

Peace Garden

Bethel College Mennonite Church
Approval by Church Board - January 4, 2018

The Peace Garden is a witness to the beauty and wonder of God’s creation, designed to invite joyful delight, worship, quiet meditation, and learning for the local community and campus. The garden incorporates native flowers, grasses, and shrubs to attract birds and pollinators. It provides a laboratory for Christian faith formation, a natural outdoor space to be used for education about our local ecosystems, and the nurture of creation care for all, young and old.

Columbarium and Scattering of Ashes

One of the creation care purposes of the garden and columbarium is to provide meaningful and affordable choices for families when a loved one dies, providing alternative ways of handling ashes when cremation is chosen rather than traditional casket burial. Nestled between the two arms (wings) of the church, the landscape integrates a columbarium where niches are provided for the preservation of ashes and spaces in the garden where ashes can be scattered and raked into the soil, modeling ecological cycling of death and rebirth of all life on earth (“from dust to dust”). Engraved plaques on the niches of the columbarium and engraved pavers on a walkway honor the memory of loved ones and that “cloud of witnesses” that surround the living body of Christ.

Policies and Guidelines for the Columbarium and Scattering of Ashes

1. Oversight.

The maintenance and ongoing supervision of the columbarium, the hard scape and the landscape of the garden are the responsibility of Bethel College Mennonite Church Board who appoints an oversight committee. The Church Board (and oversight committee) will consult with other groups such as the Deacon Commission, Facilities Committee, Finance Committee, and Creation Care Committee. Income and expenses will be recorded in the Peace Garden Fund.

2. Eligibility.

A. Full members, wider fellowship members, regular attenders, and their immediate family members (spouse and children) may have ashes placed in a niche or scattered in the landscape. The rights are personal and may not be transferred to another person.

B. Family members or friends of former Bethel College Mennonite Church members who are buried elsewhere may chose to remember their loved ones with a memorial paver.

C. Other persons who do not fit in category A or B above may apply to the oversight committee for an exception upon the recommendation of the pastoral staff.

- 39 3. Fees to support and sustain the Peace Garden.
40 A. \$1,000 per person.
41 B. Fees are payable at the time of reservation (see church office for form).
42 C. An additional fee for the cost of engraving the plaque for the niche in the
43 columbarium or engraving the paver is due at inurnment or scattering.
44 D. If an owner wishes to give up his or her niche or authorization to scatter, the Bethel
45 College Mennonite Church will refund half of the cost paid.
46 E. Fees are subject to change by the Church Board.
- 47 4. Location.
48 BCMC will assign the niche location in the order of inurnment and the area for scattering
49 ashes and the placement of the memorial paver. If families or spouses purchase niches
50 or reservations to scatter ashes at the same time, niches or memorial pavers will be
51 reserved next to each other at the first inurnment.
52 Records of ownership of niches and location of memorial pavers will be maintained by
53 the church.
54 To maintain uniformity and consistency, the memorial paver will be engraved with the
55 person's name (without titles), birth and death dates, and uniform lettering size and
56 font. The same is encouraged for the plaque on the niche.
- 57 5. Committal Service/Symbols of Remembrance
58 The planning for inurnment in the columbarium or the scattering of ashes will be
59 coordinated with the church staff. The pastoral team will provide a nurturing presence
60 and leadership for families to plan together a committal service for inurnment or for
61 scattering the ashes into the soil.
62 The ashes will be delivered to the church either by the funeral home or family.
63 A. Ashes will be placed in the cylinder provided by the church and the cylinder
64 will be sealed into the niche by the church. Small items of sentimental value
65 such as wedding rings may be placed in the cylinder before it is sealed and may
66 not be extracted or added to after sealing,
67 B. The family may provide an urn for scattering ashes, or borrow one from the
68 church for the committal service. No items other than the ashes may be buried.
69 Additional cut or artificial flowers, flags, or decorative materials may not be placed in
70 the garden or on a niche. No plants may be placed or removed without advance
71 approval from the oversight committee. Families and friends are invited to remember
72 loved ones with flowers in the church sanctuary.
73 Any additional fees are subject to facility use policies.