

WESTMINSTER PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH
MEMORIAL GARDEN
Frequently Asked Questions



Frequently Asked Questions about the
Memorial Garden, Columbarium and Memorial Wall

June, 2018

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Overview

A. *What is the Memorial Garden?*

The Memorial Garden was conceived as an extension of Westminster's end of life ministry program, in the tradition of an old-fashioned church-yard. It consists of the landscaped area and walkway, a Columbarium, and a Memorial Wall along 12th Street just outside the sanctuary. The Garden is owned by the Church, and is operated and maintained subject to the Westminster Presbyterian Church Memorial Garden Rules, adopted by the church's Session.

B. *What is its purpose?*

The Garden is intended to provide opportunities for Westminster members to inter or remember their loved ones in the Christian tradition, near their church home. The Garden is a reminder of preceding generations, and a sacred place for contemplation on the meaning of faith and eternal life.

C. *Who maintains records and operates the Garden?*

The Church maintains all files and records for the Garden, including the identity and the location of ashes interred in or removed from the Garden. The Church maintains the Garden, including the architecture and landscaping, and supervises all service providers, such as water irrigation system, snow plowing, tree care, gardening and lawn service.

Terms

A. *What are ashes?*

The cremated remains of a human body.

B. *What is the Columbarium?*

The constructed facility within the Memorial Garden, comprised of individual niches or compartments in which urns are placed. The columbarium holds 660 niches, each can contain two urns. Each niche is enclosed by a limestone front containing the names and birth and death dates of the ashes of the persons interred within.

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C. *What is the Memorial Wall?*

A wall in the Garden designed for the purpose of memorializing loved ones. The people listed on the Memorial Wall may be either living or interred elsewhere.

D. *Who may be interred in the Columbarium?*

Members or former members, pastors and staff of the Church, their current or prior spouses or partners, their children (natural, adopted) and step-children, their parents, and ordained Presbyterian pastors and their current or prior spouses or partners. Other persons may be interred in the Garden only if authorized by the church.

E. *What is an inscription?*

An inscription is the engraving in stone of a person's name.

F. *What is the inscription process?*

For the Memorial Wall, engravings are done directly on the limestone wall. For the niches, the front panel is removed and sent to a special engraver, which takes three to four days. In the meantime, a temporary front is placed on the niches. Each niche has an interior closure panel to ensure security.

G. *What is interment?*

This term refers to placing of ashes, in an urn, into a niche, with a short service conducted by a Westminster pastor.

H. *What is the Interment Agreement?*

The agreement between yourself and the Church by which you acquire right to use a niche in the Garden for the interment of ashes of you or another person.

I. *How big is a niche?*

The front of the niche that holds the engraving is 8" by 8". Each niche is about 7 ½" wide by 6 ¾" high by 11 ½" deep.

J. *What is an urn?*

Urns are 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 ½" high, 5 ½" wide, and 7" long.

K. *May I use my own urn?*

Westminster 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 standard urn (5 ½" high, 5 ½" wide, and 7" long), at the discretion of Westminster.

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Policies and Procedures

A. How are the rules set up?

The Session has adopted a set of rules as a statement of its intent and policy. The rules are designed to protect the current interests of both you and the Church, and to preserve the decorum and appearance of the Garden over time. From time to time, the rules may be amended as the Church and its Session and Board of Trustees deem necessary. Exemptions to the Rules must be approved by the Board of Trustees or by any two church pastors.

B. What are the policies about conducting a service at the time of interment?

Westminster will provide a brief religious service at the time of each interment. A member of the clergy shall conduct the service and be present at the Interment.

C. When is the interment usually done?

Interments 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, interment will take place immediately before or after a memorial service. In the event of inclement weather, interment may be delayed until practical. If so, the Church may suggest an alternative time or day.

D. May other items be interred with the ashes?

No, no valuables shall be placed in the urn or niche. The niche may be used only for the interment of ashes in an urn.

E. When may family members visit the garden?

The Memorial Garden is available for visits on Sunday mornings or during regular church business hours (ask at the front desk). If out of town relatives would like to visit during off-hours, please call the Church during normal business hours to make arrangements.

F. May I place decorations?

Yes, flowers may be placed next to a niche at the time of interment and for up to three days thereafter. The Church will remove those flowers after three days. You are welcome to place flowers at any time, but – again – they will be removed after three days.

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Application Process and Ownership of Property

A. How do I apply?

Please submit a written application (the Interment Agreement) to the Church. This is available from the church office.

B. Do I actually own the niche?

No. The Interment Agreement is only a license to use the niche. No real property right or interest is created.

C. May I change the list of people who may be interred in my niche in the columbarium?

Yes. During your lifetime, you may change the list of designated persons by a written amendment to the Interment Agreement signed by the church representative and yourself.

