



## The Columbarium at St. James Church

from JOHN CAIN

Burial in a cathedral, church, or churchyard has been an ancient and venerable custom throughout the centuries in all Christian lands, and memorial crypts and columbaria are provided in many parishes throughout the Episcopal Church. The word *columbarium*, derived from the Latin *columba* and meaning “dovecote,” refers to a place designated for the interment of the ashes of the dead. Since the earliest days of the Christian Church, disciples have been concerned with the reverent disposal of the remains of the faithful departed. Such remains were typically placed in cemeteries, crypts, and columbaria set apart, that is, blessed for the purpose. Logically the most treasured location for such disposition was within the church grounds.

Cremation of the bodies of the departed has long been an accepted practice within the Episcopal Church and the wider Anglican Communion. With an ever expanding population and an increasing concern for land use, coupled with escalating burial expenses, cremation has become a more common practice. From a theological and liturgical perspective, cremation does not in any way alter the practice or custom of the church at the time of burial. Following the Requiem Eucharist in the church, the ashes of the departed, contained in

a simple urn, are placed in a designated columbarium niche and the committal portion of the funeral service is prayed in the presence of family and friends. Once the service is over and the necessary preparations are completed, the niche into which the urn has been placed is closed with a permanent cover and an appropriately engraved nameplate is affixed.

The columbarium at St. James Church serves as a visible witness to the church’s understanding of the Communion of Saints. The intention is to provide a final resting place for the cremated remains of members of the parish, their families, and others as may be deemed appropriate, in a hallowed space. The columbarium is situated in the north passageway entrance to the nave and consists of two piers of 48 niches each, which are faced with sculpted bronze plaques bearing the nameplates.

The cost of the right to the use of a niche is \$350, which includes an urn for the remains, the cost of engraving the nameplate (with name, date of birth, and date of death), and inurnment in the columbarium. There are no further costs. Funds received from the provision of space are invested and the income derived will provide for the perpetual care of the columbarium and maintenance of the premises. The fund will provide for future expansion.

## The Cenotaph at St. James Church

The term *cenotaph* applies to a memorial honoring a person whose remains are elsewhere. Our cenotaph, in the columbarium area, consists of a set of bronze plaques similar to the columbarium plaques, placed in the shape of a cross, and carrying the individual nameplates. The uppermost plaque bears the inscription:

*Believing that thy servant is at rest in Christ,  
though we may know not where,  
we commit thy servant’s memory to this holy place.*

The cost of memorialization on the cenotaph is \$100, which includes the cost of engraving the nameplate with the name, date of birth, and date of death of the departed. Funds so derived are made part of the columbarium fund.

If you have not already done so, we urge you to take a moment to visit the columbarium area. If you have questions regarding either the columbarium or cenotaph, contact John Cain, Lou Sturbois, or Maureen Weber, members of the Columbarium Committee.

■ Packets of specific information regarding the columbarium and the cenotaph are available from the church office.