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A001 Choosing a Final Resting Place for Ashes in Northern Virginia

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By NOAH, Caretaker of Walker Chapel Historic Cemetery and Columbarium



Planning is a Gift

Choosing a final resting place for ashes can feel overwhelming. This guide explains the options available at Walker Chapel in Northern Virginia, the role of a columbarium, how families plan ahead, and the questions most people ask before making a decision.

In Northern Virginia and around the world, families today are looking beyond traditional cemeteries in search of something more personal. They want a place that feels sacred, welcoming, historic, and connected to family traditions. For many, a columbarium at Walker Chapel in North Arlington has become that answer. Walker Chapel Historic Cemetery has served families continuously since 1848 and today remains an active place of remembrance, worship, and community life.

What Is a Columbarium?

A columbarium is a carefully designed structure containing niches that hold cremation urns. These niches create a permanent memorial where family and friends can visit, reflect, and remember.

A frequent question is, “Where to keep ashes after cremation?” Unlike keeping ashes at home — where they may someday become misplaced or forgotten — a columbarium in Northern Virginia provides a lasting place of remembrance. It creates a physical connection between generations and preserves family stories in a meaningful setting.



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The Columbarium at Walker Chapel Historic Cemetery is located on the cemetery's peaceful grounds in Arlington County, offering a quiet and sacred setting for visitation and reflection. The area is protected by Arlington County's strong historic preservation program called the [HALRB](#). People ask, "So, what is a columbarium"? It is a cemetery for cremation ashes. For Walker Chapel, it is central to Mclean, Falls Church, Alexandria, Fairfax County, and the entire Washington, DC area.

What is Niche?



We are asked, "Where should ashes be kept?" and "Is a columbarium better than keeping ashes at home"? The best response is whatever gives you the greatest comfort. One of the best solutions is a niche in a columbarium.

A niche is an individual space designed for the outside safekeeping of human ashes placed in a container called an urn. We provide two niche options. The most common is the companion niche, which holds two urns. We also offer family niches that can hold four to six urns, depending on urn size. Either is the best place for cremated remains and offers a permanent resting place for ashes.

Why Families in Northern Virginia Are Choosing Cremation

Cremation has steadily become more common across Northern Virginia for many reasons:

- Simplicity and flexibility
- Lower overall funeral costs
- Smaller environmental footprint
- Easier planning for family continuity
- The ability to create personalized memorial services

But after cremation, families often discover an important truth: ashes still need a permanent home.

Some families initially keep urns at home, only later to realize they want a place where children and grandchildren can gather and remember together. Some scatter ashes prematurely in rivers, lakes, or oceans, or in forests or fields, only to later regret not having a place to visit and remember those passed to eternal care. A Columbarium in a family legacy cemetery offers safety and permanence. Walker Chapel is a peaceful cemetery near Washington, DC; it is a church columbarium open to the public.



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A Place of Peace Close to Home

For Northern Virginia families, location matters. Loved ones want a place that is nearby, accessible, and familiar — not hours away. It is the answer to the question, "Where should I put cremation ashes"? Many of our friends are spread across the country and around the world, but with family ties to Walker Chapel, they still look to the Chapel as home and as:

- A secure columbarium close to home,
- That allows regular visits, and
- Helps maintain family connections over time.

In a fast-moving region like Northern Virginia, sacred places that encourage stillness, remembrance, and reflection become increasingly valuable. Walker Chapel is not only a place of remembrance but also a living part of the community through events, volunteer projects, and seasonal gatherings such as caring for the Pumpkin Patch, the Easter Egg Hunt, and cleaning and straightening stones.

Do I have to be close to Northern Virginia?

Absolutely not, ours is a global ministry without limits of race, ethnicity, age, or religion. Unlike bodily remains, cremated remains, called cremains, are not subject to regulations governing transport across state or country boundaries. Cremated remains can often be transported or shipped using approved methods and carriers. A funeral director need not be present at the time of inurnment, and the service can range from large gatherings with clergy to a small family gathering where the urns are simply placed by family hands into the selected niche.

We are asked, if Walker Chapel is the choice, "What happens if my children move away"? The columbarium becomes a meeting spot and a family reunion destination in a world-class city with unparalleled free museums, tours, and famous places. Walker Chapel is but 15 minutes from the White House and an Arlington County Historic District worthy of visitation on its own. When asked, "Can my family visit anytime?" the welcome answer is anytime, 24/7, 365, and with a little notice, a personal tour can be arranged.

Considering Your Family's Legacy

Choosing a final resting place is ultimately about love, memory, and legacy.

Families are not simply deciding where ashes will rest. They choose:

- How loved ones will be remembered
- Where future generations will gather
- What kind of story will continue after they are gone

A thoughtfully chosen columbarium can become a place of comfort for decades to come.

Many families tell us that choosing a niche brings an unexpected sense of peace. The decision transforms uncertainty into a plan and creates a place where future generations will always know where to gather, remember, and tell family stories. Long after names fade from memory elsewhere, a place of remembrance remains.