D. What if I decide later not to use the niche?

If there has been no interment and you decide that the niche is no longer needed, the Church may, at its discretion, repurchase the niche. If so, the Church will pay eighty percent (80%) of the sum paid at the time of purchase. The remaining twenty percent (20%) of the original payment shall be retained by the Church for its administrative cost. The Church will not pay accrued interest.

E. 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 Church Representative is not allowed.

F. May I remove ashes from the Columbarium for any reason?

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

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Columbarium Niches

A. *Price*

The purchase price can be found in the price list, which is updated from time to time. A price list may be obtained from the church office. Please request a Memorial Garden folder for full information.

B. *What is included in the price?*

The purchase price for a niche includes, for each person interred, the cost of initial interment of the ashes, a sheet bronze urn provided by the Church, and engraving of the face plate with the name and life dates of the person whose ashes are interred. It also includes urn label, opening and closing of the niche officiated by a Westminster pastor, choice of niche location, maintenance of the interment site and the Garden in general, and the cost of maintaining records of use and administration of the Garden in perpetuity.

C. *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.

D. *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.

E. *May I use my own urn?*

Westminster 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 standard urn, at the discretion of Westminster.

F. *What if services have to be postponed due to inclement weather?*

The ashes will be kept in a safe until weather permits them to be interred. Family members can request to be present at that time if desired. Otherwise, a Westminster clergy member will see to the correct and respectful interment of the ashes.

G. *Will church clergy perform a service at the time of interment?*

Yes.

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H. *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 Church will make provision for delivery of the urn to the funeral home. The funeral home will arrange for cremation and deliver the ashes to the family or the Church, as directed. If delivered to the Church, they will be retained in a safe place until the time of interment.

I. *What will be on the front of the niche?*

Westminster will record the name and life dates of the person interred in a niche on the faceplate of the niche. The cost of the inscription is included in the purchase price. No other inscriptions - such as fraternal associations - are permitted.

J. *May valuables or trinkets be buried with the urn?*

No valuables, trinkets, or medals of any kind are allowed.

Memorial Wall

A. *How do I obtain a name on the Memorial Wall?*

Complete an Inscription Agreement application.

B. *Who may purchase a name for the Memorial Wall?*

Members or former members, pastors and staff of the Church, their current or prior spouses or partners, their children (natural, adopted) and step-children, their parents, and ordained Presbyterian pastors and their current or prior spouses or partners. The person being listed does not need to be a member.

C. *What is the price of one name and what is included?*

The purchase price can be found in the price list, which is updated from time to time. The purchase price includes maintenance of the Memorial Wall and the Garden in general and the cost of maintaining records of use and administration of the Garden in perpetuity.

D. *Where will the name appear on the Memorial Wall?*

Inscriptions are placed on the Memorial Wall in the order received.

E. *May I remove the name or get a refund for any reason?*

No. Inscriptions are permanent and for the life of the Garden. After a name has been inscribed, there is no refund of the purchase price.

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Miscellaneous

A. *Is scattering of ashes possible?*

No.

B. *May I inter my pet?*

A pet's ashes may be mixed with human ashes. The Church does not allow a separate inscription for the pet.

C. *May I have my niche inscribed before I die?*

Yes. There will be a separate inscription fee for dates at the time of interment, as the faceplate must be removed for this choice.

D. *What about ashes I already have?*

You may have them interred in the Columbarium after completion of an Interment Agreement and arrangement of a Memorial Service. Contact your pastor to arrange for a service and to obtain the information to purchase a niche.

E. *May ashes of two people be co-mingled in a single urn?*

Yes. Please discuss this with the funeral home or make arrangements separately.

Price and Payment Options

A. *Are there any payment options?*

Yes, see below. Ashes cannot be interred until all fees have been paid in full.

1. Memorial Wall: Pay in full at the time of purchase.
2. Columbarium:
Option 1: Pay in full; or
Option 2: Pay in up to 3 equal annual installments.

B. *Must I pay for an entire niche if I am single?*

Westminster offers a 20% discount for single people who wish to have their urn occupy the entire niche. Alternatively, you may acquire one-half of the niche at a 50% discount. Under that circumstance, the Church will place another urn in the niche as well. Finally, you may opt to share a niche with another person; if so, please make arrangements separately while jointly completing an Interment Agreement Application.

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C. What other costs are involved in being interred at Westminster?

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

D. 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.

E. What if affordability is an issue?

Please speak with one of the pastors.

F. How does the price of a columbarium niche compare to being buried in a traditional cemetery or another Columbarium?

There may be significant savings, depending on a variety of factors. The cost of a niche in Westminster's columbarium is less than half of the estimated average costs to be buried in a traditional cemetery. This estimate compares average costs of two gravesites, two openings, two burial vaults, and two markers, to that of buying a niche, which includes two openings, two urns, and two engravings. Previous analyses have shown that Westminster's prices are significantly lower than comparable local columbaria.

G. Are there other advantages of interment at a Columbarium?

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