

## BELIEFS &amp; Values

## Glen helps B'ham Unitarian remember

BY RAND POST TEMPLETON  
SPECIAL WRITER

The idea of giving a loved one to rest in a peaceful wooded setting just yards from the church can be comforting for all concerned.

The recent addition and dedication of a Memorial Glen at Birmingham Unitarian Church will provide just such a place for church members and their families.

"We feel it's very important to have a place that's conducive to quiet reflection and meditation after the loss of a loved one," Arlene Fredrick, chairwoman of the Memorial Glen committee said. "And, having the Glen will carry on the idea of memorializing someone in a very beautiful setting."

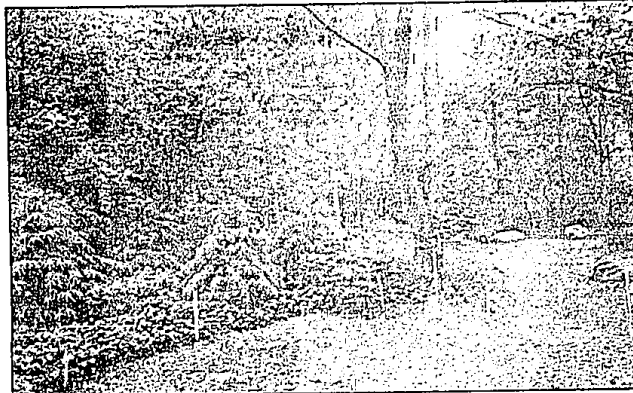
Fredrick of Birmingham has been a member of Birmingham Unitarian Church for more than 20 years. She said the idea to establish a memorial spot on church grounds came about when church members decided they wanted to return the marking of all life passages to one site.

In the past churches would not only be the place for baptisms and weddings but also a place for interment in the churchyard cemetery. Once cemeteries started being established far from churches, loved ones were buried among strangers and there was a real dilemma of finding a meaningful place to scatter the deceased's ashes.

Opening the Memorial Glen has allowed Birmingham Unitarian Church to bring life's final passage back within the physical and spiritual fold of the church, Fredrick said.

"The Memorial Glen is the 21st century version of the 19th century church graveyard," Unitarian Church Minister Deane Gallager said. "It's particularly important when families are so mobile. As generations pass, this will be a place to remember those who have gone before."

The site for the Memorial Glen is in a wooded area behind the church that can be reached by passing through the children's



Tribute: The Garden is a place where the ashes of loved ones can be scattered. The deceased's name will appear on granite rocks in the area above.

playground. The Glen was named in honor of Norbert Copek, a Unitarian minister martyred following his imprisonment in a WWII concentration camp.

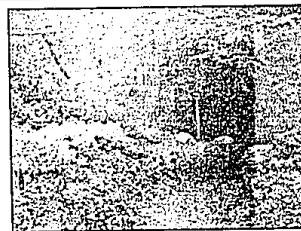
The Memorial Glen has been in the planning at the church for almost two years. It will be for the benefit of church members and their families as a place to enter ashes or scatter ashes.

A church committee, that included many members, worked with architects Keith Brown and John Hammer to create two interlocking circles of rocks and plantings with a grass floor. They then added ferns, rhododendrons and hemlocks.

"We really wanted to maintain the naturalness of the setting," Fredrick said. "And we recently completed all the planting and it really is very, very beautiful."

The names of those who rest at

Entrance: A wooded path welcomes visitors to the Glen, right.



the site will be entered in a permanent death register maintained by the church.

Family members may also have the deceased's name engraved in stone in the Glen. The granite tablets will depict the name, birth date and date of death of those interred on the grounds.

"Family members may choose to scatter ashes in the woods or in the Glen itself," Fredrick said. "It's very important to have a place like this of remembrance for the people who are closest to them."

So far, two church families have

held memorial services in the new Memorial Glen.

"We are very pleased with how the Memorial Glen has turned out," Fredrick said. "And this project was something that many members of the church have contributed to either financially or with the labor or the hours they have put in."

Birmingham Unitarian Church is located at 651 Woodward Avenue at Lone Pine Road in Bloomfield Hills. For more information about the Memorial Glen call the church at (248) 647-2380.

## Real millennium has already come and gone

## FOCUS ON THEOLOGY



REV. ALLAN RICKELMANN

During World War II, at the time that the Allies were finally able to gain a decisive victory over the Nazis in North Africa, Winston Churchill encouraged the British people with

these well-thought words, "We should not think of this as the end, nor even the beginning; rather, it is the end of the beginning."

So it is, as we approach the year 2000, that many people seem to be asking, "Is this the end, or the beginning of the end, or is it really the end of the beginning?" As we approach the end of the millennium, many psychics, social prophets, charismatic preachers and movie screen writers seem to be making big bucks predicting the end of the world. No doubt, this end time frenzy will intensify the closer we get to the year 2000; especially as movies such as "Deep Impact" and "Armageddon" continue to draw big crowds. It seems that having a millennium is no fun unless it scares you half to death.

The fact of the matter is, all of this millennial hype and hysteria notwithstanding, that nobody really knows anything about the end of the world, except the one who created it. If God left us any biblical guidelines within the book of Revelation, it must have been intended to drive us crazy with contradictions and confusion. Anyone who makes any accurate predictions based upon the tangle of symbolism which one finds in the Book of Revelation needs to go back to logic 101.

The biggest major problem with the threat of the millen-

nium is, that by all reasonable accounts, we have already missed it. What do I mean? Well, you will recall that the way we date the years, the centuries and the millennia is in accordance with the birth of Christ. This is true whether you use the traditional designation of A.D. for Anno Domini, Latin for the "year of our Lord" or whether you use the contemporary C.E. for Common Era.

In either case, the dating begins with the birth of Christ. Scholars have known for a number of years, that due to an original dating error, that the birth of Christ actually occurred sometime between 4 B.C.E. (before common era) and 6 B.C.E. Even when you take into account that the actual new millennium doesn't really begin until Jan. 1, 2001 - because the year 2000 is actually the last year of the current century - and take into consideration that the original calendar, due to another dating error, deleted the year 0, you can see that the real millennium has already passed us completely unnoticed.

Furthermore, isn't it odd that we base the millennium on the peculiarities of a particular calendar? According to the Chinese, the Moslem and the Jewish calendars, for instance, the year 2000 isn't right around the corner at all. All of these different cultures and religious groups have a totally different starting point for counting years. Where one starts, in reality, a human invention, having little to do with cosmic forces.

As we approach the year 2000, however, there are many psychological forces at work. If not cosmically, at least psychologically, the year 2000 is of some significance.

How we think about the year 2000 is really up to us.

Please see FOCUS, D8

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