

# **St Michael and All Angels, Chetwynd**

## **Churchyard Policy 2020**

### **Introduction**

This policy aims to set out guidelines for the churchyard in respect to legal and diocesan guidelines.

The churchyard is consecrated to God, Father, Son and Holy Spirit so it must be treated and cared for in a manner consistent with that consecrated status. The memorials in the churchyard must be fitting and appropriate for today and in the future.

The churchyard is also to provide peace and welcome those who have been bereaved, extending to them Christ's promise of victory over death.

The churchyard must be regarded as a fitting resting place for the mortal remains of their departed loved ones both now and in the future.

Decisions about what can be placed in a churchyard cannot be a matter of private choice. Before any memorial is placed in the churchyard, written permission from the parish priest or the Chancellor of the Diocese of Lichfield is required. The Lichfield Diocesan Churchyard Regulations set out what can and cannot be permitted. This document is only a brief summary of some of the key parts of those Regulations. Those considering a burial in a churchyard or wishing to erect a memorial should read the Churchyard Regulations (a copy of which can be obtained from the Diocesan website). They are urged to discuss matters with the parish priest at an early stage and well before any arrangements have been made with a monumental mason.

Many people have a right to be buried in the churchyard and the church welcomes those who wish to exercise that right. However, even when there is a legal right to burial in a churchyard, there is no right to a memorial nor to have any particular inscription on a memorial. Separate permission is needed for these.

### **Who has the legal right to be buried or to have their ashes interred in any consecrated burial ground forming part of the churchyard?**

A person who:

- a) lived in the parish at the time of their death, or
- b) died in the parish, or
- c) was on the electoral roll of the parish at the time of their death.

Additional qualification adopted by the Parochial Church Council of Chetwynd:

A burial is allowed if:

- a) the deceased was a priest licensed to the parish at any time, or
- b) there is sensitive pastoral need that is agreed by the parish priest

A cremation plot can be allowed if:

- a) generations of the deceased's immediate family are already buried within the churchyard or if the deceased has strong ongoing links with the parish, or
- b) the deceased was a priest licensed to the parish at any time, or
- c) there is sensitive pastoral need that is agreed by the parish priest

The use of existing family graves for the burial of cremated remains is to be encouraged.

A burial plot can only be reserved by a faculty granted by the Chancellor. An application for such a faculty has to be made on the form which can be obtained from the Diocesan Registry. It is the policy of the PCC to oppose the grant of any such faculties reserving burial plots at St Michael and All Angels. That is because of the limited amount of space available; the need to retain that space for use by those with a legal right to burial; and the risk that the reservation of a burial plot will prevent the burial of a person with a right to burial. The Chancellor has said that he will give considerable weight to the policy of the PCC when he is considering any application for a faculty to reserve a burial plot. Although any such application will be decided on its merits, a faculty will normally be granted only if the applicant can show exceptional circumstances which are sufficient to justify reserving the plot despite the limited space and the policy of the PCC.

## **Memorials.**

It is important to remember that the Churchyard Regulations control what a parish priest can and cannot allow. If it is outside the Regulations, it cannot be authorised by the parish priest and will be declined for you to reconsider or refer to the Chancellor.

To allow time for proper reflection an application for a memorial should not ordinarily be made until at least 6 months after a burial or internment of cremated remains.

The Diocesan Churchyard Regulations:

These regulations are made by the Diocesan Chancellor and set out the type of memorial that the parish priest may permit without the requirement of a Faculty of the Diocesan Chancellor.

Compliance with the Diocesan Churchyard Regulations is a matter of legal obligation. The regulations also set out restrictions regarding type of inscription permitted and prohibitions regarding kerbs, railings stones, chippings, garden areas, photographs, artificial flowers and similar matters.

A written application for a memorial and/or vase must be made on the official diocesan form, obtainable from parish priest or a monumental mason. No arrangements should be confirmed with a monumental mason before permission has been given by the parish priest for the proposed memorial. Many monumental masons deal with this process for the family. Those considering the erection of a memorial are strongly recommended to consult the parish priest at an early stage.

## **Memorials for a burial plot**

The parish priest may permit memorials which are substantially in accordance with the following requirements:

- (a) An upright stone within the following dimensions:
  - (i) Height: no more than 915mm (3') not less than 726mm (2'6")
  - (ii) Width: no more than 915mm (3') not less than 510mm (1'8")
  - (iii) Thickness: no more than 152mm (6") and not less than 76mm (3") except for slate which may be a minimum of 40mm (1½") thick.
- (b) In the case of the burial of a child, a smaller stone may be permitted but in such a case, the stone should be no less than 610mm (2') high, 380mm (1'3") wide and 51mm (2") thick.
- (c) The parish priest may permit memorial stones with any shape or style of top provided that he or she is satisfied that the shape and style of top are appropriate for the churchyard. The parish priest may not permit memorials the body of which is of an irregular or unusual shape. In particular those shapes of hearts, teddy bears, or other objects are not permitted. If the parish priest has any doubt as to the suitability of the shape or style proposed, the matter shall be referred to the Archdeacon.
- (d) A memorial in the shape of a book is not permitted.
- (e) The parish priest may not permit a memorial which includes kerbs, railings or chippings.
- (f) The parish priest may not permit any memorial or element of a memorial which involves stone, concrete, metal, glass, plaster, or plastic objects whether in the form of model people, animals, or toys or otherwise.

