

## **Parish of Christ Church & St John's, Radlett**

### **Policy on Gravespaces**

This paper proposes that the PCC and Incumbent of Christ Church and St John's Radlett should not support requests to reserve gravespaces within the Churchyard associated with Christ Church

#### **Existing practice at Christ Church**

- Historically, Faculties have been granted to reserve a gravespace, but there are no outstanding "reservations". (A faculty was last granted in the 1980s for parents to be buried next to their baby, but the family have since moved away and signed a paper asking for the faculty reservation to be removed)
- A faculty has been granted for a limited number of graves over 100 years old to be re-used, and further faculty applications may be required in future. (Graves over 100 years old can be re-used, but only after a Faculty is granted permitting this for SPECIFIED graves.)
- All new graves are dug as "double depth", and can be dug as "triple depth" on request (and for additional fee), such that other family members can be buried in the same grave at a later date.

#### **Considerations leading to the Policy**

The Diocesan website states that it is possible for people to apply for a faculty to reserve a particular space in the graveyard, but actively discourages this practice. The salient points are:

- Spaces for burial are generally allocated to those entitled as and when the need arises (i.e. on death). Entitlement arises by way of (a) residency in the parish (b) membership of the electoral roll or (c) place of death being in the parish.
- The incumbent has the right to decide where in the churchyard a particular burial or interment shall take place, except where a specific place has been reserved by faculty.
- The past decade has seen a noticeable increase in the pressure of space for burials or cremated remains and a concomitant increase in the number of applications for reserved grave spaces.
- Grave reservations are unlikely to be granted where a churchyard is almost full.... Reserved spaces merely hasten the declining available spaces and may make matters worse if, for example, the holder of a reserved space moves away or changes circumstances without informing the PCC.
- A grave can only be reserved in a particular place for future (as opposed to immediate) use after a formal 'Petition for Faculty' has been made to, and a Faculty granted by, the Consistory Court of the Diocese. An incumbent, priest-in-charge, or Parochial Church Council ("PCC") has no right to reserve gravespaces, and a promise made by them will be ineffective without a Faculty. (The Chancellor may be sparing in his granting of faculties for reserved gravespaces.)
- A Court fee is payable on the submission of the Petition (in 2016 the fee is £289, reviewed annually) and is payable whether or not the application is successful. If the application does succeed and a Faculty granted, it will normally be subject to a condition requiring a (further) fee of around £225 to be paid into the churchyard maintenance fund of the church concerned. Therefore the total cost of a grave reservation is usually at least £514.
- If a Petition for Faculty is opposed, a full court hearing is required, or the Chancellor is required to write a formal judgment, further Court fees may become payable. The Diocesan Registry can provide details and guidelines about this on request. Again, such Court fees will be payable whether or not the application is successful.
- Once a faculty has been granted by the Chancellor, the incumbent must keep a clear written record of the reservation (usually by way of annotation on the churchyard plan). The Chancellor will also issue directions as to how a reserved gravespace must be physically marked out on the ground, to ensure that the space is not inadvertently used for somebody else.

- In this Diocese, a reservation is usually granted for a period of 25 years, but can be extended by a further application to the Court.
- Some Churchyards have a policy of reusing gravespaces if at least 75 years has elapsed since internment. Families should be aware that a grave reservation does not prevent such future reuse.
- Incumbents and other parish officers can offer advice to persons seeking to reserve a gravespace. They are asked to discourage at the outset any applications which are almost inevitably going to be turned down, so that applicants are not subject to wasted time and costs.
- Where two persons (for example husband and wife) wish to be buried together, they may either
  - (a) make a single application for a 'double depth' plot, where available, (one set of fees payable) or
  - (b) make two applications for neighbouring plots (two sets of fees payable).

**Paper written by Helen Warne on behalf of Management Committee  
Policy approved by PCC 7<sup>th</sup> November 2017**

**This policy is in line with diocesan advice taken from the following documents and website links:**

**GRAVEYARD POLICIES**

<https://www.stalbans.anglican.org/wp-content/uploads/downloads/buildings/ChurchyardRegs2004%20booklet%20A4%20pages.pdf>

**GRAVE RESERVATION BY FACULTY**

<https://www.stalbans.anglican.org/wp-content/uploads/Grave-Reservation-Guidance-Apr-2016.pdf>

**CHANCELLOR'S GUIDANCE ON RE-USE OF CHURCHYARDS FOR BURIALS**

[https://www.stalbans.anglican.org/wp-content/uploads/downloads/buildings/Reuse%20of%20Churchyards%20for%20Burials%2001\\_11\\_12.pdf](https://www.stalbans.anglican.org/wp-content/uploads/downloads/buildings/Reuse%20of%20Churchyards%20for%20Burials%2001_11_12.pdf)