

**Information and Guidance on
Funerals and Burials
at St Mary the Virgin Church, Westerham**



If you have been recently bereaved, please accept our sincere condolences and be assured of our thoughts and prayers.

It is a time of sadness and pain and the church is here to help you through your bereavement. We pray for those who have recently lost a loved one in our main church services, but please do not hesitate to contact us if we can help in other ways.

There is a lot to think about as you adjust to your loss and it can be a bewildering time. The purpose of this booklet is to give you information about the funeral and the burial.

A funeral is the opportunity for friends and family to express their grief and to give thanks for the life of someone they love. Our Priest in Charge (Vicar) is available to lead funerals and the church itself can be the setting for a Church of England funeral or memorial service for those in the parish. Anyone who lived in the Parish of Westerham at their time of death, or died in the parish (or who was on the church Electoral Roll or whose burial has already been agreed by faculty) is entitled to have their funeral or thanksgiving service at St Mary's, regardless of whether or not they attended church services here.

If you have just been bereaved, your first point of contact will normally be a funeral director. If you would like us to be involved in the funeral, or if you would like to hold the funeral in church, please ask the funeral director to contact us before the date is agreed, so we can ensure that the church and the Priest in Charge are available.

We are able to offer the following services at St Mary's:

- Funeral in church followed by burial in the churchyard or funeral only at the graveside
- Funeral in church. This can be followed by a 'lychgate committal', which may be helpful for families wishing to go straight on to any 'wake', or with a separate short committal at the crematorium
- Funeral at the crematorium.

Once the funeral date is booked, the Priest in Charge will arrange to come and meet the next of kin to talk about the arrangements and make sure the service is a fitting tribute to the deceased.

After the funeral, usually some weeks or months later, we can also discuss the following:

- Memorial/thanksgiving service in church
- Interment of ashes in the churchyard.

Afterwards ...

The funeral is a time to acknowledge your sense of grief and sorrow, but within us we may continue to carry that sense of grief and sorrow caused by the love we had for the person who died. If you wish you can meet with our Priest in Charge again, or we can arrange for a visit from our Pastoral Care Team.

We also hold a special annual “Light Up A Life” service in conjunction with the Hospice in The Weald for those who have been bereaved in recent years and who would like a public opportunity to remember their loved ones. Please contact our Parish Office for details.

The Churchyard

Anyone who was living in the parish at the time of their death, has died in the parish or is on the Church Electoral Roll may be buried in St Mary's churchyard, whether or not they attend the church. The Priest in Charge may also grant permission for the burial therein of other persons at their discretion.

As our churchyard forms part of our religious and national heritage, we aim to preserve the distinctive character as the resting place of the dead of the parish and as the setting for the House of God.

We hope you that you will understand the need for regulations; more information on the rules and regulations can be found on the Diocese of Rochester. By providing these guidelines we hope you will be able to choose an appropriate memorial, worthy of the memory of the person who has died and ensure that our churchyard remains a harmonious place of peace.

This booklet contains information to help you decide where you would like your loved one to be buried. If you have any questions, please contact the Parish Office.

Information to help you decide where you would like your loved one to be buried

1. Cremated Remains

St Mary's churchyard has a designated area for the burial of ashes. If there is already a family grave in the churchyard, a request can be made to add ashes, but this is at the Priest in Charge's discretion. It may depend on how many burials have already taken place in that grave. A short interment service, conducted by the Priest in Charge can be arranged via the Parish Office.

Once a date and time for the service has been agreed, the Priest in Charge will telephone the next of kin a few days beforehand to talk through the service.

Rules governing the interment of cremated remains

- Application for the interment of ashes must be made to the Priest in Charge, who will decide on the place of interment.
- Ashes are to be interred loose, directly into the earth.
- The names of those whose ashes are interred, together with a record of where the ashes are interred (if appropriate), will be recorded in a register kept in the church safe.
- No artificial flowers (except Remembrance Day poppies) or vases may be placed in the designated area.
- The certificate of cremation must be provided at the time of burial.
- There is a burial fee, which will be confirmed by the Parish Office.

2. The Burial Area



This is to the north of the church (by Westerham Hall).

How to Choose a Memorial Stone

A headstone or wooden cross must be in weathering natural stone, slate or hardwood. **All** monuments must meet the requirements of the Diocese of Rochester Churchyard Regulations 1981. The Priest in Charge can request that any unauthorised monuments are removed.

