

Memorial Garden / Columbarium Sub-Committee Report to Session

Background: On August 14, 2006, the Session approved appointment of Dennis Dicus, Becky Davis, Charlene Diggs and Mike Walsh, Chair, (with Co-Pastor Field Russell) to a new Memorial Garden subcommittee of Campus Improvements Committee and charged them with preparing recommendations regarding placement, design, and budget of a combination Memorial Garden with Columbarium in an appropriate location on the Yorkminster campus.

Since then the group has met several times, conducted independent research in the local area and over the internet, and heard from subject matter experts regarding establishing a prayer garden with a possible expansion by initiating a columbarium ministry.

Columbarium Defined: A columbarium is a consecrated space providing a place on the property of the church for the preservation of the ashes or cremated remains for those associated with the church who wish to have a permanent alternative to the traditional cemetery or mausoleum after death.

Memorial Prayer Garden: Yorkminster established a memorial fund for the purpose of constructing a Prayer Garden in which the family and friends may have a quiet area on the church grounds devoted to prayer, reflection and to seek solace of our Lord.

Summary Results:

In order to achieve a quiet place for reflection, and yet have easy access by the elder congregates, several locations were considered about the property, both on the new property and the legacy campus. The sub-committee enlisted the help of the Landscape architect firm of Hertzler & George since they have the recent design experience of the landscape plans for the Fellowship Center and Joe Hertzler offered to review the existing campus site plans and make initial inquiries on our behalf with the County. Also several Columbarium providers were contacted and information reviewed by each member. Two companies in particular came to the church in the Fall; Homecoming Inc. and Columbarium Planners Inc., to discuss our visions and we heard presentations on their particular solution for a prayer garden / columbarium. There are several columbarium and prayer garden projects that have been completed in the area that have been willing to share experiences. These include: Massanetta Springs, Bayside PC, Trinity Lutheran NN, U of R, Blacksburg PC, Saint Joan RC, Temple Sinai, and Royster PC. Some of these are interior columbariums and were dismissed from further consideration, although the operational procedures for such a columbarium may be good fodder for the future.

Where are we now:

Based on the reviews to date we have asked Hertzler & George to provide a proposal for developing a detail plan using computer modeling data available from the Fellowship Center architect. We hope to have their proposal later this month. The garden we envision would be incrementally built to feature a brick and metal fence, possible water feature, plantings that can be easily installed and maintained, have limited seating and access, possible access lighting, and capable of incorporating a columbarium made up of niches from a provider TBD. We hope to have design costs and sketches or modeling simulations of several possible sites. We would like to be able to present a detailed recommendation for initiating a design-build project and to gauge the congregation's feelings on a columbarium ministry later this spring.