

## **Report to the Property Committee from the Memorial Garden and Columbarium Expansion Subcommittee**

In Spring of 2023, a subcommittee of the Property Committee was formed to evaluate the need for expansion of the Memorial Garden and Columbarium and options. The subcommittee members are Jim Rowley, Tim Dobbyn, Denise Galbo and Suzanne Welch, with Rick Seale and Chris Martin ex-officio.

The subcommittee reviewed possible ways to expand the capacity of the 167-niche columbarium so it can receive additional remains of deceased parishioners and their loved ones. This report summarizes the findings that the subcommittee made during its review of the options, which included a June 15, 2023 tour of the All Souls Garden at the National Cathedral and adjacent columbaria at St. Alban's School and at St. Alban's parish church.

The study was initiated after it was determined that the columbarium had fewer than 20 niches that have not been reserved by parishioners. Over the last six years an average of four niches have been reserved annually for subsequent use by parishioners. Over the next four or five years, absent the additional surrender of inurnment rights by current niche holders, there will no longer be any remaining niches in the existing columbarium to be allocated for future inurnments.

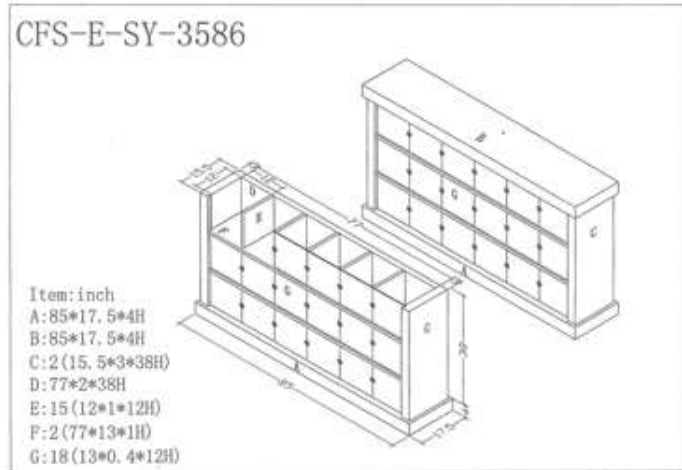
The subcommittee looked at constructing new niche banks in the Memorial Garden and setting aside an area for in-ground burial of cremains in a corner of the garden that would be made accessible to people visiting the burial site of their loved ones.

In March 2023, W.S. Tegeler Monument Co. proposed constructing free-standing niche panels to expand the columbarium's capacity.

This could be accomplished in stages rather than all at once, though a larger project might serve as a hedge against the increase in construction costs over time. One advantage of commissioning all three units would be that the stone surfaces could be better matched than if the niche installations were fabricated at different times.

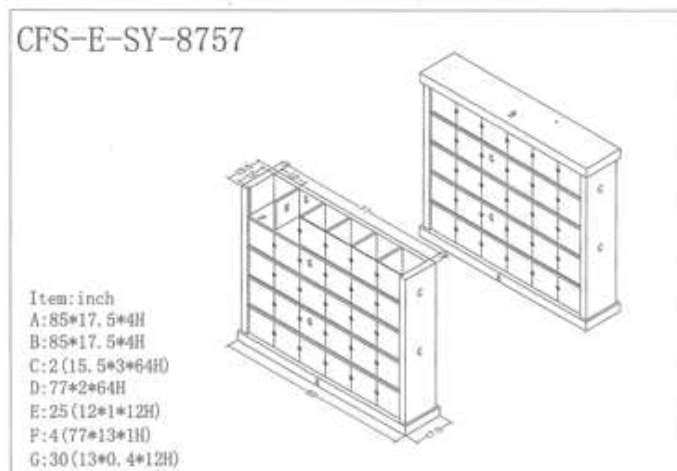
Tegeler proposed an 18-niche installation parallel to the walkway from the parking lot. The low-rise wall containing the niches would still afford passers-by a view of the entire Memorial Garden from the parking-lot entryway. The cost of this unit

would be \$21,750. The proposal was to place this on the brick landing just inside the entrance from the parking lot facing west. While one could see over the unit, the installation might make the landing feel less open.



# 21,750.- SET ON EXISTING WALL

A larger panel of 30 niches would be placed along the wall between the Garden and the parking lot, facing the existing columbarium wall. It would be placed roughly halfway between the side entrance and the fountain. This would cost \$30,295. There is also room for an identical panel of 30 niches if the decision were made to expand the garden's capacity by a total of 78 niches.