Size of Monuments/Headstones

Headstone Dimensions

- Maximum Height 4ft / 120cm
- Minimum Height 2ft 6 ins / 75cm
- Maximum Width 3ft / 90cm
- Minimum Width 1ft 8 ins / 50cm
- Maximum Depth 6 ins / 15cm
- Minimum Depth 3 ins / 7.5cm

Tablet or Plaque (for cremated remains)

- Maximum size 15 ins x 15 ins x 2 ins
38 cm x 38 cm x 5 cm

A memorial for a child under 16 years of age at the date of death may be smaller than the standard sizes specified above at the discretion of the Priest in Charge.

Key Points to Remember for All Monuments

- Memorial stones, or any object, cannot be erected in the churchyard without formal, written consent of the Priest in Charge.
- The minimum time between burial and the placing of a memorial stone is 6 months after burial, (3 months for ashes).
- Applications for burials or interment of ashes must be made to the Priest in Charge via the Parish Office.
- The form to introduce a monument into the churchyard (CR1) must be completed in duplicate and submitted to the Priest in Charge for approval. The form and the related Diocesan regulations are available from the Parish Office. Please note there is a standard national charge set by the Church of England for this.
- Funeral directors and stonemasons can help you complete the form.
- Any monument placed in the churchyard without formal written consent may be removed.
- Monuments must be in natural stone or slate, or hardwood with a non-reflective surface.
- Monuments must not be of red, black or dark grey granite, marble, synthetic stone or plastic.
- Monuments must not include any kerbs, railings, plain or coloured chippings, figured statuary, pictorial etchings or photographic representations, or be in the form of an open book or heart.
- A stone should be chosen for colour and suitability to the design of the memorial and for its ability to blend and harmonise with its setting.
- All words inscribed must, in the opinion of the Priest in Charge, be clearly legible, the overall layout set out suitably and be in

harmony with the material from which the memorial is made. Any inscription must be agreed by the Priest in Charge.

- The inscription on a memorial should contain the names of the deceased, the date of his/her death, and the date of birth or age at death. All factual material in the inscription must be accurate.
- Lettering, preferably incised, should not be gilded or silvered.
- If the Priest in Charge cannot accept the proposed wording of an inscription, he must so advise the applicant, who may, if they wish, petition for a faculty.

There are more restrictive regulations that must be observed for the Reburial Area; this is to ensure that the area maintains its traditional appearance as it is so close to the church building. It is also a conservation area.

- Headstones must be of a traditional English style, in keeping with neighbouring headstones, i.e. sunk straight into the ground (not on a plinth) and fashioned from traditional sandstone or limestone - to the measurements given below.
- Engraved lettering and fonts will be of a traditional style only.
- NO flowers, bulbs, trees or bushes of any sort may be placed on the grave – it must be left flat for plain grass to grow and be mown.

Further Points to Remember

- Bulbs and small plants may be planted in the soil of a grave; plants and flowers may be placed in a removable sunken container.
- Artificial flowers shall not be permitted.
- Rosebushes or shrubs shall not be planted on individual graves.
- Portraits, pictorial etchings or photographs shall not be permitted on memorial stones.

- No monument shall include: raised edges, kerbs, railings, fencing, chains, chippings, sculptures, plastic ornaments or statues.
- Lights, be they naked flames (tea lights), LED battery, solar powered or luminous shall not be permitted.
- The Priest in Charge and the PCC have the authority to remove any items expressly stated above. Unless the grave area is kept tidy the PCC may treat the grave as part of the turf and mow over it.

Reserving a Grave in the Churchyard

Parishioners and those on St Mary's Electoral Roll may make a request to reserve a space in the churchyard with the agreement of the Parochial Church Council and the Chancellor of the Diocese via the faculty process. A request will not automatically be granted. A grave reservation allows burial even where the deceased is no longer residing in the parish at the time of their death.

The reservation of a grave space by faculty takes 2 – 3 months and costs £500 - £600 (as at February 2019). This comprises the reservation fee and if the faculty is granted, a churchyard maintenance fee. Both are set by the Diocesan Registry. If you would like to apply to reserve a space, please contact the Parish Office for an application form.

The application must be approved by the Parochial Church Council, submitted to the Diocesan Registry and then displayed on the church door for any objections to be raised.

Neither the reservation of a grave space, nor the erection of a monument confers any right of ownership upon the relatives of the deceased or upon any other person in respect of any part of the churchyard. The whole churchyard is vested in the Priest in Charge alone and the erection of any monument is a privilege.

At the current time, St Mary's cannot permit any form of memorial to be laid in the churchyard without buried remains; however, we are seeking permission for approval from the Diocese for some sort of appropriate remembrance.

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Hours: Monday to Friday, 9.00am – 1.00pm