



# The larger circle

2007 Edition

Strengthening the community of faith

A newsletter for churches from Eickhof Columbaria, Inc.

## Bob Updike's special passion

St. George Episcopal Church

St. George Episcopal Church is located in The Villages, a well-known and active retirement community in Lady Lake, Florida. The decision to build a columbarium in a Memorial Garden was an easy decision for this church. "We saw it as a necessity, an integral part of the church's ministry," states Robert Updike, a leader and designer of the project.



Bob Updike

Once the decision was made to create a Memorial Garden that could accommodate the interment of ashes

both in ground and above ground in a columbarium, Bob, a semi-retired real estate property manager, was approached to help develop it. "Someone found out that I had designed a Memorial Garden at another church," he says

From that moment until today, the Memorial Garden is Bob's special passion. First, he designed the entire garden and then built a model to display to the congregation. He then managed the construction process and worked with Eickhof Columbaria, Inc. to build the columbarium.

Bob Updike's involvement didn't stop there. He also does the gardening  
*Continued on page 4*

## Cremation: the times and attitudes have changed

It only seems like yesterday that cremations were the exception. Today, 32% of all deaths in the U.S. involve cremation, according to the Cremation Association of North America, up from 14% in 1985. In a number of states it has reached 50%.

Funeral Wire, an industry news service, reports that states with a 60% or more cremation rate are expected to triple in the coming five years. By the end of the decade, the association predicts that six of the ten western states, including Hawaii, will have a cremation rate of 65% or higher.

There are other signs that the times are changing. The International Cemetery and Funeral Association,



A pastor conducts an inurnment service at an Eickhof Columbarium

*Continued on page 2*

## We're ready to help



Paul Eickhof  
President,  
Eickhof Columbaria, Inc.

Over more than two decades we have built and installed columbaria for churches, we have had the opportunity to work closely with pastors, committees, architects and contractors. In itself this is always a most satisfying experience. We particularly appreciate the positive response to the ease and convenience of our patented niche locking system.

At the same time, an educational and informational role has emerged for our company. Since planning a columbarium is mostly a "first time experience" for most churches, there's a learning curve. Certainly, no one wants to waste time or make mistakes that can be avoided by having adequate and proper information.

Having built more than 450 columbaria for churches, we have accumulated knowledge that can be helpful to churches.

We are always glad to answer questions and to refer committees to churches we have worked with over the years. The booklet, *Consider the Possibilities: A Planning Guide for a Church Columbarium*, answers many

*Continued on page 2*

## In this issue

Bob Updike's special passion .....	1
We're ready to help .....	1
Cremation: the times and attitudes have changed .....	1
A mountain top experience .....	2

"Very much a part of the church's ministry" .....	3
FAQ .....	3
Filling a community need .....	4

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### Cremation: the times and attitudes have changed

*Continued from page 1*

the group that started out with only “cemetery” in its name and later added “Funeral” has a new name. It’s now the International Cemetery, Cremation and Funeral Association (ICCFA), giving recognition to the increasing role of cremation. Funeral homes are taking a similar step by adding “cremation” to their names and some operate “cremation societies” to grow their businesses.

All this interest in cremation is part of a growing trend. At a recent annual convention of the International Cemetery and Funeral Association (which took place before the name change) attendees were given the option of choosing one of four breakout groups. A total of 45% of the 550 participants selected the cremation track.

This broad acceptance of cremation has not gone unnoticed by cemeteries, churches, retirement communities and funeral directors.

In fact, one funeral director in New Hampshire is giving serious consideration to installing a columbarium in his funeral home.

While many cemeteries have long had columbaria, others recognize the need to install them, both to meet consumer demand and as an alternative to purchasing and developing land for expansion.

However, more and more churches are taking a leadership role. Church leaders see a columbarium as an appropriate component of the service of the church to its parishioners, pointing out that the family of faith includes both the living and the dead.

Quite clearly, cremation has moved beyond public acceptance to the point where it is actually embraced by more and more Americans.

As the population ages, more and more churches are viewing a columbarium as an opportunity to demonstrate the continuing role they play in the lives of their parishioners.

### We’re ready to help

*Continued from page 1*

questions and provides a helpful framework for churches considering a columbarium, as well as ideas for those who already have one. We will send it to you without charge. Just call, email or write to us.

