

Memorial Garden

Frequently Asked Questions

What is a Yahrzeit in Jewish tradition?

Jews commemorate the anniversary of the death of loved ones by lighting a small candle, called a yahrzeit candle, which burns throughout the 24-hour day of the anniversary of death. Lighting a yahrzeit candle in memory of a loved one is a minhag (custom). While it is not required by halakhah (Jewish law), it is deeply ingrained in Jewish life.

Traditionally, the relationships for which we light a candle are the same as those for whom we say Kaddish: parents, spouse, siblings, and children.

Why a Memorial Garden?

Shir Hadash never established a Yahrzeit memorial wall. Since space was limited and the members of Shir Hadash wanted a creative Yahrzeit memorial, a committee was formed to research options. The Memorial Committee began this project in 1998 and selected the setting and the artists for the project. The Memorial Garden became a reality when the Bookey and Lettween families donated the funds to cover the costs of building the structure.

What is this Memorial?

This is a secluded space surrounded by beautiful curved granite walls engraved with the names of loved ones of congregants. The walls can include approximately 1000 names. The walled area will encompass a raised garden with an ancient olive tree and flowers. This space will be lighted at night and is wheelchair accessible. There is an option to add a fountain within the space in the future.

Where is it located?

This memorial is to the north of the Sanctuary building on the undeveloped land between the Temple parking lot and Blossom Hill School. It is forward of the building so that it will not interfere with any possible subsequent enlargement of the Sanctuary building.

Who were the designers?

The artists were chosen in a talent search done for this site in 2000 and 2001. They are Richard Deutsch of Davenport, CA and Larry Kirkland, of Washington, DC. Both are renowned public artists with works in major public spaces such as the California ScienCenter, LA, Stanford University, The Smithsonian Institute and the Federal Courthouse, Sacramento. They have won numerous design awards as well.

Who can place names on the Wall?

Any Shir Hadash member in good standing can place a name on the wall. A non-member can only place the name of a deceased Shir Hadash congregant on the Memorial Wall. Donor names will not appear on the wall.

How much will it cost to place a name on the wall?

The current fee for placing a name on the wall or reserving a space on the wall is \$650. This fee must be paid in full prior to the engraving date unless special arrangements have been made with the Memorial Committee. Once an application is accepted by Congregation Shir Hadash, there will be no refunds. This applies to reserved space as well. Donations for the name inscriptions will form the basis of a new Shir Hadash endowment fund.

Are there restrictions on the name placement?

For the initial naming process, there are no restrictions on the number of names any member can place or the ability to group names together other than what space on the wall allows. Selection of wall location will be done according to guidelines established by the Memorial Garden Committee in its Policy Statement, and solely at the discretion of the Memorial Committee. Grouping requests cannot be guaranteed, especially as spaces on the wall fill up.

Each name on the wall can consist of up to 27 letters and spaces. No titles or symbols will be allowed such as MD, PhD, or JD, as Jewish tradition considers us all equal in death. There is room beneath each name for the dates of birth and death, which can be in the Hebrew or Western calendar. Only the English alphabet can be used.

How many names can one place on the wall?

Initially, the number will not be restricted. As space on the Wall fills, we may eventually have to limit the number of names or reserved spaces one can inscribe at any time. Names on the Shir Hadash Yahrzeit Wall will be read in perpetuity at the Shabbat Service closest to the Yahrzeit.

Can names be grouped?

Every effort will be made to allow donors to group as many names as they wish together on a single stone column, recognizing space limitations.

Can spaces be reserved?

Yes, you can reserve a space for someone who is not yet deceased. The donor will be responsible for notifying the Committee when the name can be placed on the wall. We would strongly encourage the donor to insert language in their will informing the executor to notify the Shir Hadash Memorial Committee of the selection of the name and dates of designed honoree. If this issue is relevant to you, please contact the Memorial Committee for more detailed guidance.

When will names be placed on the wall?

There will be an initial opportunity to place names on the wall in the spring of 2005. Subsequent engraving dates are yet to be determined and will be based on the number of names to engrave. It is expected that there will be a minimum of one engraving opportunity per year. Applications can be filled out at any time. It is customary for engravings to be done before any one of the four Yizkor Services during the year.

What if two members wish to memorialize the same person?

Since a name can appear on the wall only once, we would ask that donors coordinate their name placement.

What if mistakes occur?

The committee is keenly aware of the importance of placing the correct name and dates for the memorial names. The donor must confirm all names and dates in writing before the order to engrave is finalized. It will not be the responsibility of Congregation Shir Hadash, its Board of Representatives or the Memorial Committee for errors made by the donor. A disclaimer to that effect will be incorporated into the confirmation form.

Is this Memorial Garden safe?

The artists have designed this area so that it will discourage skateboarders and graffiti artists. It will be lighted at night. Nonetheless, we advise anyone using the site when the Synagogue is closed to exercise the appropriate cautions in such situations.

Can we bring Yahrzeit candles or place stones in the Memorial Garden?

No, the Memorial Committee has chosen to exclude these items because of potentially serious maintenance problems they create.

Is there an appeal process?

In the event an applicant does not agree with a decision of the Memorial Garden Committee, the applicant may appeal the decision to the Board of Representatives whose decision shall be considered final for all purposes.

How do we convert a civil date to the Hebrew Calendar?

Many traditionally observant Jews mark a Yahrzeit date according to the Hebrew calendar. You are welcome to use the Hebrew calendar in your inscription. If you know the Hebrew date just write it in according to the Hebrew months as listed below in current standardized spelling: Nisan, Iyar, Sivan, Tammuz, Av, Elul, Tishrei, Cheshvan, Kislev, Tevet, Sh'vat, Adar (or Adar I & Adar II). Many Internet resources are available to convert the civil date to the Hebrew equivalent. Please note that the time of day makes a difference in this conversion as the Hebrew day begins and ends at sunset, and the civil day begins at midnight!

Is the donation for the inscription tax deductible?

As far as we know, the entire donation is deductible at the time the donation is made, regardless of when the name is inscribed on the wall. However, we ask that you please confirm that interpretation with your personal tax consultant.

What does the Hebrew on the wall mean?

The Hebrew words on the wide central Wall section – *T'hiyena Nafshoteichem Tz'rur Betzrur HaChayim* – mean: “May Their Souls be Bound Up in the Bonds of (Enduring) Life.” The five initial letters are traditionally placed on Jewish gravestones. The key root-words are *Nefesh* (soul), *Tz-rur* (bound) and *Chayim* (life).

On the reverse side of the pathway stone benches are the words *Menuchah Nechonah*, which means “Perfect Peace,” as in the peace of the dead, and *Shalom*, which means “Peace,” but is also a greeting, both in meeting and in leave-taking.

What happens after I submit an application to place a name on the wall?

After you submit your application form (available online or at the Temple office) with your donation, you will receive a confirmation letter acknowledging the receipt of your form. When the committee has collected enough names to set up an engraving session, the names will be entered into a database. You will then receive a second, more specific confirmation letter asking you to verify that all the data on that form is accurate and the way you wish it to appear on the wall.

Please verify, sign and return the form to us promptly so we can proceed to place your loved one's name on the wall. Members who have reserved a space but who have not designated a name for that space will also receive a letter notifying them that they are ultimately responsible for submitting a name for that slot in the future. Please return that form to the Temple office as well. When the engraving process is completed, donors will be notified by the Temple office that they can see their submitted names on the wall. Each name on the wall will be read in perpetuity by the Rabbi on his or her Yahrzeit.