

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

What is a columbarium?

The word columbarium comes from the Latin word “Columba”, meaning dove. It has come to mean a structure with compartments, or niches, for holding urns. First Presbyterian Church Prayer Garden Columbarium will have 160 niches, where urns containing cremated remains are inurned. Each niche has the capacity to hold two urns. The niches are sealed with engraved stone fronts showing the name and life dates of those inurned within.

How will the columbarium be financed?

No capital campaign funds will be used to finance the columbarium. The Church has received in excess of \$100,000 in donations for the purpose of building the Prayer Garden Columbarium. A portion of the moneys from the sale of niches will be considered a tax-deductible donation. The Church will make an interest free “loan” to the columbarium to cover the balance of the estimated \$365,000 cost to build and install the columbarium. As niches are sold a portion of the sales price that is considered a tax-deductible donation will be paid to the church until the loan is repaid.

Where will the Prayer Garden Columbarium be located?

The columbarium will be located in the courtyard between the Chapel and the Christian Education wing, adjacent to 7th Street. A memorial wall will also be placed in the courtyard, with 90 spaces to honor and memorialize past church members, whether they are inurned in the Prayer Garden or not.

Will the Prayer Garden be accessible on weekends or other times when the Church is not open?

The Prayer Garden will be accessible through a door that leads directly from the church to the garden and also through a doorway that opens off of 7th Street. When the church is not open, the garden will be accessed through that 7th Street doorway. Each niche owner will be provided with a unique code to open the door. The garden will be handicapped accessible.

Who can be inurned in the columbarium?

Members or former members, affiliate members, pastors and staff of the Church, their current or prior spouses or partners, their children (natural or adopted) and step-children, their grandchildren, their parents, and ordained First Presbyterian pastors and their current or prior spouses or partners may be inurned at the columbarium or memorialized on the Memorial Wall.

How much does a niche cost and what is included in the price?

There will be two sizes of niches available. An 8"X8" niche currently costs \$3150 or a double and \$2,775 for or a single. \$2,400 of which is considered a tax-deductible donation. The 12"X12" niche currently cost \$3750 for a double and \$3275 for a single. \$2,800 of which is tax-deductible. The price includes the niche, an urn for each person inurned for a maximum of two, engraving the face plate with the name and life dates or the person(s) whose cremains are inurned, choice of niche location, inurnment by a First Presbyterian pastor, opening and closing of the inurnment space, record-keeping, and maintenance in perpetuity. It does not include the cost of cremation. The purchase prices will be adjusted every three years as needed to allow for inflation.

Are there any financing options?

Yes, you may opt to pay the purchase price over three or five years. However, you may not choose a niche location until the niche is paid in full.

Who maintains records and operates the columbarium and memorial wall?

The Columbarium Committee maintains all files and records for the columbarium, including the identity and location of cremains inurned in or removed. The records will be located at the church. The Committee maintains the columbarium, including the architecture and landscaping.

What are the sizes of the niches?

The Prayer Garden Columbarium offers two niche sizes. The smaller niche has a front panel measuring 8 inches by 8 inches and has an interior space which is about 7 1/2 inches wide by 6 3/4 inches high by 11 1/2 inches deep. The 8"X8" niche will accommodate two sheet bronze urns provided with the purchase. The larger niche has a front panel measuring 12 inches by 12 inches and has an interior space which will accommodate 2 urns 10 1/2 inches tall and 6 inches in diameter. Two sheet bronze urns are provided with the purchase.

What is inscribed on the niche?

The person's or persons' full name(s) with month, date and years of birth and death. For an additional cost, an emblem may be added for military service or other associations.

What is an urn?

Urn is the receptacles into which ashes are placed. The urns are then placed in the niche. The urns provided with the purchase of a niche are made of sheet bronze with a satin finish. Each urn is 5 1/2 inches high, 5 1/2 inches wide and 7 inches long.

May I use my own urn?

The Columbarium Committee recommends using the sheet bronze urn included in the price of the niche. However, another urn that may have special meaning may be used if it fits within the niche, at the discretion of the church. The 12" X 12" niche can accommodate 2 urns 10 ½ inches tall and 6 inches in diameter.

May other items be inurned with the cremains?

No valuables may be placed in the urn or niche. Other items that may have special meaning may be placed in the niche as space allows, upon approval by the Columbarium Committee.

How many niches may I buy?

You may buy as many as needed. For example, families may opt to purchase a group of adjacent niches, with two urns per niche.