# 30,295.- SET - PLUS FOUNDATION

The two-panel option would cost a total of \$52,045 (plus foundations), according to Tegeler's proposal. Adding a second 30-niche panel would bring the total cost of columbarium construction to \$82,340 for all three units (plus foundations). Construction of the in-ground burial space and other improvements to the garden would add additional expenses.

The construction could be financed with a loan from the Norwood Parish Fund, which could be repaid with proceeds from the sale of niches and in-ground burial spots, and a donation from the Memorial Garden Fund.

According to a preliminary estimate, an annual 5 percent increase in the fees for niche reservations and for in-ground burial over 10 years would help raise revenue to defray the estimated \$90,700 of principal plus 2 percent annual interest over the decade on a \$75,590 loan. For the purposes of the estimate, the subcommittee assumed that an initial \$500 fee for in-ground burial of cremains would also rise 5 percent annually to \$776 during the 10-year life of the loan.

Currently, the fee for reserving a niche in the Memorial Garden is \$2,000, effective in October, 2023. The current price is considerably lower than what comparable parishes charge. Since 2021, St. Columba has charged \$3,000 for a four-urn niche and also sold single places in a community niche for \$1,250.

[https://www.columba.org/uploads/images/columbarium-flyer-2022-fillable\\_602.pdf](https://www.columba.org/uploads/images/columbarium-flyer-2022-fillable_602.pdf).

In October, 2023, the Vestry the approved raising by \$500 the longstanding niche-reservation fee of \$1,500 to help defray Memorial Garden maintenance costs. The subcommittee envisions additional, incremental annual increases over the next 10 years to raise the price to almost \$3,500 in the 10<sup>th</sup> year of the loan.

There would be additional expenses to landscape and otherwise prepare an area of the garden where cremains would be buried in the ground. We did not seek proposals to determine the costs of that project. But it would include constructing a large stone plaque or series of plaques on which the names of deceased parishioners whose cremains are buried in the ground would be engraved.

It may also be necessary to repair or replace outdoor light fixtures as part of any renovation. The stone that covers the courtyard in front of the memorial wall is in need of replacement.

The in-ground burial area would potentially accommodate a much larger number of cremains than the columbarium. All Souls Garden, a grass covered area in the Cathedral Garth accommodates 900 spaces for in-ground burial. Peter Spaulding, the gardener who conducted our tour, says the cathedral uses a grid overlay to determine where individual cremains are to be placed. Our area is much smaller and would accommodate 20-30 individual spaces for in-ground burial initially.

The Cathedral mixes the ashes with a composting material known as Let Your Love Grow ([letyourlovegrow.com](http://letyourlovegrow.com)), a product whose marketers claim mitigates environmental damage from straight burial of ashes.

Ashes are typically placed in the ground in biodegradable pouches or urns and the families are able to keep some of the cremains that won't fit into the ground, according to Spaulding.

At the Cathedral, ashes are placed in a 14-inch hole that is dug in the grass. The committal service is conducted and the small bit of ash/compost mixture is placed in the hole with the family present. After the mourners leave, the rest of the ash mixture is put in the hole and the grass plug placed back on top. Sedge would be a good alternative ground cover to grass, according to Spaulding.

There have been proposals from within the parish for a burial ground on the Tower Lawn side of the church. However, that area would likely be needed for storm-water management so the subcommittee concluded that it would be impractical to set aside a burial ground on that side of the church.

### **Conclusion**

The subcommittee determined that using the existing space of the Memorial Garden could accommodate a substantial expansion of the capacity to receive cremains. Further work is needed to determine the total costs of capital improvements to the Garden, including construction of the in-ground burial space and replacement of the existing stone pavement.

It will also be necessary to determine the market demand in the congregation for niches or spaces in the burial ground before determining the scale of any new construction.

The Memorial Garden's columbarium is fast approaching full capacity. A plan to expand the number of inurnment and burial spaces is needed to keep the Memorial Garden a relevant component of the parish's future.

**The subcommittee requests Property Committee's conception support for expanding the Memorial Garden Columbarium. The report would be delivered to the Vestry for authorization of the next steps in development of an expansion plan, which would then come back to the Property Committee for consideration before going to the Vestry for approval.**

Memorial Garden Property Subcommittee

March 6, 2024