



Frequently Asked Questions

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

The Coker Columbarium 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 access. Economically, the comparison of the costs of a traditional cemetery burial and a columbarium inurnment highlights the substantial financial advantage of a columbarium. Also, a significant portion of the price to purchase a Niche or Memorial Plaque at Coker is eligible for tax deduction as a donation.

2. Where is the Columbarium located?

The Coker Columbarium is on the Coker campus, easily accessed from anywhere in north San Antonio via the Wurzbach Parkway. On the campus, the Columbarium is adjacent to the Administrative and Pastoral offices housed in the Gibbs Building.

3. What is a Niche?

A Niche is a recessed compartment in which containers (urns) of cremated human remains are placed.

4. What are the details of Coker's Columbarium? 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 fountain. 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. Is there a place to sit and reflect or pray?

Yes, there are benches in the Columbarium for reflection, meditation, prayer, and services. The fountain's gentle sound of falling water enhances visits to the Columbarium.

6. What are the visitation hours for the Coker Columbarium?

The Columbarium is open Sunday through Friday, 9am – 5pm, and Saturday, 9am – 1:30pm. 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 setting.

7. What are the guidelines for purchasing a Niche?

As of 12-15-2022



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 for full details.

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

Purchase instructions can be found on www.cokercolumbarium.org under More Information. Payment is accepted by cash, check or credit card. Checks should be made to: Coker United Methodist Church, with “Columbarium” in the memo line and included with your application. Purchase of a Niche now, as an advance planning option, relieves your loved ones of those arrangements later.

9. What is included in the price for a Niche?

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.

10. What is a Memorial Plaque?

A Memorial Plaque is an engraved granite plaque (identical to a Niche faceplate) which is included on one of the Memorial Walls in the Coker Columbarium. If you have plans to be buried, scattered, or inurned elsewhere but want to be remembered at Coker, a Memorial Plaque is an excellent option. A Memorial Plaque is also ideal for honoring someone else who is inurned, scattered, or buried elsewhere.

11. What is included in the price for a Memorial Plaque?

Memorial Wall Plaque price includes: Engraved granite plaque and hardware in designated space on a Memorial Wall; permanent document record maintenance by Coker United Methodist Church; perpetual care and Columbarium maintenance.

12. How do I purchase a Memorial Plaque? What are the payment options?

Purchase instructions can be found on www.cokercolumbarium.org under More Information. Payment is accepted by cash, check or credit card. Checks should be made to: Coker United Methodist Church, with “Columbarium” in the memo line and included with your application.

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

Yes, both are available for you to purchase.

14. Is any of the purchase price for a Niche or Memorial Plaque tax deductible?

Yes, a significant portion of the purchase price is a donation to Coker UMC. Please refer to the current fee schedule for the amount eligible for tax deduction.

15. 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.

16. 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.

17. 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.

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

No. However, for inurnment you must coordinate with the Coker Pastoral Staff by contacting Gail Hatcher, Director of Care and Adult Services (210-494-3455, ext. 236).

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

Yes. Contact Gail Hatcher, Coker's Director of Care and Adult Services (210-494-3455, ext. 236, to discuss and arrange for memorial or inurnment services in the Columbarium.

20. What is the United Methodist Church's 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.

21. 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.

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

Contact Gail Hatcher, Coker's Director of Care and Adult Services (210-494-3455, ext. 236).

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

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

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. Will my Niche Faceplate or Memorial Plaque be engraved when it is purchased?

Faceplates and Plaques will be engraved following the death of each individual inurned or memorialized.

27. 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, but they are to be removed at the close of the service.

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

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

29. 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.

30. 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.

31. 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.

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



Yes, upon purchase of a Niche.

33. 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 within the Coker Columbarium.

34. Who administers the Coker Columbarium? Who maintains the records associated with the Columbarium?

Coker's Director of Care and Adult Services, Gail Hatcher, is the point of contact for the Columbarium (210-494-3455, ext. 236). The Church permanently maintains all Columbarium records.

35. Who maintains the Columbarium facility and grounds?

The Coker Trustees are responsible for perpetual care and maintenance of the Columbarium.

36. How durable are the niches?

Our niches are made of engineered, injection-molded ABS plastic resin that is 20% glass-filled, the most stable available. The niche material is non-corrosive and cannot rust. Since the niches are injected-molded and therefore seamless, element encroachment is eliminated. Additionally, the niche material is non-porous and thus repels water, eliminating absorption into the niche cavity and ensuring that the niche material will never have mold issues.

37. Which other United Methodist Churches in San Antonio have a columbarium?

Laurel Heights, Alamo Heights, University, and Windcrest United Methodist Churches have a columbarium.

38. 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.

39. 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.