

# St. James' Episcopal Church

## Columbarium FAQs

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### 1) **What is a columbarium?**

“Columbarium” is a term derived from the Latin word *columba*, meaning dove. The dove is a symbol of God’s spirit and peace. A columbarium is a structure, often a vault or wall, with niches for urns containing the cremated remains of the dead.

### 2) **Why should I choose the Columbarium at St. James’ for me or my family?**

Historically, Christians have laid the dead to rest in churches, where they are remembered and their remains safeguarded. Burial within the church itself, or in an adjacent churchyard, was once a common practice. The Columbarium at St. James’ offers a final resting place for parishioners and their loved ones, and a tranquil place to reflect and honor the memory of the deceased. This is a unique ministry in Leesburg, where there are very few cemeteries, and few columbaria located in outdoor settings.

### 3) **Where will the Columbarium of St. James’ be built?**

The Columbarium will be built on the old Church property on Church Street in historic downtown Leesburg. Each of the niches will hold one or two urns. A total of 96 niches will be installed in each columbarium wall, and two additional walls are planned for future expansion, for a total of 288 niches.

### 4) **To whom is the opportunity to purchase niches being given?**

Parishioners who are current or former regular attendees of St. James’ and St. Gabriel’s, the daughter church of St. James’, and contributors of record and members of their families at both parishes are being given the first opportunity to purchase niches. Subsequently, the opportunity to purchase a

niche will be extended to the general public, pending approval of the Rector and the Columbarium Committee.

**5) Who may be inurned at the St. James' Columbarium?**

Parish members of St. James' and St. Gabriel's, members of the immediate family of parish members, and, with the approval of the Rector and the Columbarium Committee, former parish members and friends of the parish may be inurned at the St. James' Columbarium. Once a niche is purchased for the inurnment of a particular individual's cremains, that niche must be used for that purpose. Niches are not transferable.

**6) How much does a niche cost?**

A single inurnment costs \$1,250, and a double inurnment costs \$1,750. A payment plan for three equal payments over 90 days is available.

**7) How were these prices set?**

The prices were established based after a careful and thoughtful analysis of a number of factors, including local market conditions.

**8) Is some portion of the purchase price of a niche tax deductible?**

St. James' recommends that you consult with your tax advisor on this point and offers no tax advice.

**9) Will there be extra costs at inurnment?**

Yes. At the time of each inurnment, prior to the opening of the niche, the purchaser agrees to buy a polished sheet bronze urn, an urn identification plate and an engraved memorialized facing stone. To ensure consistency of size, materials and quality, these materials are provided by a third party. The cost of this is \$159 per inurnment. However, the Church reserves the right to increase this price, should the third-party increase its prices in the future. There will be a separate opening fee of \$250 at the time of each niche opening.

**10) Is some portion of the purchase price counted toward my annual giving to St. James'?**

No. No reference will appear on your St. James' quarterly statement of giving.

**11) What if I buy a niche, and then eventually decide to make arrangements for inurnment someplace else? May I get a refund, or resell my niche?**

If, because of changes in personal circumstances, you no longer wish to inurn the ashes of an individual in the St. James' Columbarium, and you have purchased a niche, you may request--and receive--a refund from St. James'.

**12) Is St. James' pledging to tend the Columbarium in perpetuity?**

No, but as long as St. James' exists, it will exercise its best efforts to care for the Columbarium, the ashes inurned, the urns, and the memorial markers.

**13) How will the Columbarium be administered?**

The Columbarium Committee at St. James', a committee of parishioners and clergy, will administer the Columbarium.

**14) What records will be maintained?**

Each location reserved for an inurnment, and the date and location within the Columbarium of each actual inurnment, will be recorded on a master grid chart of the Columbarium maintained in the Church Office. The Church Office also will keep a record of the personal information of each person inurned, and information on memorial and other gifts designated specifically for the Columbarium.

**15) When will construction on the Columbarium begin?**

Groundbreaking is expected on or around Sunday, November 2, 2010, the Commemoration of All Faithful Departed, commonly known as All Souls Day. However, that will depend on the rate at which niches are purchased.

