

Crash Helmets and the Open Soul: Taking the Closer Walk

By Tom Jones, Green Lake Board Director Emeritus

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It is early morning on a crisp fall day and I am running along Lake Shore Drive on my Closer Run with God. Normally my thoughts on such runs drift back to earlier times in Green Lake (that's me at the outdoor pool in the 1940s), but today my mind is clearly focused on the future.

Green Lake is one of the most beautiful places on earth. It doesn't measure up to the Grand Canyon for sheer grandeur, and the vastness of the Atlantic Ocean from the rocky shores of Gloucester does more to conjure up the "awesome wonder" of How Great Thou Art. But, as John Dawson would say, Green Lake is "life-sized." Its beauty, tranquility and depth are perfect for the Closer Walk with God.

The future of Green Lake starts with the place itself. At Green Lake every walk is an adventure. Short or long, God awaits the open soul. It can be reassuring or it can be dangerous - where God calls us to the very edge of our believable capabilities. As Annie Dillard says, "we should all be wearing crash helmets."

The future of Green Lake is fueled by a need so large that it literally takes one's breath away. We intersect this need at the most meaningful. The individual Christian. The single congregation. The local church. The family. The pastor.

The future of Green Lake is a reflection of the twin commitments that we have as Baptists. On one hand we staunchly defend the priesthood of believers and, at the same time, we reach across the boundaries created by these beliefs to embrace others with different perspectives. Green Lake is the warmly welcoming home for American Baptists and also a place where Christians of all stripes can come for dialogue and their own Closer Walk with God.

I am now running up the hill along the Avenue of the Flags. This is far and away my favorite place on the grounds. These flags have always represented the mysterious outcomes of the commitments formed at Green Lake. We are called to respond to human pain and suffering anyplace it calls home; to spread the Good News to all corners of the earth.

Green Lake is at its best when it takes the inward journey and connects it to the outward journey and the commitment to serve. This is a new day at Green Lake marked by new leadership, a renewed commitment to our dual roles, and an abiding belief in God's eternal Grace. I couldn't be more excited.

