

**Sinai Evangelical Lutheran Church**  
**950 East 8<sup>th</sup> Street**  
**Fremont, Nebraska 68025**  
**Policies and Procedures Governing the Columbarium**

These policies and procedures are designed to protect the interests of those agreeing to reserve a niche at Sinai Evangelical Lutheran Church. It is the goal of these policies to preserve the dignity and appearance of the Columbarium over time. As deemed necessary, these policies may be amended by the Columbarium Board and approved by the Sinai Lutheran Church Council.

#### I. PURPOSE

As a witness to our core Christian beliefs, centered in the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ, namely the communion of saints, the resurrection of the body and the life everlasting, Sinai Lutheran Church provides a Columbarium to offer a final resting place for the cremated remains of loved ones, and to offer a ministry to their families.

#### II. DEFINITIONS

- A. Columbarium: The word “columbarium” comes from the word “columba” meaning “dove.” It has come to mean a structure with compartments, or niches, for holding urns of human remains.
- B. Columbarium Board: The Columbarium Board will consist of three members of Sinai Lutheran Church who have been appointed by the Congregation Council, as well as the Council President and Pastor. All will be voting members.
- C. Niche: The recessed enclosure for the placement of cremated human remains (cremains).
- D. Eligible Persons: Members of the congregation, former members of the congregation, immediate family members of such persons, and anyone associated/affiliated with Sinai Lutheran Church.
- E. Immediate Family Members: Parents, spouse, child(ren) (natural, adopted, foster, or stepchild), grandparents, or partner of an eligible person.
- F. Reservation and Use Fee: The fee for a niche is payable to the Sinai Lutheran Church Columbarium Fund. This gives the reserver the privilege of exclusive reservation and use of a niche in the Columbarium. The reservation and use fee shall be determined, and may be changed by the Columbarium Board, with approval by the Congregation Council at any time without notice.
- G. Church: Refers to Sinai Evangelical Lutheran Church anytime it appears in this document.

#### III. TITLE AND RIGHTS OF THE CHURCH

Legal title to the Columbarium and all niches contained therein shall at all times be held by Sinai Evangelical Lutheran Church. The right of reservation and use of a Columbarium niche is a license to reserve and use a niche in the Columbarium of the Church and is not a property right. The right to reserve and/or use a niche in the Columbarium may not be sold, gifted, conveyed, devised, assigned, or otherwise transferred, unless approved by the Columbarium Board.

#### IV. DUTIES OF ADMINISTRATION BY COLUMBARIUM BOARD

- A. Provide a packet of information to the Church office containing the Columbarium Policies and Procedures, forms, and contact information of Columbarium Board members. The Church office will provide these upon request to those who have an interest in Sinai's Columbarium.
  1. The purpose of this procedure is to ensure that inquiries about the reservation of a Columbarium niche receive consistent, compassionate, respectful, and accurate information.
  2. The packet of information contains the following forms:
    - a. Policies and Procedures Governing the Columbarium,
    - b. Application for Reservation of a Columbarium Niche,
    - c. Columbarium Certificate of Use Agreement, and
    - d. Receipt of Columbarium Certificate of Use of Niche.
  3. Packets will be available in the Church office and will be given to persons who request information about the Columbarium. The Columbarium Board is responsible for keeping these forms current. Digital forms will be kept in the Church office computer. Packets will be compiled by the Columbarium Board, kept in the Church office, and available for distribution upon request. The Parish Administrator, Pastor, or Columbarium Board members may give a packet of information upon request.
  4. All requests for Columbarium information will be referred to the Niche Reservation Assistant, who will be contacted by the interested person. If the Niche Reservation Assistant is going to be out of town, he or she will contact the church office and let the Parish Administrator know who will be his or her designee in his or her absence. If the packet of information has not been given, the Niche Reservation Assistant or designee shall give the packet to the requesting person. The Niche Reservation Assistant or designee will meet with the interested person(s) as requested. The purpose of this meeting will be to enter into full explanation of Columbarium Policies and Procedures, and if desired, completion of the Application for Reservation of a Columbarium Niche.
  5. All forms must be filled out completely and accurately, as information on these forms will be used to engrave the name, date of birth, and date of death on the nameplate.
- B. Interpret and administer all Policies and Procedures regarding the Columbarium.
- C. Recommend changes that may be required in its Policies and Procedures. Any changes shall become effective when approved by the Congregation Council.
- D. Provide for the maintenance/security of the Columbarium out of the funds collected from the reservation of niches and applicable dedicated funds held by the Church in the Columbarium Fund.
- E. Provide a quarterly financial report to the Congregation Council. Conduct a yearly financial review and independent audit of the Columbarium Fund, following the guidelines set forth in the Sinai Evangelical Lutheran Church Constitution and provide this information for inclusion in the Annual Congregational Report.
- F. Maintain a registry of all niches in the Columbarium to be identified with the following: name of decedent, date of niche reservation, decedent's date of birth, decedent's date of death, date of inurnment and contact information for decedent's next of kin and/or personal representative.
- G. A member of the Columbarium Board or its representative will be responsible for making an urn available to the selected mortuary, opening and closing of the niche, ordering the engraved nameplate with the decedent's name, date of birth, date of death and applying the engraved nameplate to the faceplate.

