



A Special Place of Remembrance

Our Christian faith teaches that the beginning and ending of physical and spiritual life rests with God. This year, Portland United Methodist Church is offering a new opportunity to honor life's passing – a Memorial Prayer Garden and Columbarium that will serve as a final resting place for the cremated remains of our loved ones.

What is a Columbarium?

The word Columbarium comes from the Latin word “columbary” which is a structure for the nesting of doves- the dove being the symbol of God’s spirit and peace. A Columbarium is a structure made up of many recessed niches (sealed compartments) that hold cremated remains which are housed in urns.

Is it okay for Christians to be cremated?

Yes, we believe that both burial and cremation are dignified ways to exhibit proper respect for the dead.

While burial was common practice for early Christians, the Bible nowhere commands burial as the only method of disposing of a body.

We believe cremation will not interfere with God’s ability to resurrect the body. Bodies that have already turned to dust are in the same state as cremated bodies.

“Cremation is a process used to reduce the body to ashes and small bone fragments. Intense heat, converts the body to its basic components, idealized as “ashes to ashes, dust to dust.”

Cremation is essentially a hastening of the natural process that occurs following death. This ancient practice which began in 3000 B.C. and became the dominant method of final disposition in 800 B.C. has particular relevance today with land surrounding churches less readily available for in ground burial. The number of people choosing cremation has steadily increased since being brought to the U.S. in 1874 and stands at a percentage of almost 30% of all deaths in the United States. Cremation and placement of the ashes on church grounds makes it possible to continue the tradition of granting a place for God’s children to “dwell in the house of the Lord forever.”

Additional information about the history of cremation and some scriptural references are available in the church office.

Who may use the Columbarium?

Our church will reserve a certain percentage of niches for its members and their family members as well as offering the use of additional niches to our surrounding community. We have a master plan that will allow us to either keep the Columbarium modest or to expand it to accommodate a larger demand.

Why would we have a Columbarium at our church?

A Columbarium ministry revives the age-old tradition of the church to serve its members from baptism to death. For hundreds of years, Christians have brought their loved ones to the church to be buried at death either in the church building or in an adjoining churchyard cemetery. Such action gives testimony to our faith in a God who created us and loves us and to whom each of us returns at death.

With a Columbarium at the church, family can visit their departed loved one and reflect before or after service. Also, there is great comfort in knowing that your loved one is there with you. There is also a practical side. It is economical, theologically sound and environmentally friendly. It also offers a convenient way to handle pre-need concerns, relieving the surviving family of difficult decisions. The availability of this service also provides a spiritual outreach to members of our community who may not be connected to any church.

Who takes care of the niches and the property around them?

An endowment will be set up to take care of the niches and the maintenance of the grounds around them.

How do I purchase a niche?

There are forms in the church office along with a price list for purchasing the use of a niche. Niches are reserved on a first come, first served basis.

Portland First United Methodist Church

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