**16) May I specify a desired niche location?**

Yes. Niches are selected and assigned on a first-come, first-serve basis. Upon first payment towards the niche purchase, the purchaser may specify by number a desired niche or niches. Upon complete payment of each niche purchase, the purchaser will receive a signed certificate for permanent use of the specified niche.

**17) What personal identification appears on the identification plaque?**

The name, and the birth and death years, of each person inurned will be inscribed on the identification plaques. For uniformity, the Columbarium Committee has specified the style and size of these inscriptions, and has designated the firm authorized to create them. All arrangements of inscriptions are made through the Church Office, with the cost to be paid by the family or estate of the deceased (see question 9). No other form of inscription, marker, or monument, or any floral decoration will be allowed.

**18) What if a family wishes that the remains or partial remains of more than two people be placed in a single niche?**

Each niche is large enough to accommodate two standard-sized urns. It is the policy of the Columbarium Committee not to add or mix any urns beyond this, but the Committee will evaluate this on a case-by-case basis.

**19) I'm single, and I've purchased a niche for a single inurnment. If my personal circumstances change, what do I need to do to make my niche accommodate an additional urn such that what was originally a single inurnment is now a double inurnment? Do I pay the difference between \$1,250 and \$1,750 (that is, \$500)? Or, what if I had originally purchased a niche for a double inurnment and my personal circumstances have changed. I now wish to provide for the inurnment of one urn instead of two. Do I receive a refund?**

The Columbarium Committee is sensitive to the fact that personal needs and circumstances of parishioners can and do change. For example, if you had originally purchased a niche for one inurnment, and now need the niche to accommodate two inurnments, you would simply pay the difference between the price of a single inurnment (\$1,250) and a double inurnment (\$1,750)—or \$500.

On the other hand, if you had originally purchased a niche for a double inurnment (\$1,750), and, due to personal circumstances, you found yourself requiring a niche for a single inurnment (\$1,250), you would receive a refund of \$500.

**20) There are a limited number of niches. How will St. James' accommodate those of future generations who wish to be inurned here?**

In the experience of other parishes with columbaria, this problem seems to be more theoretical than real. Over the years, many parishioners will decide to be buried/interred or inurned in family plots elsewhere. In the event that demand is higher than expected, St. James' has room to construct up to two additional walls each containing 96 niches in the area of the current columbarium, and can also expand capacity in other parts of the property.

**21) Why doesn't the church convey an estate or tenancy in real estate with a niche?**

If St. James' conveyed an estate or tenancy in real estate, this would mean that title to our land would be encumbered with up to 96 or more estates or tenancies. If we ever wished to use the church as collateral for a mortgage, for example, this would involve gathering the signature of all the niche holders or their heirs on a subordination agreement or other legal document.

**22) Will visitors have access to the Columbarium outside of regular Church hours (e.g., Saturdays or evenings)?**

Yes. The gates to the Church Street cemetery where the Columbarium will be built are not locked. Visitors are invited to enter, walk around, find a quiet place to sit down and pray whenever they wish.

**23) Will visitors be allowed to leave flowers or other forms of memorial at the Columbarium?**

No. Family and friends who wish to honor their loved one with flowers are encouraged to contact St. James' to offer floral arrangements that are placed on the altar in the church.

**24) What is the process to purchase a niche?**

If you already have a Columbarium brochure, fill out the Application of Intent and return it to the Church Office with your \$100 commitment payment. If you do not have a brochure, they are available in the Church Office and on the St. James' website. Or, should you wish, we would be happy to mail one to you.

Once the Church Office receives the Application of Intent with your commitment payment, you will be mailed the Niche Agreement and Columbarium Rules and Regulations. After carefully reading these materials, please complete the Niche Agreement (excluding the niche location) and contact the Church Office to make an appointment to meet with Kay Gregg, Parish Registrar. Kay will help make sure that the forms are filled out correctly, process your payment, and help you choose a niche location.

**25) How may I obtain more information?**

If you have other questions, or would like additional information on the Columbarium at St. James', please contact the Church Office at 703-777-1124. In the near future, the St. James' website will have a link to the Inurnment Permit, Niche Agreement, Rules and Regulations, and FAQs.