- H. An engraved permanent lid will be offered for each urn, with no additional costs to the reserver. This will be provided and engraved at the time of death or inurnment. Options for engraved symbols and script will be discussed with the reserver, or family of the deceased, with guidance provided by the Columbarium Board member(s).

## V. THE COLUMBARIUM

The Columbarium consists of a set of niches of uniform size for the placement of the ashes of cremated human remains of one person. Each niche shall have a metal nameplate upon which shall be engraved only the name of the decedent whose cremains it contains, the date of birth, and date of death. No titles or degrees will be used. As additions are made to the Columbarium, the same design shall be utilized as in the original installation.

## VI. ELIGIBILITY FOR THE USE OF NICHES

Placement of an urn in the Columbarium shall be limited to members of the congregation, former members of the congregation, and immediate family members of such persons, or anyone associated/affiliated with the Church. The name of the eligible person whose remains are to be placed in an assigned niche shall be listed on the Columbarium Certificate of Use Agreement. Upon request, and with approval of the Board, the name of another eligible person may be added to or deleted from a Columbarium Certificate of Use Agreement following its issuance.

## VII. RESERVATION AND USE PRIVILEGE & ASSIGNMENT OF NICHES

- A. A reservation fee of \$800.00 for a niche in the Columbarium will include an urn provided by the Church, the cost of inurnment of the cremains, engraving of the nameplate with the name, date of birth, date of death of the person whose cremains are inurned and provision and engraving of an urn lid.. It also includes choice of an available niche at the time of reservation, maintenance of the inurnment site, the cost of maintaining records for use and administration, opening and closing of the niche, and a committal service officiated by the Church pastor (or designee). The reservation price does not include the cost of cremation or other related funeral expenses. The fee to obtain the privilege of exclusive reservation and use of a niche will be determined, and may be changed, by the Columbarium Board and approved by the Congregation Council.
- B. The Columbarium Board shall maintain a current listing and/or diagram illustrating the columbarium niches that are both reserved and available. Each reserver can choose a niche location based on available spaces. Once a niche has been reserved, no changes in location may be made.
- C. Neither the nameplate nor the faceplate can accommodate other emblems.
- D. The niche space cannot accommodate any mementos.

## VIII. INURNMENT

- A. The clergy at Sinai Lutheran Church will provide a committal service at the time of each inurnment. A member of the clergy or designated officiant shall conduct the service and be present at the inurnment.
- B. No cremains will be inurned in the Columbarium without a committal service.
- C. The Church and the Columbarium Board shall not be liable for ensuring the identity of the person whose cremains are to be inurned.