At the same time, it is clear that we can offer even more assistance. We recognize that the columbarium itself is the result of a process that involves church leadership, the interest of the congregation, financing the project, building the columbarium and maintaining it. Committees, which are faced with so many unanswered questions, can benefit from the experience of others.

We want you and your congregation to be completely satisfied with your columbarium. This is why we are pleased to make available the resources of Eickhof Columbaria, Inc. as you consider the possibilities for having a columbarium for your church.

*Call 800-253-0457 or email me, paul@eickhofcolumbaria.com.*



### A mountain top experience

*St. Margaret’s Catholic Church*

When The Rev. Francis J. Doyle arrived at St. Margaret’s Catholic Church in Maggie Valley, North Carolina, he found that several families had ashes in their homes. “There is no Catholic cemetery in our diocese,” says Fr. Doyle, “so the ashes could not be buried in consecrated ground.”

Before Fr. Doyle arrived at the church, members of the parish had expressed interest in a columbarium, but that’s as far as it went. He surveyed the parish and found substantial interest including purchasing niches.

In 2002, the 96-niche York preassembled columbarium was installed next to the church atop a mountain in the Great Smoky range. “It is absolutely magnificent,” comments Fr. Doyle, who describes it as “a sacred place where people are remembered.” He uses it as a

way to remind his parishioners that the “communion of saints” includes both the living and the dead.

Single niches are \$1,000 each and doubles are \$1,500. The columbarium is restricted to parishioners and their families, Fr. Doyle indicates. The cost of the columbarium was underwritten by pre-need purchases.

Today, the funds from the sale of niches go to a special fund for possible columbarium expansion. “People are talking about it,” says Fr. Doyle, although a lack of space creates a problem.

When asked about the cost of upkeep of the columbarium, Fr. Doyle says, “There really isn’t any.”

Although the parish “grows” during the summer months with an influx of vacationers, “we have only about 180 families the rest of the year,” the priest notes. Even so, there have been some 30 inurnments in the last four years.



*The setting for St. Margaret’s columbarium is in the Great Smoky Mountains*

## “Very much a part of the church’s ministry”

Village Presbyterian Church

More than thirty years ago, a member of the Village Presbyterian Church in Northbrook, Illinois, wanted his ashes buried on the church grounds after his death. That was the beginning of the church’s Memorial Garden that is now mostly reserved.

Recognizing that additional space would be needed, the church worked with Eickhof Columbaria to create a Memorial Wall with 1,600 cremation niches.

Robert M. MacMillin, co-chairman of the Memorial Garden Committee for the 1,500-member congregation was in charge of the construction for the Memorial Wall. It was truly a labor of love. “The pallets with the stones for the wall had to be unloaded a distance from the construction site,” says Bob. “So we moved them all by hand.

“The Memorial Garden and Wall are an integral part of the life of our church,” Bob reports. “We have an early morning church service in the Memorial Garden in the summer.”

The Memorial Garden Fund financed the building of the Memorial Wall. Today, there is a reserve fund for continuing maintenance. There are between five and 10 inurnments a year.

The cost of a double niche (for two urns) is \$2,400 and a single is \$1,400. The church administrator is responsible for taking care of the purchase arrangements.



The Memorial Garden of the Village Presbyterian Church

## FAQ

Paul Eickhof answers frequently asked questions.

**Q.** “How many niches should we install?”

**A.** This is an important question and there are several factors that can influence this decision:

*The size of the congregation.* The number of families or parishioners should be taken into account.

*The general age of the congregation.* If the congregation is older, you may want to start with more niches or provide for future expansion of the columbarium.

*The availability of funds.* If funds are somewhat limited, you can start with a more limited number of niches and add more at a later time.

*The constituency for the columbarium.* Will the columbarium be limited to members of the congregation or will it be available to other than church members and their families?

As a guide, 72 niches is a minimum, although a number of smaller congregations are starting with 144 niches, and larger churches may want to consider installing more initially. Whatever the number of initial niches, it’s important to plan for the future by providing space for adding more niches.

