



Grace Presbyterian Church

Columbarium Policies

What is a Columbarium?

The word Columbarium refers to a place designated for the inurnment of the cremated remains (cremains) of the deceased. Since the earliest days of the Christian Church, disciples have been concerned with the reverent disposal of the remains of the deceased. Such remains were typically placed in cemeteries, crypts, and columbaria set apart, that is blessed, for this purpose. Logically, the most treasured location for such reposition was within the church grounds.

In our confessions we affirm that "In life and in death, we belong to God." The Grace Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) Columbarium and Prayer Garden reflects this belief and confession. The Prayer Garden is an integral part of the life of our faith community, being a place for prayer, small group gatherings, fellowship activities, and quiet contemplation. It is a place for reflection and remembrance, a part of the church's ongoing ministry to both the living and the dead.

Romans 14 affirms: *"If we live, we live to the Lord, and if we die, we die to the Lord; so then, whether we live or whether we die, we are the Lord's. For to this end Christ died and lived again, so that he might be Lord of both the dead and the living."* In our Columbarium and Prayer Garden, we affirm life in the Lord by celebrating and embracing all aspects of our communal life, and at the same time, we affirm that even in death, we rest in the arms of Christ and Christ's Church.

There is perhaps no more fitting place for our church members, who experienced God's love through the fellowship and service of our church, to be laid to rest than in our church's Columbarium knowing they will be cared for in perpetuity. This will truly be a beautiful place dedicated to the Glory of God.

I. Description

The Columbarium consists of niches uniform in size (12" x 12" x 12") of the capacity to hold the cremains of one (1) or two (2) persons for inurnment. Each niche is covered with a granite plate, uniform in size, which is engraved with the name(s) and dates of birth and death of the deceased.

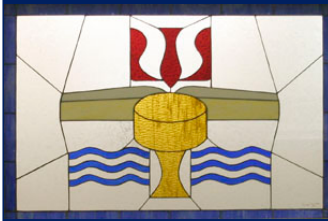
II. Eligibility

The Columbarium and Prayer Garden is restricted to the inurnment of cremains of member(s) of Grace Presbyterian Church, as well as all other North Alabama Presbytery churches, spouses of members, children or step-children of members, parents or step-parents of members, and current or past ministers of these churches and their spouses. Other persons sharing a relationship to Grace Presbyterian Church may be deemed eligible, if approved by the Memorial and Columbarium Team, after a written request and with the approval of the Session. Past members who reserved niches while members of Grace Presbyterian Church maintain their eligibility.

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5555 Wall Triana Hwy • Madison, AL 35758-7604

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III. Reservation of Niches

Reservation for inurnment in niches may be made only by those eligible as set forth above. The reservation may not be transferred to any person, except an eligible person as defined above, or back to the Grace Presbyterian Church, without the express written consent of the Memorial and Columbarium Team. Designation of the person to be inurned may be changed by a request in writing from the holder of the reservation at any time prior to death. A reservation may be surrendered by its holder upon written notification to the Memorial and Columbarium Team, with 90% of the original fee returned to the reservation holder. Specific niches, identified by number, for the inurnment of cremains may be reserved by any eligible person upon payment of designated fees and execution of required documents at the time of reservation.

A Columbarium Niche Reservation and Agreement form, which shows the required fees, is attached to these policies. The Memorial and Columbarium Team may change these fees anytime in the future upon approval by the Session. This will not affect previously purchased niches. Any niche not previously reserved may be selected by the person making the reservation. The exact location of a prepaid, reserved niche will be recorded in a form such as: "Unit 1, Niche 5." A chart showing this reservation of space will be provided upon full payment of fees.

IV. Access and Removal

A container of cremains may be accessed or removed after a written request by a party with legal authority to make such a request, upon such party's execution of a release agreement, approved by the Memorial and Columbarium Team, in which the party represents and warrants they have legal authority to access and remove the cremains, and releases Grace Presbyterian Church, its minister(s), officers and elders, and the Memorial and Columbarium Team from any and all liability relating to the opening, accessing, or removing of the cremains. If not in concert with time of inurnment, any expense shall be borne by those requesting such action. All such openings and removals shall be witnessed by two Grace Presbyterian Church elders or Memorial and Columbarium Team members and fully documented, only after the Memorial and Columbarium Team provides written notice to any known survivors.

V. Cancellation

In the event that no inurnment has occurred within five years after the death of the person(s) for whom a Columbarium Niche Reservation and Agreement form has been issued, a certified letter and/or other reasonable efforts will be made to contact known family members, including publication of a legal notice. If after 90 days there is no response, the Session may terminate the reservation upon recommendation of the Memorial and Columbarium Team.

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VI. Management

The church will receive all payments and disburse all expenditures in a separate account to be known as "The Columbarium Fund" apart from and entirely separate from "The Memorial Fund," and both entirely separate from the general church budget. Appropriate annual audits and reviews are performed on both funds in accordance with the church's regular accounting procedures.

The church maintains a basic record of each inurnment in the Columbarium. The name(s) of the deceased in each niche, the deceased's dates of birth and death, and the deceased's next of kin or legal representative are included therein. Families may choose to add additional biographical information in the Columbarium Memorial Book to supplement the basic information. An additional copy of these records is maintained off the church grounds in case of unforeseen circumstances. The church also maintains a list of the persons who have reserved niches or have made arrangements for placement of cremated remains, together with the names of the next of kin or legal representatives of such persons.