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Planning Is a Gift to the People You Love

Few decisions say "I love you" more clearly than making difficult decisions before someone else has to. Choosing a final resting place for ashes is not simply about selecting a niche. Preplanning a cremation inurnment makes good sense, and we can assist with our cremation planning guide. Preplanning is about giving your family certainty during a time of uncertainty. It is about creating a peaceful place where children, grandchildren, and generations yet to come will always know where to gather, remember, and tell your family's story.

There is no need to make a decision today. Instead, take the next small step:

- Talk with your family about your wishes.
- Visit several columbaria and compare what feels right, what is the best cremation memorial option.
- Walk through Walker Chapel Historic Cemetery at your own pace.
- Sit quietly beneath the trees.
- Ask every question that comes to mind.

We are not here to pressure you. We are here to listen. Walker Chapel Historic Cemetery has served families continuously since 1871, and we would be honored to help your family explore whether this peaceful place feels like home.

Schedule a personal tour - Walk the grounds - Ask NOAH

Because the greatest gift we can leave our family is not simply our memories, it is a place where those memories can live.

[Schedule a Personal Tour](#)

No obligation. No sales pressure. Simply come see the cemetery, ask questions, and discover whether Walker Chapel feels right for your family.

Frequently Asked Questions

Choosing a final resting place can feel emotional and overwhelming. Here are some of the questions many Northern Virginia families ask:

Can I visit the Columbarium before making a decision?

Absolutely. Families are encouraged to visit, walk the grounds, and spend time reflecting before selecting a niche. A personal visit often answers questions that are difficult to address through photographs alone. Tours are available by appointment, and the cemetery grounds remain open for quiet visitation.

Who may be inurned at Walker Chapel?

The Columbarium is open to the community and is not limited to Walker Chapel members. Families from across Northern Virginia, the United States, and even abroad have selected Walker Chapel as their permanent place of remembrance.



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What happens if my family lives in another state?

Many Walker Chapel families live throughout the United States and internationally. Cremated remains can often be transported more easily than traditional burials, making long-distance family participation practical.

Will future generations know our story?

Historic cemeteries preserve memory in ways that private storage or scattering cannot. A properly engraved niche becomes part of a family's continuing history. At Walker Chapel, each physical niche has a companion digital niche where the family can upload photographs, videos, important documents, and memories to the Cloud for sharing across generations.

What is the columbarium setting like?

Families often seek locations with natural beauty, quiet surroundings, and a sense of sacred care.

Walker Chapel Historic Cemetery emphasizes reverence, dignity, and preservation of sacred space throughout its grounds and operations. Beautiful flowers, evergreens, and towering noble trees abound, yet the area is a walkable garden just over two acres.

Can ashes be divided?

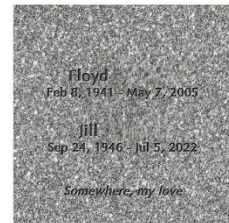
Yes, if you wish to divide the ashes among multiple locations, that is not only permissible but also fairly common. Many choose a columbarium like ours as their primary visitation site but also place some ashes at sites with strong memories. Sometimes there are local restrictions, but they are not impossible.

I am not a Methodist; can I still be inurned at Walker Chapel?

Yes. The tacit agreement is that you understand and accept that Walker Chapel is a Christian graveyard.

What is the layout of the engraving on the niche cover?

The layout for inscriptions includes the individual's name, the date of birth, and the date of death. This is repeated for a second person. At the bottom of the plaque, there is a line for a favorite saying.



What is the Importance of Historic and Sacred Grounds?

One reason families are drawn to historic cemeteries is the sense of continuity they provide.

Walker Chapel Historic Cemetery dates back to the 1800s and rests within an Arlington Historical District. The grounds reflect generations of faith, remembrance, and community life. Being a Historical District demonstrates the dedication of the Chapel and Arlington County to Historic Preservation.

For many families, this matters deeply. A historic cemetery does more than provide space — it becomes a family's legacy.

Can I pre-plan a columbarium niche?

Many families select niches long before they are needed. Pre-planning removes uncertainty, reduces future stress, and allows thoughtful decisions to be made calmly rather than during grief. Planning ahead is a gift.

It also gives families time to:

- Explore available options
- Discuss wishes openly
- Keep family members together



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- Prepare meaningful engravings and memorial plans

At Walker Chapel, many families choose their niches in advance as part of long-term family planning.

Related Articles and Links

You may find these additional references helpful:

- [Learn more about companion niches](#)
- [Read and download *The Guide to the Columbarium*](#)
- [Schedule a personal tour](#)
- [Learn about historic preservation at Walker Chapel](#)

Why Families Choose Walker Chapel

Families often tell us they choose Walker Chapel because it offers:

- A peaceful historic cemetery in North Arlington
- A Christian setting open to all
- Companion and family niches
- A permanent place for visitation and remembrance
- Volunteer stewardship rather than commercial ownership
- A family legacy that can span generations
- A cemetery that has served families continuously since 1848