

## Frequently Asked Questions

### 1. What is a Niche? What happened to Chambers?

With the change of the Columbarium planned location and design, a change of terminology provides a fresh start. A Niche is the industry standard term for what previously we called Chambers. It is a recessed compartment in a Wall Panel in which containers (urns) of cremated human remains are placed. The Columbarium design now includes Walls instead of Vaults, and each Wall contains two Panels of Niches.

### 2. What are the benefits of a Columbarium to Coker and to you?

It fulfills the Church's mission to oversee the spiritual life of our congregation and the community from birth and baptism through life to death. The Columbarium setting is a modern version of historical church cemeteries. It is also a serene spot for reflection, meditation, and prayer, allowing for visitation by family and loved ones. Practically speaking, cemetery plots have become increasingly remote and difficult to reach. Economically, the comparison of the costs of a traditional cemetery burial and a columbarium inurnment reveals the substantial financial advantage of a columbarium. Also, a significant portion of the price to purchase a Niche or Memorial Plaque at Coker is a tax-deductible donation.

### 3. Where is the Columbarium located?

North of the Gibbs Building, nestled just inside the consecrated grounds of the Prayer Garden. It is visible from Wurzbach Parkway, adjacent to the Gibbs Building entrance, and integral to Coker's new front door.

### 4. What are the details of the Columbarium design? How many Niches are there?

The Columbarium is a freestanding, open-air structure with fourteen curved limestone walls and brick dividers highlighted with stained glass inserts, shaded by trellises, and surrounding a landscaped central Prayer Garden and water feature. Initially, four Niche Walls providing 320 Niches for one or two urns, two Memorial Plaque Walls providing 160 Memorial Plaques for honoring either one or two loved ones, and one History Wall, highlighting Coker Church History and honoring Senior Pastors who have served Coker United Methodist Church, complete the current phase. The design includes plans for expansion as needed, with full finish-out providing a total of 800 Niches and 240 Memorial Plaques.

### 5. Who can use the Coker Columbarium or be memorialized with a plaque on the Memorial Wall?

The Coker Columbarium is open to all people.

### 6. Will there be a place to sit and reflect or pray?

Yes, benches are included in the Columbarium design, to be used for services, reflection, meditation, and prayer.

### 7. What is included in the price for a Niche? For a Memorial Plaque?

Niche price includes: Use of Niche space for one or two urns in perpetuity; polished, lacquered bronze box urn(s); all hardware for the Niche; engraved granite faceplate; opening and closing of the Niche at time of inurnment(s); permanent document record maintenance by Coker United Methodist Church; perpetual care and Columbarium maintenance.

Memorial Wall Plaque price includes: Engraved granite plaque and hardware in designated space on a Memorial Wall.

**8. How do I purchase a Niche? What are the payment options? Is there a pre-planning purchase option?**

Payment is accepted by cash, check or credit card. Checks should be made to: Coker United Methodist Church, with “Columbarium” in the memo line. Purchase of a Niche now, as an advance planning option, relieves your loved ones of those arrangements later.

**9. Are there any extra costs at inurnment?**

No, the costs of opening and closing at the time of inurnment(s) are covered in the cost of a Niche.

**10. Is any of this purchase price tax deductible?**

Yes, a significant portion of the purchase price is a donation to Coker UMC for building the Columbarium. Please refer to the current fee schedule for the tax-deductible amount.

**11. Is my Columbarium Purchase counted as part of my annual pledge to Coker?**

No, it is separate and apart from your annual pledge to Coker United Methodist Church.

**12. Are there any property rights with the purchase of a Niche?**

The purchase of use of a Niche space or placement of remains in a Niche does not confer any property rights in the purchaser.

**13. May I select the exact Niche location that I would like?**

Yes, selection of your Niche location, from currently available Niches, is part of the Niche purchase and payment process, when purchasing an exclusive-use Niche. Location of non-exclusive-use Niches will be assigned upon purchase.

**14. How do I obtain my Columbarium Urn to take to the funeral home/crematorium?**

Contact Gail Hatcher, Director of Care and Senior Adults, at Coker United Methodist Church, 210-494-3455, ext. 236.

**15. Will a church representative pick up my Urn from the funeral home/crematorium and hold it at the Church until the memorial service?**

No, you (or your family) are responsible for bringing the urn to the memorial service on the day of the service.

**16. Is it necessary to have a memorial service at Coker to be inurned in the Columbarium?**

No, but you must coordinate the inurnment with the Coker Pastoral Staff.

**17. What is the United Methodist Church stance on cremation?**

The United Methodist Church accepts cremation as a viable option when it is the choice of the deceased or family. Cremation is in accordance with the Church’s beliefs and doctrines.

**18. What other churches in San Antonio have a columbarium?**

Many churches in San Antonio have a columbarium. A few examples include: Laurel Heights Methodist Church, Alamo Heights Methodist Church, Woodland Baptist Church, St. John's Lutheran, Christ Episcopal, St. Mark's Episcopal, and St. George Episcopal.

**19. Who handles the cremation? What is the cost?**

San Antonio has numerous crematoriums and funeral homes providing cremation. Costs vary by the total services you obtain from these facilities. You may work with a funeral home or directly with a crematorium, if desired.

