Ministerial Musings

As we attempt domesticating and adopting a kitten that was born near the Parsonage, I am learning more life lessons. Some of you have heard about this latest addition to our family - Gandalf, a really cute grey striped kitten. He was born "feral" and we brought him indoors back in July. He has not been happy about it.

I've adopted kittens before, but they were always already adapted to human interactions. Not this little guy: wild, off the wall, squalling and not at all friendly.

He is happy to eat the food we provide and used the litter-box from the get-go (a good sign, we thought). But I found myself frustrated and impatient. This was a lot of work and attention for so little "reward". Yes, a puppy is even more work, but at least you get some tail-wagging and gratitude. What was the point if all I get out of this relationship is antagonism and ingratitude?

This brought me up short. What was the point, indeed! Really, was this creature put on this planet solely for my amusement? Or am I here to accept and care for a creature I have taken under my roof?

While this is not totally analogous to our human condition, it tells me something about love, and about the purpose of the religious community. The image included above appeared on Facebook just as I was musing about these ideas. It comes from the Unitarian Universalist Church of Atlanta GA and it is a graphic reminder of why we are here. It cuts to the chase, without a lot of fussy "mission statement" words.

It's a theological statement that requires no particular deity, but it asks for almost super-human effort. For to love fully, with no exceptions, is a challenge. But when I first saw the UUCA graphic, I read it as "*Love without* ***expectation***."

That's another message that is hard for us to hold on to and live with most of the time. We want guarantees that the love we give is going to come round back to us. And that does not always happen, at least not right away, which leads to much disappointment, frustration, even anger - and some folks give up on love altogether.

Yet the lesson for us is to love anyway... to keep finding way to give love away in big and little ways and not count the cost.

How Gandalf will fare in our household - he has yet to meet the other two cats we share our home with - is still unknown. But the "love" we are giving him will have its return. It's seen in the purring sounds he now makes, and in the feeling we get by caring for a living creature even if he does not really "appreciate" it the way we might expect. I am being reminded to love without exception and without expectation.

So it will be in our Unitarian Universalist community in the year ahead: we are learning and growing together and we will be called to love without exceptions and without expectation... trusting it will all come around well in the end.

In the faith, with hope and love,

-- Rev. Susan