

Words of Wikstrom – December 2015

Expectation.

Our theme for the month of December is the question, “*What does it mean to be a people of expectation?*” December seems a pretty apt month to look at this. The members of our community who identify in one way or another with the Christian tradition(s) know that [Advent](#) – the four weeks prior to Christmas – is a time of expectant waiting. Others of us are expectantly waiting for [Yule](#), the Winter Solstice, the shortest day of the year, which presages the return of the sun. And for some of the younger ones in our community it's all about the presents, and the expectant waiting they must endure is almost unbearable.

The word “expectation” is related to the word “expect,” of course, which comes to us from Latin. *Expectare* (or *exspectare*) means, “await, look out for; desire, hope, long for, anticipate; look for with anticipation.” And our theme for the month asks us to consider what it means to be a *people* of expectation. What does it mean that we Unitarian Universalists are a people of expectation?

This leads to an obvious question – are we? Are we a people of expectation? Is that one of the defining features of our movement? I'd say that it is and we are. [Take our flaming chalice](#), for instance. We and so many other congregations light one the beginning of each service (and, often, before the start of many meetings, and even often in our homes!). It was created during World War II by Hans Deutsch, an Austrian artist who had been living in Paris drawing cartoons critical of Hitler. He was commissioned to design a logo for the Unitarian Service Committee (the precursor of today's [Unitarian Universalist Service Committee](#)) which had been formed to help Eastern Europeans who needed to escape Nazi Germany. The logo was intended to give this fledgling organization an air of respectability, and it became an underground symbol of hope for Unitarians, Jews, and others in occupied Europe who were seeking safety and freedom. A sign of hope from a people of expectation. Our Unitarian ancestors *knew* that good would ultimately triumph.

And what could be more of an indication that we Unitarian Universalists have a profound sense of expectation than our Universalist's assertion that no one would be condemned to eternal punishment, articulated at a time when it seemed that nearly everyone else was preaching that damnation was the fate of the *majority* of humankind? Albert Einstein [once famously said](#), “I think the most important question facing humanity is, ‘Is the universe a friendly place?’ This is the first and most basic question all people must answer for themselves.” Our Universalist ancestors most definitely answered, “yes.”

And we Unitarian Universalists in the 21st century are their heirs, living in the expectation that love is stronger than hate, that everyone has worth and dignity, that the good fight is worth fighting and that, in the end, the good will win. During the month of December each of us is encouraged to consider Einstein's question for ourselves, and to explore what it might mean that we – Unitarian Universalists – are “a people of expectation,” and that TJMC might be “a community of expectation.”

Pax tecum,

RevWik