**20. Is the Columbarium part of the Coker Master Plan?**

Yes, the Columbarium is Part A of Operation Open Door Phase III of the Coker Master Plan.

**21. May I donate to the Columbarium with or without making a purchase?**

Yes, donations to the Columbarium are welcomed. Donations are accepted by cash, check or credit card. Checks should be made to: Coker United Methodist Church, with "Columbarium Fund" in the memo line.

**22. What is the construction timeline for the Columbarium? When will it open and be available?**

Groundbreaking is planned for November 2021, with completion planned for April 2022. If you have a need before completion, in the Coker Chapel are temporary, secure, locked Columbarium Cabinets which are available now. These Columbarium Cabinets serve as a bridge for your or your loved one's urn until Columbarium construction is complete. The polished, lacquered bronze boxes, called Urns and included with the purchase of a Niche, are available for use now in the Columbarium Cabinets. Granite Memorial Plaques, to be displayed in the temporary location, are also available now. Both Urns and Memorial Plaques in the temporary location will be relocated to the permanent Coker Columbarium as soon as it is available.

**23. What are the guidelines for purchasing a Niche?**

The Coker Columbarium is open to all people. Please see the Policies and Procedures and the Application and Purchase Agreement Regarding Inurnment Rights on [www.cokercolumbarium.org](http://www.cokercolumbarium.org) for full details.

**24. Who is responsible for engraving the faceplate of the Niches or the Memorial Plaques?**

The Church handles the engraving of the granite faceplates for the Columbarium Niches and the granite Memorial Plaques.

**25. What can be engraved on the Granite Faceplate for the Niches or Memorial Plaques?**

Engraved information on the granite faceplate of each Niche and each Memorial Plaque includes only the name of the decedent(s), date of birth, and date of death. Titles, awards, degrees, or other information are not to be included in the inscription.

**26. What are the visitation hours for the Coker Columbarium? How do I make arrangements to visit?**

The Interim Columbarium in the Coker Chapel is open during normal church administrative and worship hours. Outside of worship hours, you must register at the Church Office for access. Upon completion, the Columbarium will be open

when the church buildings are open. All persons entering the area of the Columbarium are expected to conduct themselves in accordance with customary respectful decorum as normally observed in a church.

**27. Can I get a refund if my plans change, or I change my mind at a later date?**

Upon request and surrender of the Purchase Agreement of an unused Niche, a purchaser shall have the right to a refund from the Church of the non-tax-deductible portion of the fee paid for such Purchase Agreement, with no interest thereon, less an administrative fee as defined in the Schedule of Fees. Similarly, refund of the non-tax-deductible portion of the fee paid for Memorial Plaques that have not been inscribed, less an administrative fee, is available upon request and surrender of the Purchase Agreement.

**28. May I purchase both a Niche for Inurnment and a Memorial Plaque?**

Yes, both are available for you to purchase.

**29. Who administers the Coker Columbarium? Who maintains the Columbarium facility and grounds? Who maintains the records associated with the Columbarium?**

The Church provide reasonable care and maintenance of the Columbarium and administers and permanently maintains all Columbarium records.

**30. Can small memorial services be held in the Columbarium Prayer Garden?**

Yes, please contact the Coker Pastoral Staff to discuss and arrange for memorial or inurnment services in the Columbarium.

**31. Can flowers be placed in the Columbarium with a memorial service?**

Yes, flowers can be used during a memorial or inurnment service in the Columbarium. They will be removed promptly by the Church at the close of the service.

**32. Can my pet be inurned with me in a Niche at Coker Columbarium?**

No, the Coker Columbarium is only for inurnment of human remains.

**33. Can ashes be inurned at the Columbarium if they were previously housed somewhere else?**

Yes, upon purchase of a Niche.

**34. I am single, and I've purchased a Niche for a single inurnment. If my personal circumstances change, what can I do to allow my niche to accommodate an additional urn?**

Upgrade to a full Niche by purchasing the additional one-half of your Niche, provided the other half of your Niche is available. If the other half is not available, apply for a refund of the non-tax-deductible portion of the fee paid for this non-exclusive Niche, surrender the Purchase Agreement for that Niche, and purchase an exclusive Niche to accommodate two urns. Administrative fees may apply.

**35. We originally purchased a Niche to hold 2 urns, and my personal circumstances have changed. I now wish to provide for inurnment of only one urn, rather than two. How is this accommodated?**

An exclusive-use Niche may be used for one instead of two urns if you choose. If you wish to purchase a non-exclusive-use Niche for only one urn, apply for a refund of the non-tax-deductible fees paid for an exclusive-use Niche, surrender the Purchase Agreement, and purchase a non-exclusive-use Niche. Administrative fees may apply.

**36. Is it possible to bury one's ashes or scatter one's ashes in the Columbarium?**

There is currently no area available for burial of or scattering of cremains in the Coker Columbarium design.

**37. What is the Family Record Form?**

The Family Record Form is for your personal use. It may be shared with the Pastoral Staff when planning a memorial service or funeral. It may be useful to your descendants in knowing your family history.