

## Guidance for the Bereaved: Memorials in Churchyards



For those grieving the loss of a loved one, marking their grave in a local churchyard with a memorial may be a significant way in which to honour and cherish their memory.

Your parish priest will want to do all they can to assist so the proposed memorial meets your needs and conforms with the Churchyard Regulations for the Diocese of Coventry.

*“The Lord is close to the brokenhearted  
and saves those who are crushed in spirit.”*

*Psalm 34: 18, NIV*

## What are the first steps in seeking permission for a memorial?

### **Allow a period of at least six months**

Six months must pass after a burial or interment before applying for a memorial to be introduced into the churchyard.

This allows time for the ground to settle and to reflect on the most appropriate form of memorial.

Your parish priest and memorial mason can offer guidance in this period regarding the type of memorials that conform to Churchyard Regulations.

Memorials should always be installed by a fully qualified and registered memorial mason.



### **Complete a Memorial Application Form**

Memorials in churchyards can only be introduced with the correct permissions in place.

Your memorial mason can provide and assist you to complete the application form, giving details of the type of stone to be used, the design, dimensions, inscriptions and other key details.

The form then needs to be sent to your parish priest who is authorised to permit memorials that conform to the Churchyard Regulations.



## **Conforming Memorials**

The parish priest will sign the application form granting permission under delegated authority from the Chancellor of the Diocese and return it to the memorial mason.

This allows work to begin on the memorial and the mason will then contact you and the priest to indicate when the memorial is ready for installation.

Sometimes proposed memorials do not conform to the Churchyard Regulations and are beyond what the parish priest is legally authorised to permit, or the priest may need to seek further advice.

If this happens the parish priest or a church representative will contact you and the memorial mason to discuss next steps.

A fee will be payable to the church when the memorial is approved for installation.

## **What kind of memorials can a local priest permit?**

Full details are available in the Churchyard Regulations:

<https://d3hgriq6yacptf.cloudfront.net/5f3ffda5728e0/content/pages/documents/churchyard-regulations-v2.pdf>.

Your parish priest, the funeral director and memorial masons will be able to advise on these. Memorials that conform to the Regulations and can be authorised by the parish priest:

- are made of natural stone of a colour, type and texture traditionally used within, or in the locality of the church e.g. limestone, sandstone, slate or granite (not black granite).
- have a honed finish, not polished or reflective.

- are of the right shape, height, width and thickness whether vertical or horizontal.
- may include a small plain cross or a single floral symbol of an appropriate size.
- include inscriptions that are simple, reverent and accurately commemorate the deceased and which are incised (cut) into the stone or carved in relief.
- are informative to visitors to the churchyard and consistent with the Christian faith.
- may include verses from the Bible, or lines from a poem or another suitable phrase consistent with the Christian faith.
- ensure that any additional inscriptions match the style and appearance of existing inscriptions.
- may include one flower vase of a suitable size securely fixed into the base of the memorial.

The parish priest reserves the right to refer any application to the Chancellor of the Diocese for further guidance or authority.

### **What else should we be aware of when considering a memorial?**

The upkeep of a churchyard will usually fall to the local church, very often volunteers. In the case of 'closed' churchyards, responsibility for upkeep falls to the local council. The Churchyard Regulations are also designed to make maintenance, such as mowing, more manageable. They take into account the needs of other families who have loved ones buried nearby, and those of present and future generations of visitors. Churchyards are also public and natural spaces that need to be managed in environmentally friendly ways. It is important that the churchyard be harmonious in

appearance so that memorials integrate well into the established character of the churchyard.

For these reasons the following are not permitted:

- kerbs or edging.
- chippings, stones or artificial turf.
- memorials in the shape of a book or other unusual shape.
- wind chimes or other wind-propelled items, lighting or solar-propelled items.
- plastic or other artificial flowers.
- photographs of the deceased.
- placing other items on graves in addition to the memorial.

### **What if the kind of memorial we would like cannot be authorised by our local priest?**

Your application will need to be considered by the Chancellor of the Diocese. The Chancellor is a judge of the Consistory Court who has legal authority relating to Church of England churches and churchyards in the diocese. The Churchyard Regulations are issued by the Chancellor who determines whether a memorial can be permitted in a churchyard by way of a faculty or his delegated authority to the parish priest to allow conforming memorials to be installed.

If the proposed memorial falls beyond what the parish priest (or Area Dean if the parish is in vacancy) can approve, a request for legal permission must be made to the Chancellor. This is known as a faculty petition.

## **What does applying for a faculty involve?**

A person applying for a faculty would need to go through the memorial application process described above. Your parish priest can then advise whether a faculty will be required, explain the process more fully and help you through the various stages.

A Memorial Petition Form can be obtained from the Diocesan Registry <https://www.coventry.anglican.org/memorials-in-churchyards.php>.

A statutory fee must be paid when the application is submitted. Please refer to *“The Faculty Procedure: Applying for a Non-Conforming Memorial”* available on the churchyard section of the diocesan website.

## **We are here to help**

Thank you for taking the time to read this leaflet. We hope it will be of help to you and recognise that you may be trying to absorb this information at a time when your loss still feels very acute.

Please contact your parish church for links to further bereavement support if needed. More information regarding memorials is available on the Coventry diocesan website (see below).

Your parish priest and memorial mason are available to provide further guidance.

We look forward to working with you to ensure that your loved one is remembered well in your local churchyard.

*Almighty God,  
Father of all mercies and giver of all comfort:  
deal graciously, we pray, with those who mourn,  
that, casting all their care on you,  
they may know the consolation of your love;  
through Jesus Christ our Lord.*

*Amen*

*A Prayer from Common Worship: Pastoral Services*

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**For further information and advice:**

See the Churchyards & Memorials section of the Diocese of Coventry website under 'Info for parishes':

<https://www.coventry.anglican.org/memorials-in-churchyards.php>

**Contact the Diocesan Registry:**

Diocesan Registry, Rotherham and Co. Limited, 8 & 9 The Quadrant,  
Coventry, CV1 2EH

Tel: 024 7622 7331

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