May I choose the location of the niche?

Yes. A map of the columbarium will be provided at the time of purchase and you may choose the location based on availability. However, if you opt to pay over time, you may not choose the location until the purchase price has been paid in full.

May I place decorations?

Only fresh flowers may be placed next to a niche at the time of inurnment. The Church will remove flowers after three days. The Church will provide holiday decorations, Memorial Day, Veterans' Day, Advent/Christmas, Mothers' Day and Fathers' Day in the Prayer Garden as appropriate.

Will clergy perform a service at the time of inurnment?

First Presbyterian Church will provide a brief religious service at the time of each inurnment. A member of the clergy shall conduct the service and be present at the inurnment.

When is the inurnment usually done?

Inurnments or other services will be made when reasonably feasible after the church has received adequate notice from you or your heirs or personal representative. Often, inurnment will take place immediately before or after a memorial service. In the event of inclement weather, inurnment may be delayed until practical. If so, the church may suggest an alternative time or day.

How will the church and funeral home interact?

At the time of death, the family, funeral home, and the church are in communication with each other. The funeral home will arrange for cremation and deliver the ashes to the family or the church, as directed. The family may make arrangements to pick up the approved urn or have the funeral home pick it up, and either the family or the funeral home will deliver the urn back to the church just before inurnment. The family is responsible for the urn until the time of the inurnment service. Once the provided urn is closed it cannot be reopened without damage.

Is the scattering of cremains available?

No.

May I inurn my pet?

A pet's ashes may be mixed with human cremains or placed in the niche as space allows but are not allowed in a separate niche. The church does not allow for a separate inscription for a pet.

May I have my niche inscribed before I die?

No.

What about cremains I already have?

You may have them inurned in the columbarium after completion of the Columbarium Agreement and arrangement of a memorial service. Contact your pastor to arrange for a service and to obtain the information to purchase a niche.

May two peoples' ashes be co-mingled in a single urn?

Yes, please discuss this with the funeral home or make arrangements separately. There is only room on the niche faceplate for two individual names.

How are the rules set up?

The Columbarium Committee has adopted a set of policies and procedures. They are designed to protect the current interests of both you and the church, and to preserve the decorum and appearance of the columbarium over time. From time to time, the rules may be amended as the church or the committee deems necessary.

How do I purchase a niche?

Submit a written application (Columbarium Agreement) and payment to the church. These are available in the church office, online, or from a Columbarium Committee member.

Do I actually own the niche?

No, the columbarium agreement is only a license to use the niche. No real property right or interest is created.

May I change the list of people who may be inurned in my niche in the columbarium?

Yes, during your lifetime, you may change the list of designated persons by a written amendment to the columbarium agreement signed by the church representative and yourself.

What if I decide later not to use the niche?

If there has been no inurnment and you decide that the niche is no longer needed, the church may, at its discretion, repurchase the niche for the original purchase price less the portion that was considered a donation. There will be no refund of the tax-deductible donation. If there has been no inurnment within either five years after the death of the last living purchaser or 120 years after the person's birth, the niche reservation will be cancelled, with no compensation due to the niche reservation owner or the person's estate or family.

May I sell the niche to another person?

Yes, but only if you obtain prior permission. The sale, transfer or assignment of the niche without the prior written consent of the Columbarium Committee is not allowed. The rules about who may be inurned will apply to the subsequent purchaser.

May I remove ashes from the columbarium for any reason?

Yes, in the event there has been an inurnment in a niche and the personal representative or immediate family of the person whose cremains have been inurned wish to permanently remove the cremains from the niche, they may do so. However, there will not be any reimbursement in this case.

Must I pay for an entire niche if I am single?

Yes, single pricing is available. Columbarium Committee can provide pricing for single use niche.

What other costs are involved in being inurned at the First Presbyterian Prayer Garden Columbarium?

The memorial service, honorarium for minister, musicians, etc. are separate and subject to the church's policies and fee schedules.

Does the price include cremation?

No, the price does not include cremation. Arrangements for cremation should be made directly with a funeral home or cremation society.

What if affordability is an issue?

Please speak with one of the pastors.

How does the price of a columbarium niche compare to being buried in a traditional cemetery?

Currently, columbarium niches are less than cemetery burials. More information on these details is available from a mortuary/funeral home.

Are there advantages of inurnment at a columbarium?

Some may feel that a columbarium interment is more environmentally responsible than burial in a cemetery.