## IX. ADDITIONAL COLUMBARIUM POLICES AND PROCEDURES

- A. The Columbarium Board reserves the right to amend or waive any of its Columbarium Policies and Procedures. Waiver of any policy or procedure does not constitute a continuing waiver of that policy or procedure with respect to any situation arising thereafter.
- B. In addition to the Policies and Procedures, all inurnments, disinurnments and removals shall comply with all federal, state, and local laws, as well as rules and regulations to the extent that they are applicable to the Church. Nothing herein shall be construed as a waiver of any exemption of the Church as provided pursuant to such laws, rules, and regulations.
- C. Removal of cremated remains so that the niche inurnment rights may be sold for profit, or removal contrary to the expressed wish of the original reservation, will not be allowed.
- D. Disinurnments: Upon written request by the personal representative of the decedent, and with approval of the Columbarium Board, the cremated remains, including the urn, will be permanently removed from the niche and be given to the personal representative or his or her designee. Under this circumstance, there will be no refund of the reservation fee. The reservation rights for the niche shall revert back to the Church upon removal of the cremains. The niche may be reserved and reassigned at the Columbarium Board's discretion.
- E. Request to surrender an unused niche: If there has been no inurnment, the reserver or authorized representative may request to surrender the niche reservation back to the Church. The Columbarium Board may, at its discretion, refund 25% of the total fee paid.
- F. Niche not used within 5 years of death: In the event the exclusive right to use a reserved niche is not exercised on behalf of the eligible person listed on the Certificate of Use Agreement within five (5) years following that person's death, the exclusive right to use the niche reserved or to surrender the right, shall expire. The licensing rights of the niche shall revert back to the Church and the niche may be reserved and reassigned at the Columbarium Board's discretion. Under these circumstances, there will be no refund of the reservation fee.
- G. Moving the Columbarium: Sinai Lutheran Church reserves the right to move the Columbarium to another location should it be necessary to do so, as determined by the Columbarium Board and approved by the Congregation Council. Reasonable effort to locate and notify surviving heirs as to the new location will be made. No fee to the reserver/personal representative will be charged for this move.
- H. Circumstances beyond Sinai Lutheran Church's control: If, at any time in the future, the Columbarium should become unusable for any reason as determined by the Columbarium Board and Congregation Council, or the Columbarium facilities are discontinued:
  1. The right to inurn shall terminate.
  2. The Columbarium Board or Congregation Council, or its successors, shall exercise reasonable effort to locate and notify surviving heirs and give them the opportunity to remove the cremains.
    - i. A certified letter will be mailed to the last known address of the reserver or designee.
    - ii. The Columbarium Board or Congregation Council, or its successors, shall not otherwise relocate the urns up to one (1) year after the Columbarium facilities are discontinued for any reason.
    - iii. After one (1) year, any unclaimed urns shall be placed in a properly zoned and established cemetery at the Church's expense.

3. In the event that cremains have not been inurned in the Columbarium, then:
  - i. The right to inurn will terminate.
  - ii. The Board will refund 100% of the reservation fee paid by the reserver to the Church.

X. THE COLUMBARIUM FUND

- A. The fee for the reservation and use privilege will cover the cost of the niche and inurnment in the Columbarium, opening and closing of the niche, engraving of the nameplate, provision of and engraving of an urn lid. Residual funds will be maintained in a reserve account, separate from general Church funds, for the future needs related to maintenance, enlargement, moving of the Columbarium, or termination of the Columbarium.
- B. Initially, all funds received will be placed in a checking account. As more niches are reserved, the Columbarium Board will review the account and consider investing funds in an account such as the MISSION INVESTMENT FUND of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America.

XI. ACCESS AND RESTRICTIONS

- A. The Columbarium shall be open to visitors at all times when the Church is open to the public.
- B. Special arrangements for visiting at other times can be individually made through the Church office.
- C. No flowers, flags, insignias, or other decorations may be added to the Columbarium area.

XII. ADOPTION

These rules were endorsed by the Congregational Council of Sinai Evangelical Lutheran Church and approved by the Congregation on September 15<sup>th</sup>, 2019. They may be amended upon recommendation of the Columbarium Board and endorsement by the Congregation Council.

9-15-2019

2-24-2020 Amendments approved by Congregation Council

03-05-2023 Amended by Columbarium Committee