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A Brief Guide to Placing Monuments in a Churchyard

Losing a loved one can obviously be very difficult, and it is important that due care is given to putting in place appropriate ways of remembering and grieving. Part of this may involve churchyard monuments of one kind or another.

The following is intended as a guide for those wanting to put something in place to remember their lost loved one. It should be used as a reference when the time comes to do this. There are no rights and wrongs about the timing of placing monuments. It might be something you want to organise along with the funeral, or it might be something you want to think about years later. If you plan to do this later on, remember to file this and pull it out when the time comes.

Norwich Diocese produce detailed regulations about what is permitted, and how the system works. The latest edition was published in May 2010. Copies are displayed in our church porches, and I've summarised some key points overleaf. You can also find it online at: www.norwich.anglican.org/buildings/registry/churchyards/regulations.

There are certain monuments that the local vicar is allowed to permit, and for those things, application should be made directly to him/her. Stonemasons should be familiar with this procedure. There are fees, revised annually, required to place each of these standard monuments. For 2013, the monument types & fees are as follows:

- Small cross of wood £36
- Small vase or small stone tablet £62
- Simple headstone £117
- Additional inscription on existing monument £20

If you would like a monument that falls outside of these strict regulations, then it may still be possible, but the local vicar is not allowed to authorise it. You will need to apply to the diocese for permission, and for this you will need the backing of vicar, churchwardens and church council. There are additional fees related to these special applications. Your vicar will advise you further.

I do hope that we can work together at the right time to provide a fitting memorial for those you have loved and lost, and that you find this information helpful.

Yours truly,

Rev Adrian Miller (Team Vicar)

CHURCHYARD REGULATIONS SUMMARY

General

- Nothing may be erected or placed in a churchyard, or work done, without the consent of the Chancellor of the Diocese (or the Minister of the Parish, acting within authority delegated by Chancellor).
- Applications for memorials must include details of wording, size, materials, and a sketch, along with the fee.
- Consent from Incumbent should be in writing.
- Precedence is not seen as justifying any breach of the regulations.

Monuments

- Monuments in full grave spots should not be installed until burial ground is settled, minimum 6 months after burial – though arrangements may be made beforehand. Make sure consent is given BEFORE entering into a contract with stonemason.
- Chancellor has delegated authority to local minister to allow: simple headstone; a base for the headstone; natural stone vases; a simple cross; a horizontal ledger. These monuments should be fixed securely.
- Ashes may be buried in a dedicated area of the churchyard, or elsewhere, space allowing, but ashes must not be scattered. An ordained clergy must be present for burying of ashes.
- A plaque marking burial of ashes spot must be flush with the turf, and may be laid at the time of burial.
- Monuments must be of natural stone. Red and very dark stones are prohibited, and stone surfaces must not be mirror polished.
- Kerbs, railings, fencings, chippings, statues, sundials, birdbaths, photos, pictures, plastic materials and glass are all expressly forbidden.
- Inscriptions shall be simple, dignified and reverent.

Management of Plot After Monument is Placed

- Surface of plot should be level and free of grass mounds.
- Bulbs and annual plants may be planted in the soil of a grave within area previously excavated. These plants may be in a removable sunken container. No other plants, bushes or trees are permitted.
- Wreaths and cut flowers may be laid directly on grave or in an authorised vase.
- No artificial flowers are allowed (other than poly/cotton “silk” flowers)
- The church council may remove any items at their discretion.
- Nothing other than items mentioned may be placed on or near a grave plot. If anything non-regulation does appear, the church council has the right to remove the same.
- Church councils may also decide to implement further local regulations in order to maintain consistency with local traditions.