- (g) The parish priest may not permit any object designed to make a noise when moved by the wind.
- (h) Stone crosses of similar dimensions to headstones and hardwood crosses may be permitted. A wooden cross is to be no more than 915mm (3') and the transom is to be of commensurate length.
- (i) A flat memorial stone without kerbs, railings and flush with the ground may be permitted if it is of equivalent dimensions to those set out above save that a length of no more than 1,830mm (6') shall be permissible for flat memorial stones.
- (j) An upright stone or base may be fixed on a foundation slab which is flush with the ground. The slab shall extend no more than 152mm (6'') nor less than 76mm (3'') all round.

The parish priest may permit the inclusion in a memorial of a stone vase which is not less than 203mm (8'') and not more than 304mm (12'') cube provided that the same is securely cemented into a sunken slab. The proposed vase must be of a high quality design and appearance.

Memorials are not considered in isolation but in their context as part of the churchyard as a whole. The starting point is that a memorial should be made of stone of the colour, type and texture used in building the church or local buildings or a stone closely similar to those in colour and texture. The Regulations list stones which are likely to be appropriate for use in a churchyard, such as limestones, sandstones, granites (but not grey or black granite), nabresina or serena stone. Polished granites, marbles, or synthetic stones are not appropriate. The stones should not be polished so as to have a reflective appearance but the incumbent may permit the face which is to be inscribed to be honed or polished.

### **Inscriptions on memorials**

Inscriptions are to be incised into the stone or carved in relief. They may be painted in black or white or in another colour providing that this harmonises or blends in with the stone. Plastic lettering is not permitted nor is gilding or silvering.

The parish priest may permit an inscription provided that the wording proposed:

- (a) Is simple, reverent and appropriate to the churchyard.
- (b) Accurately commemorates the life of the person who has died and is something fitting to that person's life.
- (c) Is consistent with orthodox Christian belief. Quotations from Holy Scripture or classical Christian poetry or hymnody are likely to be appropriate while those from the writings of other faiths or from popular culture will not normally be appropriate.
- (d) Is not over-sentimental and is more than an expression of personal loss or sorrow no matter how deeply felt
- (e) Is neither flippant nor irreverent.
- (f) Is not in the form of social media speak

Memorials may not bear photographs or portraits of the deceased, nor should they bear embossed symbols. No advertising or trademark can be placed on the face of the memorial. However, the stonemason's name may be discreetly incised on the side or the reverse of the memorial.

### **Area for the Burial of Cremated Remains**

Cremated remains must not be scattered or strewn in the churchyard.

Cremated remains are to be interred in a cremation plot by being poured directly into the ground within the area for the burial of cremated remains at a point not less than 101mm (4'') below the surface. If desired, the pouring of cremated remains may take the form of placing the casket in the ground and opening the base to allow the remains to flow out and then casket removed. It may be appropriate to open base and remove casket after bereaved left the graveyard provided they have been told in advance that this has been done.

The burial of cremated remains in a permanent casket is to be discouraged but if the family wishes to use such a casket, it should be unlined and must be made of cardboard or some equivalent material which is rapidly bio degradable. The interment of cremated remains in a hardwood casket is not encouraged.

### **Tablets for cremation plot**

A cremation tablet marking the site of a cremation plot is permitted providing it is a flat memorial stone without kerbs and flush with the ground. The tablets dimensions must not be greater than 406mm (16") by 406mm (16"). Wedge shaped cremated remains tablets are not permitted as they would not be in keeping with the cremated remains area.

The regulations regarding the type of stone used and the inscriptions permitted follow those for memorials to burial plots as stated above.

A vase may be inserted into the ground at the head of the tablet only. It must be round at the top and have a diameter no greater than 75mm (3"). The top of the vase must be flush with the ground.

A discreet temporary cross should be erected on the cremation plot at time of interment for identification purposes only but must be removed after placement of the tablet.

### **Flowers or other items**

The policy regarding flowers applies equally to memorials and tablets.

Cut flowers can be placed on a grave or cremation plot but once withered, must be removed promptly by the person who placed them there. Artificial flowers are not permitted and will be removed from any memorials on which they lay. By way of exception to this prohibition, the placing of wreaths and poppies is permitted in the periods of and leading up to Remembrance Day, Christmas and Easter and on the anniversaries of death or marriage. Such items are to be removed not more than one month after those occasions. No balloons or other portable or man-made items are to be left on a grave except that such items may be left in position for the period of no more than one calendar month after interment. If they are not removed by those who placed them on the memorials within that period, they will be removed by the churchwardens or a person authorised by them.

### **Coffins and caskets.**

Material used for coffins must be bio degradable. Wool, wicker, or suitably lined cardboard is to be encouraged. Coffins are to be of a size to fit into a standard grave space. The interment of a coffin requiring more than one standard grave space is not permitted other than by a faculty granted by the Chancellor. American style coffins are not permitted.

### **Health and safety**

The health and safety of visitors to the churchyard is important. The churchwardens reserve the right to take any necessary action in order to preserve visitors' safety within the churchyard.

### **Summary**

In conclusion, The Lichfield Diocesan Churchyard Regulations set out what can and cannot be permitted. This document is only a brief summary of some of the key parts of those Regulations. If in doubt, please consult with the parish priest.