

## Grounds Committee Annual Report

May 2023

**Chair and members:** Jim Flowers, chair; Susan Baker, George Lally, Denise Martin, Greg Evanylo, Walter Pirie, Joe Powers, Amanda Morgan, Valerie Bidwell, Susan Fry

**Purpose of the Committee:** The various sections of our Grounds each, and all together, are a manifestation of our collective commitment to Inspire, Create and Transform our Grounds for our larger community. We have inherited and are maintaining a place of beauty, welcome, joy, and celebration.

**Achievements:** We have segmented the grounds into six Areas and begun the process of identifying and equipping hands-on Stewards for each Area. We engaged the larger congregation in two major work days, one for fall cleanup and winterization, the second in the spring to welcome the re-birth of all our plants and trees. Most noticeable changes include re-setting the stone tree berms in the parking lot and recovery of the pond in the Glades. The Unitarian Universalist Memorial Walkway was completed.

**Lessons learned:** The Area Stewards need committed helpers in order to stay ahead of routine maintenance, particularly mowing. We will be working on this issue in the new fiscal year.

**Expenses for the year to date:** As usual, we have operated within our budget.

**How does the committee or group work to further our mission and vision?** We maintain and improve our Grounds for the enjoyment and inspiration of our congregation and the larger community.

Our “tour” begins by driving or walking up the hill from Gladewood Drive. Our Open Door is welcoming all the way from the street. The driveway is flanked by manicured shrubs. It passes the playground committed to our children. And it directly faces our rainbow banner.

Our half-mile Pathway of the Spirit begins at the top of the curving sidewalk leading uphill from the Elarth Hall doorway. It stitches together all the areas of our property, and is a comfortable 20 minute stroll. But it also provides a special opportunity for extended contemplative stops. You will pass through the blossoming Gardens, the calming Glades, the earth-friendly Meadow, and the community Lawn, each with their own special features. And integral to the Pathway are seven Meditation Points, each of which includes a (donated) bench and signage denoting one of Unitarian Universalism’s Seven Principles, with a quotation explaining or amplifying on the meaning of that

principle. Each meditation point has its own mini-landscape design as well.

When one follows the pathway clockwise, the last leg contains the 'Unitarian Universalist Memorial Walkway' consisting of a low, fifty-three foot wall and signage with the names and biographical sketches of forty notable Unitarians, Universalists and Unitarian-Universalists. The memorial is not a 'Hall of Fame' however, but was created to honor the contributions and sacrifices of many thousands of Unitarian Universalists, with the forty as a representative sample. You are invited to sit on the wall and read their stories.

Uphill from the Memorial, the pathway ends at the small picnic area outside the meetinghouse.

We encourage all to open their spirits to the spirits of the Grounds. They are available all year long, and they customize themselves to meet the needs of every individual who passes through.

**Goals for the coming year and how do they further our mission and vision?**

During the next fiscal year, we look forward to maturing our Area Steward program for both maintenance and improvement of each Area. We also look forward to a major upgrade of the playground, and to finding a means to provide live water and power to the Glades within our to-be-determined budget constraints, and adding an additional picnic table to the Lawn Area. A revised and refreshed Ten Year Plan is near completion, and will be finalized soon, following congregational and Board review. All these activities support and further our use of the Grounds as a comprehensive spiritual offering to the congregation and the larger community.