

Policy on Growth and Cultural Preservation

Goals

GNUUC has a mission to embody a sanctuary. There are three dimensions to the word sanctuary: (1) It is a holy place, (2) It is a place of safety, and (3) It is a place of nature. These three elements are found at GNUUC to various degrees.

This policy requires the creation of a formal list of physical and cultural features that are unique to GNUUC and which must be preserved as the congregation grows.

Definitions

Cultural Touchstone

A cultural touchstone is either a physical object or specific behavior that is essential to the identity of Greater Nashville UU.

History and Context

Growth and Preservation in Davidson and Surrounding Counties

According to a recent article in the Tennessean, Nashville continues to grow at the rate of 100 people per day. That's 36,500 people per year. To put it another way, Nashville grows by one Brentwood every year.

Based on current UUA trends and projected growth patterns in Davidson and surrounding counties, we estimate that there will be 450 more Unitarian Universalists in our area by 2020. This assumes that Nashville remains similarly conservative. If, in fact, the people moving here are more progressive than the average Nashvillian, then 450 is probably a low estimate.

GNUUC cherishes a culture of openness and acceptance as described in our congregational covenant. In numerous congregational discussions, loss of this culture is mentioned as one of the primary fears associated with growth. This makes it particularly important to identify behavioral touchstones that are part of the culture of GNUUC.

Seek Community Input

Research coupled with a survey and followed up by interviews should be undertaken to identify cultural touchstones of GNUUC and to document the history associated with each

touchstone. Here are just some of the physical objects and spiritual practices that should be considered in the final Cultural Touchstone inventory.

The Church Building

We believe that the building currently used by GNUUC was a originally an elementary school called the Gower Annex. Gower Elementary school is still operating on Old Hickory Road. We also believe that Gower Annex Elementary served a predominantly (if not segregated) population of African-American children starting in 1960.

We can confirm that the property was purchased by Davidson County on March 20, 1958 as two tracts; one from Robert and Evelyn Temple and another from Thomas A. Baugh and Mary Hill Baugh.

The beginning of that school year, September 1957 was the first year that Nashville City Schools were integrated. According to tax records, the school building itself was built in 1960.

Members recall a visitor to a GNUUC garage sale whose aunt attended the school and recounted the original configuration of the building. This history should be explored.

The Still Spring Forest

The congregation owns 5 acres of forest hillside north of the church building and parking lot. Three acres were included in the original purchase and 2 more adjacent acres were added during a refinance in the late 1990s. This forest is a unique feature of our campus and should be preserved, especially as Bellevue continues to develop. More should be learned about the forest so it can be properly managed.

The Still Spring Memorial Garden

The Memorial Garden was established in 2003. It is home to the cremains of many deceased members of the congregation. Within the Memorial Garden is a granite and brass monument engraved with the names of those whose cremains are interred there. The garden is supported by a restricted account. A plan for improved accessibility and expansion should be developed.

The Still Spring Playground

The playground was established in 2017. It occupies about 3,000 square feet in an oval about 70 feet long and 40 feet wide located south of the Memorial Garden. The playground is supported by a restricted account. A plan for ongoing maintenance should be developed.

The *Satori* Painting

Within the sanctuary is a large painting titled *Satori* which depicts various sacred symbols of the world's religious traditions. This work was commissioned by one of the founders of GNUUC. Interviews can help fill in the history of the painting. A preservation plan should be designed for the painting.

The Wall of Handprints

Two walls of the Fellowship hall are decorated with the handprints of adults and children that were or are members of the congregation. These handprints represent members young and old, some of whom are no longer with us. An inventory and history should be taken of the wall and a plan made for its preservation.

The Culture of Sharing a Meal Together

Since at least 2000, GNUUC has served lunch to members and visitors after our weekly service. The membership of GNUUC is spread widely across Davidson and surrounding counties. Serving lunch was in part a response to the long commute, in part a response to the 11am service start time, and a great chance to gather as a community to deepen our bonds. .

The Culture of Open Acceptance

GNUUC has earned a reputation for being the congregation where people are welcomed on their first visit. A place where people are deliberate in their openness. Choosing to walk through our doors is a life-changing step for some folks, and our hospitality recognizes this.

The Culture of Showing Up

GNUUC has an exceptionally high rate of volunteerism. If this attitude is recognized and supported it too can become one of the defining features of GNUUC.

Delegation & Accountability

The Board delegates to the Healthy Congregation Team the responsibility to create of a list of "cultural touchstones" that are to be preserved as part of the cultural identity and historical legacy of GNUUC.

The Healthy Congregation Team will meet annually to update the touchstone list. It will invite and encourage congregation wide participation in adding and removing items from this list.

The Healthy Congregation Team will support others as needed to ensure that cultural items on the touchstone list are understood, preserved, and enhanced.

The Building and Grounds committee will incorporate the physical items on the touchstone list into its maintenance and strategic planning. This will help preserve and enhance these items.