

The Memorial Garden St. Matthew Episcopal Church, Tacoma WA

In 2008, St. Matthew Episcopal Church set aside for perpetuity and consecration a portion of its grounds for the purpose of providing a place for the committal of cremains in a tranquil haven for reflection, remembrance, and prayer. Since then, St. Matthew has established the Memorial Garden on the south side of the property to provide a place on hallowed ground for committals. Prior to the words in the Burial Office, “earth to earth, ashes to ashes, dust to dust”, we place the cremains into the earth which has nurtured us all of our lives and from which all earthly life grows. Throughout the year, the Prayers of the People provide an occasion for the naming of those whom we especially wish to remember before God. This practice reminds us of our continuing relationship, through God, with those who have died.

Policy Statement

As a ministry of St. Matthew and as a sign of our hope in the Resurrection of our Lord, Jesus Christ, the Memorial Garden is open to all who wish to be committed regardless of parochial status or religious affiliation. All committals shall conform to the Burial of the Dead found in the Book of Common Prayer, be conducted by an Episcopal cleric in good standing, and with the approval of the Rector of the parish. Once the committal has occurred, the placement of the cremains is permanent.

There will be no charge for a committal in the Memorial Garden. However, any donation for the upkeep of the garden or to any other ministry of St. Matthew is gladly accepted.

There will be no individual grave markers beyond the two that currently exist in perpetuity. The site and location of each grave will be recorded on the grid of the Memorial Garden that is kept in the parish office. Individuals are listed on the Memorial Marker with only the name and dates of birth and death at no cost. The Memorial Marker is updated once a year during the dry season.

Cremains may be committed in biodegradable containers or deposited directly into the ground. When cremains have been committed, an entry is made in the parish registry of burials with a code associated with the grid map.

Post-committal, no permanent plants or artificial flowers will be permitted to be placed at an occupied committal site to retain the integrity of the landscaping of the garden and the site itself. However, plants may be purchased in accordance with the predetermined landscaping schematic as a memorial prior to a committal taking place if the planting is to occur at a desired committal site. Plants may also be purchased and planted according to the schematic at any time and for any purpose as long as the planting does not disturb a committal site that is occupied.

The Building & Grounds Co-Mission will review annually the Memorial Garden records, upkeep status, and other matters pertaining to Garden policy and also recommend any needed changes to the Vestry. An annual report will also be made to the congregation at the Annual Meeting of the parish.

Approved by Vestry 10-14-17
(updated on 7-21-18 by KTH)