**Q.** “Can you provide us with a rendering of what the columbarium will look like?”

**A.** Yes. A rendering can be provided at a reasonable cost. It can play an important role in helping to communicate to the parishioners what is being planned. It can make a very positive impression and assist in pre-construction sales.

**Q.** “How much should we charge for niches?”

**A.** This is one of the most frequently asked questions. As a general guide, individual niches are priced at four times the

cost of the columbarium, divided by the number of niches. While this is a good rule of thumb, there are other factors to take into consideration such as pre-construction pricing, pre-need purchases and at need sales. There is also a question of a single inurnment. Niches are designed to hold two urns. If a niche is for one person only, some churches reduce the price in those cases.

You will find more answers to frequently asked questions in *Consider the Possibilities: A Planning Guide for a Church Columbarium*. It is available upon request and without charge from Eickhof Columbaria, Inc.

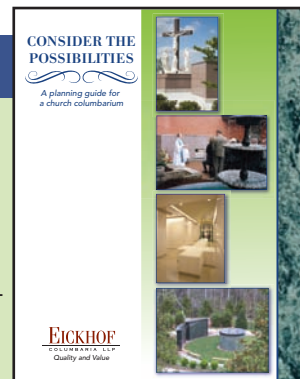
### Now available

#### Consider the Possibilities: A Planning Guide for a Church Columbarium

Through this booklet, Paul Eickhof shares more than 20 years of experience working with churches in planning and building columbaria.

Whether it’s “Getting Started,” “Pricing” or dozens of other important issues, the planning guide offers meaningful suggestions.

The planning guide is free. Call 1-800-253-0457 or email [paul@eickhofcolumbaria.com](mailto:paul@eickhofcolumbaria.com) for your copy.



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## Bob Updike's special passion

*Continued from page 1*

and visits the Memorial Garden every day to water the plants. "I go by on my way home," he says. "It's a quiet time at the end of the day when I can pray."

The model of the Memorial Garden played an important role. "We had it on display in the narthex of the church," comments Bob. "It created interest and enthusiasm among our people."

Why is Bob so committed to the Memorial Garden? "I wanted to be sure it was designed right and equaled the high quality of our church building." It was a two-year project, with one year in planning and a second year in building it, with the columbarium being installed in September 2005.

The church funded the project. "We felt that's the way it should be since this is part of our ministry," Bob notes.

There were 25 interments in the first year. The columbarium has 300 double niches and the garden provides for 400 in ground locations. There is also room for expansion.

The purchase cost of a niche in the columbarium is \$600 and in-ground spaces are \$300 each.

The five-ton Canterbury columbarium was pre-assembled at the Eickhof facility in Crookston, Minnesota and delivered to the church by the company's installers.

Having worked with the Eickhof people for more than a year, Bob said, "They are A-1. From the moment I made an initial call right through construction, they were responsive and always helpful. It couldn't have been better."



*St. George  
Episcopal Church's  
columbarium graces  
an elegant garden.*

## Filling a community need

*St. Thomas the Apostle Catholic Church*

St. Thomas the Apostle Church has the distinction of having the first and so far only columbarium in a Catholic church in Tennessee. A 700-family parish in Lenoir City, the church is located not far from a large community of retirees. Sixty percent of the parishioners are retired.

Retired oil company executive Jim Polhamus chairs the Interment Board. At the request of the pastor, Fr. David Boettner, Jim had the major responsibility for the columbarium project.

"From the time the decision was made until the landscaping was completed, it took just about 30 months," Jim reports.

The first step in the planning process for a columbarium was conducting a survey of the parishioners. Once the survey had been completed, a parish meeting followed to discuss the idea.

"We had about 100 people there and 20 made a commitment to purchase niches on the spot," says Jim. Another 24 were sold during the following year.

St. Thomas the Apostle Church has two Eickhof Ely pre-assembled columbarium units, totaling 192 niches, in a magnificent setting overlooking 50 acres of meadow.

When asked about cremation and having a columbarium in the church, Jim Polhamus said, "Cremation is so much easier for the family and the columbarium gives people the feeling they will always be part of the community."

In planning the columbarium, Jim contacted three companies. "One didn't respond and another didn't seem to have much interest. The third, Eickhof Columbaria, got back to us quickly and answered our questions," reports Jim. "We are very pleased we chose them to work with."