



ST. GEORGE'S
EPISCOPAL CHURCH

FAQ: The Toombs Memorial Columbarium & Charles and Dottie Nelson Memorial Plaques at St. George's Episcopal Church New Orleans, LA

What is a columbarium? “Columbarium” is a term derived from the Latin word *Columba*, or dove, a symbol of God's spirit and peace. It is a structure, often a vault or wall, with niches for urns containing the cremated remains of the dead.

Why should I choose the Columbarium at St. George's Episcopal Church for myself 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 the adjacent churchyard was once a common practice. The Columbarium at St. George's Episcopal Church offers a final resting place for parishioners and their loved ones, and a tranquil place to reflect and honor the memory of the deceased.

Where is the Columbarium at St. George's Episcopal Church? The Columbarium is located in the *Toombs Memorial Garden* at St. George's Episcopal Church and is on the west side of the church. There are a total of 52 niches.

Where are the Charles and Dottie memorial Plaques and why would I buy a plaque versus reserve a niche? The memorial plaques are located on the wall opposite the columbarium inside the memorial Garden. The memorial plaque wall was given to the church by parishioners Charles and Dottie Nelson, who wanted to memorialize a family member who died in WWII and whose body was lost at sea. The memorial plaques have been designed so that parishioners can visit the garden and pay their respects to those they loved but who are buried elsewhere.

Who is eligible for burial or memorial plaques? The columbarium and memorial plaques are restricted to the cremated remains of members, rectors, former members, and former rectors of St. George's Episcopal Church and their parents, spouses, children or relatives. The Rector (or in the absence of a rector the Priest-in-charge or Vestry) may grant eligibility to others who are meaningfully connected to St. George's Episcopal Church. No more niches may be reserved for a family than those necessary for the remains of all eligible persons in that family.

May I specify a desired niche/plaque location? Yes. Niches and plaque locations are selected and assigned on a first-come, first-served basis. Upon payment, the subscriber may specify by number a desired plaque location, niche or niches. The subscriber will receive a signed certificate for permanent use of the specified niche. Diagrams of the columbarium & memorial plaques are available in the church office.

Could the remains or partial remains of more than one person be placed in a single niche if that were the family's wish? No. Each niche is designated for the remains of one person.

How much does a niche subscription/memorial plaque cost? The one-time fee to reserve a niche in the Columbarium is \$1,200.00. The fee includes the internment in the reserved niche and ongoing care for the Columbarium. The fee does not include the cost of cremation, the urn or inscription on the granite niche cover (the *current* cost of inscription is \$5 per character). The average name & date inscription is thirty characters totaling \$150.00. The niche subscription may be payable in total or in three (3) payments of \$400.00 to St. George's Episcopal Church. Memorial Plaques can be purchased for a one-time fee of \$600.00 each. This does not include the cost of inscription (\$5 per character), paid by the purchaser to the monument company inscribing the plaque. Future changes in niche subscription/memorial plaque costs may be made by the Vestry of St. George's Episcopal Church.

Can I customize the inscription on my or a family member's columbarium niche cover? No. Due to both practical and aesthetic considerations inscriptions are limited to names and dates only.

Can I customize a memorial plaque? Yes. However, each plaque is 12" x 12" and for aesthetic reasons the size and font are typical. Each plaque can utilize approximately 100 characters (not including spaces).

Can I purchase a niche and a customized memorial plaque for the same person? Of course!

Is some portion of the subscription cost counted toward my annual contribution to St. George's Church? No. No reference will appear on your St. George's Episcopal Church quarterly statement of contributions.

Does the church earn a profit from my purchase of a niche or memorial plaque? Technically, yes, but all income from the purchase of niches and memorial plaques are placed in a permanently restricted perpetual care fund specifically for the maintenance of the memorial garden.

Is some portion of the subscription cost of a niche tax deductible? St. George's Episcopal Church recommends that you consult with your tax advisor on this point and offers no tax advice.

What if I buy a niche then eventually decide to make arrangements for burial someplace else? May I get a refund, or resell my niche subscription? No. St. George's Episcopal Church will not issue refunds. However, if you discover that you don't need the niche after you've purchased a subscription, you must offer it first to St. George's at your original purchase price. Then you may offer it to other eligible parishioners.

Will visitors have access to the Columbarium outside of regular church hours? (e.g. Saturdays or evenings?) No. For security reasons, the courtyard containing the Columbarium does not remain open after church hours. However, the church is open to visitors during church services on Sunday and during church office hours. In the event of special circumstances, visitation arrangements at times other than during church hours can be made by contacting the church office.

Will visitors be allowed to leave flowers or other forms of memorial at the Columbarium? Yes. Our columbarium has been designed with an open niche for items such as these. However, any items left in the columbarium may be removed and disposed of by the church without notice or liability.

Is St. George's Episcopal Church pledging to tend the Columbarium in perpetuity? No, but as long as St. George's exists, it will use its best efforts to protect the columbarium, the ashes interred, the urns, and the memorial markers from damage or destruction

There are a limited number of niches. How will St. George's Episcopal Church accommodate future generations who wish to be inurned here? This problem is more theoretical than real. However, there is room in the Toombs Memorial Garden to expand the number of niches available for future generations.

Why doesn't the church convey an estate or tenancy in real estate with a niche? If St. George's Episcopal Church conveyed an estate or tenancy in real estate, this would mean that title to our land would be encumbered with up to 52 estates or tenancies. If we ever wished to use the church as collateral for a mortgage, for example, this would involve gathering the signatures of all the niche holders or their heirs on a subordination agreement or other document.

St. George's Episcopal Church owns the Columbarium and all niches. Niche reservation owners acquire no property rights in the Columbarium, any of its niches, or any of St. George's Episcopal Church's property. The reservation confers only the right to inter the cremated remains of the designated person in the identified niche pursuant to St. George's Episcopal Church's applicable policies and procedures, as amended by the church from time to time.

How is the Columbarium administered? The Rector and Vestry at St. George's Episcopal Church administer the Columbarium.

How may I obtain more information? If you have other questions, or would like additional information on the Columbarium at St. George's Episcopal Church, please contact the church office at (504) 899-2811.