



St Laurence Northfield

St Laurence Church Registered Charity 1132975

A Guide to the Churchyard Regulations 2021 revision

St Laurence Churchyard is consecrated ground and has served as the last resting place for those who have died for many centuries. It is still open for burials, the burial of ashes in plots and in the recently created memorial garden. It is a place of reflection, remembrance and above all faith. It is a place for all to enjoy and seek peace.

When someone you love has died it is a time of sadness, pain and confusion. The Church is here to help you through your bereavement and we regularly pray for those whose loved ones have died whether recently or many years ago.

There is a lot to think about following a bereavement and it can be a bewildering time. This leaflet is designed to help you think through how best you wish to commemorate the person who has died and to remember them in this place which is special to so many.

Jesus said,

'Come to me all who are heavy laden and I will give you rest.'

Matthew 11.28

Who may be buried here?

Anyone who lives in the parish of St Laurence or is on the church electoral roll has the right to be buried in the churchyard. They do not need to be of the Christian faith. Occasionally permission has been granted to others but as there is little space left this is becoming rare.

Who owns the grave or ashes plot?

Unlike a municipal cemetery, the whole churchyard belongs to the church. You will not receive grave deeds as the plot continues to belong to the church; you have simply been granted permission for a burial or internment of ashes and can then apply for permission to mark the place with a headstone, flat-stone or wooden cross.

Do I have to erect a headstone?

No! There is no need to do so. You may wish to let the grave become flat and grassed over. Although the church is responsible for the churchyard as a whole you are responsible to keeping the plot in good order. You may plant bulbs or small plants but please be aware that the grass is cut or strimmed during the growing season and this needs to be done efficiently so plants may accidentally be clipped.

When can I put in place a memorial stone?

You need to wait at least six months in order to let the ground settle before you can apply for a permanent stone can be placed on the grave. In the meanwhile you may wish to erect a

temporary marker such as a wooden cross. Both the headstone and any temporary marker should be placed at the 'head' end of the grave which is normally east facing.

To apply for a permanent memorial you need to complete a form which is available from the Parish Office or a Funeral Director.

Permission is then sought from the Rector of St Laurence in consultation with the Church Legal Authorities. The Chancellor of the Diocese has the final word. For complex or unusual memorials the Chancellor has to be consulted and you may need to seek special permission. This permission is called a 'Faculty' for which there is a non-refundable application fee.

Please note that normally only one memorial stone is permitted on a grave or ashes plot. The exception is when additional ashes have been buried in grave plots and there is no space left on the headstone. Flat stones such as on recent ashes plots may be added or further inscriptions added to the reverse side of the headstone.

Who will be responsible for the upkeep of the memorial?

This is your responsibility. You will be liable for keeping it in good repair and stable. Although vandalism is rare repairing the memorial in these circumstances is still your responsibility. You need to bear this in mind in your choice of memorial.

What are the regulations about memorial stones?

These are quite complex and can be found at www.cofebirmingham.com/documents/view/churchyard-regulations/

This is a summary of the key points:

Material: Natural sandstone to match the church or grey granite or a hardwood cross from a sustainable source. Stone may be polished on ONE side only.

Shape: an upright headstone can be basically rectangular or in the shape of a book. The top edge should be flat or in the shape of a cross.

Size: Full grave

Max: 1.25m (49") x 0.65m (25") x 0.11m (4")

Min: 0.60m (24") x 0.50m (20") x 0.08m (3")

A rectangular flat stone must be no larger than the grave itself and lie flush with the ground.

Size: Ashes plots

Maximum 0.45m (18") x 0.30m (12") or to match plots in the immediate surrounding area.

Note: Grave mounds are not permitted

Designs: one or two vase holes can be included in the base of the headstone or the flat stone.

A small incised carving (up to 0.15m² on a large headstone) in white enamel to represent a special aspect of the life of the deceased e.g. a teddy bear for a child, a cricket bat or musical instrument is normally permitted.

The following are NOT normally permitted:

Portraits or photographs on the headstone; kerbs, fencing, chippings or glass shades; heart-shaped stones; sculptures, statues or lights.

Inscriptions: These should be incised by machine or hand. White enamelling is permitted but not coloured, gold or silver except to match an existing inscription. The full name of the deceased and their dates or years of birth and death must be included. Nick names should be in inverted commas (some may not be suitable!) Additional words must be consistent with the Christian faith, and not tactless, inept or likely to cause offence.

Ongoing tokens of remembrance.

For a period of up to 6 weeks after the burial you can place both flowers and mementoes on the grave. After that the rule is that only cut flowers are permitted, however we are aware that visiting graves and placing items on them gives a lot of comfort. Also, many people who visit are not local and cannot maintain a regular supply of fresh flowers so for an experimental period we **are** permitting the following:

- Cut flowers
- One plant pot (up to 30cms diameter on full graves & 12cms on ashes plots)

All wrapping on cut flowers or plant pots must be removed as it quickly looks scruffy.

- Remembrance Poppies and crosses from 11 Oct – 20 Dec (all year for Commonwealth War Graves.)

We regret that toys, balloons, ornaments and statues are still **not** permitted as they cause problems for maintenance and if stolen or vandalised this results in enormous distress for families and the church.

Are there any charges?

Yes there are fees which help pay for the general maintenance of the churchyard. Please check with the parish administrator.

There are a lot of memorials which do not comply with the above so why do I have to comply?

The regulations have changed over time and we are bound by the current regulations. We will take into account the memorials in the immediate area but permission for them may have been granted by faculty and you may need to go through the same process.

Sadly, if you do not go through the proper process and have not obtained the necessary consents you may be required to remove your memorial which is distressing for all concerned.

Please do talk to the Parish Administrator or the Rector early in the process to avoid disappointment.

Each year around All Souls' Day (2 November) we hold a Service of Remembrance in church and remember before God all buried in the churchyard.

Morning and Evening Prayer are said in church most week days and we would be pleased to remember by name your loved one on or near to an anniversary. Please contact the Parish Office at least a week in advance if you desire this. Tel 0121 475 1518
e-mail: enquiries@saintlaurence.info