

GRACE EPISCOPAL CHURCH

Columbarium Niche and Memorial Garden Policies

September 2017/Updated October 2020

Columbarium

The cremated remains of eligible members of the Parish family may be placed in a niche within the church. Eligible members include current and former members, their spouses, children, and grandchildren. Exceptions must be approved by the Rector and Vestry. The fee is \$1,000 per niche. Each niche will accommodate the remains of two persons, such as a husband and wife. The placement of cremains will be officiated by the Rector or the Rector's approved clergy member.

The fee does *not* include the required standardized inscription on the niche cover plate identifying only the name and dates of birth and death of each person. This inscription will be arranged by the Parish Office, and the family will be notified of the cost. An urn or other suitable container to hold the remains will be the responsibility of the person making arrangements. These costs and the niche fee are not tax deductible.

Eligible parish members may reserve a niche for a non-refundable fee of \$1,000 payable at the time of reservation. Collected fees will be kept in a Columbarium/Memorial Garden Fund. This fee will be reviewed every two years.

Niches may be reserved singly or in family groups of named individuals. A chart in the Parish Office will identify which niches are reserved and which are available. A certificate of reservation identifying the name of the person(s) and their niche or niches will be given for each niche reserved. The Parish Office will maintain the official records.

A niche reservation may not be sold, transferred, or assigned in any manner to another person except through written request and subsequent written approval by the Rector and the Vestry. The original purchaser may request the niche reservation be given to another eligible and named member of the Parish family.

If the original purchaser or heir of a niche reservation gives written notice of abandoning the reservation, the Parish Office will provide a letter identifying such notice as a "Contribution to the Columbarium/Memorial Garden Fund" in the amount of the current niche fee.

If a niche has been reserved for a named family member who no longer lives in the area, it shall be the responsibility of the named person to maintain contact with the Parish Office. If that person fails to communicate their address change to the Parish Office or to communicate with the Parish Office for a period of five years, the office shall make a reasonable effort to establish contact. If the person cannot be found, or if found does not reaffirm an intention to use the niche, then the church may issue that niche reservation to another person for the current fee.

The holder of a reservation who defaults for failure to communicate current contact information to the Parish Office and whose niche has been reassigned may request another niche without additional payment if one is available.

Access to the church and Columbarium at times when the church is not normally open may be arranged through the Parish Office.

The church reserves the right to move the Columbarium to another location.

Memorial Garden

The cremated remains of eligible members of this Parish family may be scattered in the Memorial Garden located in the southwestern corner of the churchyard and designated for this purpose. Eligible members include current and former members, their spouses, children, and grandchildren. Exceptions must be approved by the Rector and Vestry. The fee is \$250. A service at the time of the scattering will be officiated by the Rector or the Rector's approved clergy member.

The fee does *not* include the required standardized inscription on the plaque identifying only the name and dates of birth and death of each person. This plaque and inscription will be arranged for by the Parish Office, and the family will be notified of the cost. The cost of the plaque and the Memorial Garden fee are not tax deductible.

Collected fees shall be kept in a Columbarium/Memorial Garden Fund and may be used for maintenance of the site.

Reservations need not be made for the Memorial Garden. Arrangements are handled on an as-needed basis.

The above policies are condensed from the undated document **POLICIES GOVERNING THE COLUMBARIUM AND MEMORIAL GARDEN OF GRACE EPISCOPAL CHURCH** as recorded below:

The following policies govern the church columbarium, with its niches and the Memorial Garden, including issues of eligibility, cost, and maintenance.

1. **Limited to Cremated Remains:** Only pulverized cremated human remains may be permitted in the church's Memorial Garden or placed in an appropriate niche in the church's columbarium. Ashes inurned (spread) in the Memorial Garden shall be immediately "washed-in" with Holy water.
2. **Eligibility:** All Grace Episcopal Church members, former members, former clergy, spouses, children, and grandchildren of current and former members are eligible to have their ashes placed in the church's columbarium or scattered in its Memorial Garden. Any exceptions to this policy must be authorized by the Rector and approved by the Vestry.
3. **Religious Services:** An appropriate religious service consistent with the liturgy of the Episcopal Church shall be held at the time cremated remains are placed in the church's columbarium or scattered in the Memorial Garden. Only the Rector of Grace Episcopal Church, or his clergy designee, will conduct the funeral service. The religious service may be public or private, depending on the desire of next of kin, and if authorized by the Rector and approved by the Vestry.

4. **Record Keeping:** An accurate record will be maintained of those whose ashes have been inurned in the church's columbarium and scattered in the Memorial Garden, with such record properly preserved in perpetuity. Whether ashes are inurned in a niche or scattered in the Memorial Garden, the form of identification will be limited to the name, initials, date of birth and death of each individual whether or not the niche or Memorial Garden contains the ashes of related people (e.g., man and wife, brothers or sisters). The size, shape, texture and appearance of the numerals and lettering will be standardized. No other inscription, plantings, or flowers will be permitted.
5. **Cost of Scattering of Ashes or Acquisition of a Niche:** Costs associated with inurnments and upkeep of the Memorial Garden will be covered by contributions from those choosing to have their ashes in a niche or scattered in the Memorial Garden. In order to assure perpetual care of the columbarium and the Memorial Garden, a trust fund will be established from a portion of each contribution. Any out-of-pocket cost for the church should be recouped immediately. An engraved niche or identification space on a marker near the Memorial Garden may be arranged at the time of need or in advance and reserved until needed. The cost for maintaining the columbarium and the Memorial Garden will be reviewed at least every five years in order to determine whether an adjustment needs to be made to assure sufficient funding. The guidelines for the amount of financial contribution will be determined by whether ashes are to be inurned in the columbarium or scattered in the Memorial Garden, and if the former, by location of the niche.
6. **Termination of Reservation:** If it is determined by the Rector and Vestry that a reservation for a niche or for the Memorial Garden donated in advance will not be used, the reservation shall be canceled. Upon request, a donation may be returned to the next of kin unless the niche has already been attained and inscribed, in which case there would be no refund and the balance, after deducting the cost of the acquisition and engraving, shall be placed in the Columbarium Trust Fund. No engraving would be made in advance of the scattering of ashes in the Memorial Garden other than immediately prior to the memorial service. Niches and/or reserved use of the Memorial Garden donated in advance may be transferred to other eligible family members upon written consent of the original donor or his/her next of kin. However, selling of a niche or one's reservation for a name on the Memorial Garden marker will not be permitted.
7. **Access to the Niches or Memorial Garden** is permitted only under the control and supervision of an official representative of the Grace Episcopal Church. Removal of ashes from a niche may be made only upon written consent of the next of kin and with the express approval of the Church. Ashes may not be removed from the Memorial Garden.
8. **Change of Location:** A release must be signed allowing the removal of the cremated remains to another appropriate place should the church property be sold or if it is deemed by the church authorities that it is no longer feasible to maintain the columbarium or the Memorial Garden on the present site. Under no circumstance will the columbarium or the Garden be abandoned without the church making proper arrangements for the placement of all cremated remains in another appropriate place.
9. **Modification of Rules:** Any modification of these rules must be approved by the Rector and the Vestry.