



Fourth Presbyterian Church

The Meaning of the Memorial Garden

Presented by Dr. Michael Hoyt on All Saints Day, 2015

Adapted from theological reflections prepared for the Garden Committee by Rev. Patricia Gwinn.

The Minute for Mission on this All Saints Day,
is on the meaning of our Memorial Garden at Fourth Presbyterian Church.

Perhaps the place to start
is to note that the Resurrection Window behind me
looks down on the Memorial Garden.
So as you exit the sanctuary, under this window, and out the glass doors,
a few steps across the driveway takes you straight into our Memorial
Garden.

The Memorial Garden is not just encompassed within the walled area,
but includes the outside area as well.
There has been a great deal of very purposeful work this past year by the MG
committee.
The addition of a walk, gliding bench, trees pruned, additional plants planted
has brought a deliberate order and beauty to this area.
Our thanks to the MG committee:
Jackie Highley, Sally Flynn, Lynn Mitchell, & Deborah Schneider.

The purpose of the Memorial Garden is to provide a spiritually appropriate
place on the church property for the interment, or burial, of ashes.
Ashes are placed directly into the soil without a container
so they may become part of the living garden.
In contrast, a columbarium is a room or building with niches for funeral urns
to be stored.
We have a garden.
The garden is a place for prayer, meditation and the celebration of life –
for remembering the beauty and goodness of life,
those individual lives we have known,
and the life of all of God's good creation.

Some may note with curiosity that the garden is located in a parking lot.
This, too, is meaningful.
It is a resting place set down in the middle of life – a living place.
If you stand in the garden and listen you will hear:
the calls of children, the hustle and bustle of church comings and goings,
traffic, people laughing, talking....
Our loved ones are not buried in some quiet, sweet bye and bye,
but are resting in the middle of LIFE.
The Church Triumphant set down in the middle of the Church Militant,
to use the older language.

If you go inside the Garden, you will see that all the flowers are white:
White for baptism – the sacrament of our dying and rising with Christ.
Just as within the church our funeral paraments are white,
so the inside of the garden is white for the same reason:
we are wrapped in our baptismal garments – swaddled in the love and
life of Christ.

Inside the garden is a fountain:
And the water flows out from the mouth of a lion, a symbol of power and
protection.
In Revelation 5:5a: ...One of the elders said,
“Do not weep, behold the Lion of the tribe of Judah,
the root of David has conquered.
The water that flows out of the mouth of the lion
gathers into the bowl of the fountain
– which looks like a shell – another reminder of our baptism.
Christ has conquered. We have victory with Christ through our baptism
in him.

Outside the walls of the garden the plantings are colorful.
All through Scripture, from Eden to the book of Revelation, we find garden
imagery.
It is fruitful, colorful, filled with variety -
so, outside the garden, you will see seasonal colors –
symbols of life, vitality, and the beauty of the presence of God.
Ashes are buried in the earth both inside and outside the garden.
The Memorial Garden is one of those thin places where heaven and earth
meet
– but you have to notice it.
Those who notice the garden in our midst
are reminded that all the saints, the living and the dead,
wait together for the final coming of our Lord.

Today, All Saints Day, the Memorial Garden committee,
invites you to enter into the Garden and remember -
remember the ones you have loved who have joined the Church
Triumphant,
and remember your own baptism in the sure hope of our good future in
Christ.
After worship, members of the garden committee will be in the garden,
holding baskets of white ribbons.
We invite you to take a ribbon, tie it on to one of the two gates,
and say a prayer for those you love who have died.
Run your hand across the ribbons already there
and remember others' loved ones in prayer as well.
Then, if you feel like it, walk into the garden and dip your fingers into the
fountain,
and remember your own baptism and give thanks for your life,
your life now and the life to come.