

GROUNDS MINISTRY ANNUAL REPORT, 2020-2021

Chair: Susan Baker

Members: George Lally, Denise Martin, Amanda Haynes, Walter Pirie, Valerie Bidwell, Joe Powers and Susie Fry

On-site helpers: Alyssa Short, Linda Pfeiffer, Linda Cherry, Tom Bube, David Warner, Greg Evanylo

Purpose of Grounds Ministry

*To create and maintain a welcoming place of natural beauty that provides spiritual and emotional sustenance for members, friends, neighbors and other visitors

*To provide and protect habitat for insects and critters

*To provide safe outdoor space for recreation, meetings, and other events (e.g.. weddings)

*Consistent with the Unitarian Universalist principle seven, "respect for the interdependent web of all existence of which we are a part", serve as stewards of the land and supporting its flora and fauna

Achievements

Maintenance is always on-going and requires a great deal of volunteer time (e.g. mulching, wood chip placement, removing dead tree limbs and other plantings, pruning, painting, weeding, planting etc)

Got rid of four rotting and unsafe picnic tables and replaced them with tables having metal frames

All posts, meditation benches, and picnic tables were cleaned and painted or stained (part of a new on-going maintenance of anything made with wood)

Hosted the winter light festival and provided all lighting, refreshments, organization and set-up

Removed 3 deteriorating raised beds and replaced them with grass (opting for low maintenance)

Three additional trees purchased and added as part of the tree sponsorship program; now have a total of 18 new trees planted

Over saw installation of a concrete sidewalk connecting the memorial garden and the picnic area; some additional landscaping had to be done on behalf of the sidewalk

Creation of a fern garden along a section of the meditation path (used donated ferns)

Cleared the detention pond of trees and brush (as required by ordinance)

Organized a fall and a spring workday; each workday made use of 24-32 volunteers

The three bee hives are thriving and growing (Richard Reid, the bee keeper)

What the grounds ministry has learned

Church neighbors and friends make use of the UUC grounds for relaxation, pleasure and meetings. We've seen a significant increase of neighbors using and appreciating the grounds

Replacing "end of life" gasoline powered equipment with cordless, battery powered equipment is a good investment for the environment and in the long run will save money

There is a huge need to recruit helpers, particularly younger people, to augment our aging current helpers

The landscape budget is significantly underfunded, particularly if we want to be proactive in land and equipment management

Expenses

Playground, labyrinth, snow removal and mowing were all within budget. The landscaping line item experienced a \$700 deficit. The deficit would be even greater if individuals had not donated money and/or items. A new schedule of rotational mulching will help reduce the mulch expenses in the 2021-22 budget year. Due to the shortage of church pledges, no money was set aside for the eventual purchase of age-appropriate playground equipment.

Grounds Supports the UUC Mission and Vision

We welcome neighbors and community members to join congregants in walking the grounds and taking part in some church outdoor activities. We show hospitality to all through our actions. The grounds speak for themselves for the spirituality of the outdoors and the joy and peace that can be found there. Critters, large and small, co-habitat on the grounds and play a critical role in the web of life.

Goals for the coming budget year

Divide the grounds into manageable areas, and seek a volunteer to oversee each designated area

Follow rotational mulching schedule and repainting/restaining schedule

Maintain our sanity during the ever-present and on-going maintenance tasks

Complete signage for the memorial walkway

Increase congregant usage of the UUC grounds.

Respectfully submitted,

Susan Baker, Grounds Ministry Chair