VII. Addresses

It is the responsibility of the holder of the reservation to keep the church advised at all times of the current mailing addresses of themselves, the person for whom the niche is reserved, and the next of kin of the designee or legal representative. The holder of the reservation is normally the individual that the church would contact for any reason.

VIII. Inurnment

Services for the inurnment of cremated remains are designed by the Minister(s) in consultation with the family of the deceased. Only ordained ministers of Grace Presbyterian Church or an ordained minister approved by the Pastor of Grace Presbyterian Church is authorized to officiate at memorial services. Payment for the services of the Minister and transportation of the cremains to the church is not provided as part of this agreement. The church will provide both a liturgically appropriate container and a pall for use at the service. The family may also elect not to have a service at the time of inurnment.

The containers for the cremated remains of the persons to be inurned in the Columbarium are not provided by the church. Individuals may provide their own urns that meet niche space requirements (12" x 12" x 12") or may use containers provided by their funeral home. Each niche may hold one or two urns with cremains.

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IX. Cost of Cremation not covered

The cost of cremation is not covered by any fee paid to the church pursuant to these operating policies. The church does not offer cremation services. No expenses other than those prescribed herein are covered by the prescribed fees.

X. Niche Covers

Engraving of niche covers is of uniform size and style as prescribed by the church. The church provides for such engraving as a part of the fee prescribed in the Columbarium Niche Reservation and Agreement form. Each niche cover is inscribed only with the name(s) and dates of birth and death of the deceased. Niches containing the remains of two persons are inscribed with information for both persons. No other inscriptions are permitted. All reasonable care will be exercised to ensure that the Church has correctly notated the niche cover information for the person to be inurned. A Niche Cover Engraving Approval form is required for each deceased person who will be inurned within the purchased niche space. The Purchaser will be responsible for the cost of a replacement niche cover due to an error made in information furnished to the Church by the Purchaser, and signed as approved.

No flowers, flags, decorations, or other memorabilia are permitted inside the Columbarium and Prayer Garden, except for a single flower arrangement, if desired, to be placed near the niche on the day of the service. The church also marks November 1, All Saints Day, as a decoration day for floral arrangements to be placed in the Prayer Garden. Such arrangements should be removed from the Prayer Garden no later than November 8.

XI. Change in Property Ownership

It is the intention of the Church that these facilities will not be relocated to any other alternate site at any time. However, the Church reserves the right to move the Columbarium, including niches already in use, to another location within the church grounds, or in the case of future relocation of the church, to that new site. All care will be exercised if such relocation does occur and family members of those inurned, as well as subscribers for unoccupied niches, will be given advanced notification.

XII. Release

All holders of Columbarium Niche Reservations and Agreements, on behalf of themselves, their heirs, beneficiaries, successors and assignees, release the Church from any and all liabilities arising as a result of unauthorized removal of cremains or vandalism of niches and/or their contents. The inclusion of valuables of any kind in the niches is prohibited so as not to invite such vandalism.

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XIII. Property

No real-property right is created or conveyed by the approval of an application or the acceptance of fees. Approval relates only to the use of a niche as provided for herein.

XIV. Memorial and Columbarium Team

Grace Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) does at all times have full control of the Columbarium and Prayer Garden. Such control is exercised through a Memorial and Columbarium Team. The initial Columbarium Task Force, which was formed to study and make recommendations to the church, will serve with the Memorial and Columbarium Team members for the first three years after completion. This is to provide for a suitable transition from creation into the years of operation and management.

At the end of the first three years, the Session in consultation with the Pastor, will appoint five members to serve on the Memorial and Columbarium Team. The Memorial and Columbarium Team includes two elders (at least one on current Session) and three at-large members.

Each member serves a staggered two-year term for a maximum of three terms, with terms to be drawn for the first group of appointees. The Pastor and the Team Leader of the Property Team serve as ex-officio members with voice but without vote.

The Team Leader of the Memorial and Columbarium Team is elected by the members of the Memorial and Columbarium Team for a one-year term. The Memorial and Columbarium Team functions, as do all Teams, under the general supervision of the Session and reports to it annually or more often if deemed necessary.

The Memorial and Columbarium Team has the authority to make all decisions about plantings or furnishings in the Prayer Garden. The Memorial and Columbarium Team approves any and all changes or additions to the Prayer Garden area. All requests are submitted to the Team in writing and considered by the Team. They recommend any and all amendments, changes or modifications to these operating rules which govern all activities and services relating to the Columbarium and Prayer Garden, for approval by the Session.

The Memorial and Columbarium Team has responsibility for maintaining both the Columbarium and Memorial Funds (two separate funds) and both the Columbarium and Memorial records (two separate books/records). The Columbarium and Prayer Garden is a self-sustaining ministry of the church with funds generated by fees and gifts used to provide for the maintenance of the Columbarium and Prayer Garden. Other memorial gifts given to the church from time to time may be used for other designated

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purposes. The Memorial and Columbarium Team is charged with responsibility to maintain appropriate records related to the Columbarium, Prayer Garden, and memorials.

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