

Kings Norton Parish Church
St Nicolas Churchyard
Memorials, headstones and maintenance

For centuries, our churchyard has been a place of Christian burial - a place of hope in the resurrection to eternal life through the death and resurrection of our Lord Jesus Christ and a place of solace and inspiration for all who grieve. *Jesus said: "I am the resurrection and the life. Whoever believes in me will live, even though they die; and whoever lives and believes in me will never die." John Chapter 11 verses 25 & 26.*

Kings Norton Church Council is the legal authority for the churchyard and is bound by the Churchyard Regulations 2006 issued by the Chancellor of the Church of England's Diocese of Birmingham. These can be found in full at <http://www.birmingham.anglican.org/upload/pdf/ChurchyardRegulations.pdf>

The Regulations mean that we are not free to run the churchyard or allow memorials and inscriptions just as we might like. We must care for its main purpose as the parish's Christian burial ground. We must maintain it as a public open space offering tranquillity and inspiration for all. We must also ensure that the whole area around the Church is both a fitting place for burial and an apt setting for our three beautiful listed buildings.

It is especially important that every person with a loved one interred in Saint Nicolas Churchyard is aware of the needs and sensitivities of others in the same position and of other visitors to the churchyard.

Monuments (Headstones)

In a churchyard, there is no right to have a monument erected over a grave. Relatives have to apply to the Rector to do so. The Rector can only give permission if the request is for a memorial which keeps to the Regulations on size, shape, material and lettering allowed for churchyard memorials and monuments and the wording of inscriptions. Stonemasons are aware of the Regulations. They can help and guide you on what is allowed and will apply on your behalf to the Rector for the necessary permission, using Form A.

*It is wise to check your stonemason is accredited by the National Association of Memorial Masons (NAMM)
Contact 01788 542264 or www.namm.org.uk for details*

The Rector is not able to give permission for anything which falls outside the regulations.

Wording on monuments

Any inscription must:

- Include the full names of the person(s) buried with dates or years of birth and death.
- Be brief
- Be about God's hope

The Rector is not allowed to permit variations from these.

We also do not allow other names on memorials, except in remembrance of a family member who has died.

Responsibility

Relatives or personal representatives always remain legally responsible for the maintenance and good upkeep of 'their' grave in the churchyard. This includes the ongoing cost of keeping a monument fixed securely. Where family and friends are no longer able to take responsibility; the Church Council (PCC) reserves the right to permanently remove or flatten monuments and graves that fall into a state of disrepair.

If you would like further help or explanation, or would be interested in helping in the churchyard, please contact The Parish Office, 81 The Green, Kings Norton, Birmingham, B38 8RU (Mon-Fri: 10 am – 1 pm)
0121 458 3289 www.kingsnorton.org.uk parishoffice@kingsnorton.org.uk

How does it all work in practice?

1. Please discuss your choice of memorial and wording with your stonemason
2. If the stonemason is confident that your choice is within the regulations, they will apply to the Rector on your behalf using Form A.
3. If the stonemason or you have any doubt over your choice being within the regulations, please contact the Parish Office before filling in Form A.
4. If your choice of memorial or wording falls outside the regulations, the Rector will not be able to give permission and you will have to apply to the Chancellor for a Faculty (see *B6 below*.) This will be treated very sympathetically but permission can normally be given only in exceptional circumstances.

Extracts from the Churchyard Regulations relating to Monuments and Headstones

B3. Erection of Monuments

(i) No monument may be erected over a grave until at least 6 months have passed since the interment save that the incumbent may permit an exception in the case of the death of a minor provided that he first consults the Archdeacon.

(ii) Neither the relatives nor the personal representatives nor the deceased's close friends have a right to have a monument erected over a grave. They may apply for the privilege of so doing to the incumbent who has discretion to permit such a monument if and only if the application complies with Regulations below.

(iii) Applicants are reminded that a churchyard is consecrated ground and that any memorial/monument will be seen by others visiting. Therefore those completing the application should seek to have erected nothing that will cause offence to others or that will be contrary to traditional Christian teaching; nor should any memorial impliedly or otherwise draw an unfavourable comparison with anyone else. **Accordingly applicants must discuss their proposals with the incumbent before making formal application.**

(iv) Any application to erect a monument shall be made to the incumbent on Form A but only following the discussions with the incumbent referred to in (iii) above.

(v) Once a memorial has been erected on the grave the relatives or personal representatives remain responsible for maintaining it. **Neither the incumbent nor the PCC has any responsibility at any time for the upkeep of individual memorials.** As a result, applicants are advised to choose monuments that are not expensive to maintain and that are not especially susceptible to vandalism.

(vi) All changes in a churchyard including the erecting or removal of monuments require the authority of the Chancellor who by custom delegates to the incumbent (save where he specifically directs otherwise) authority to permit the introduction of monuments which come within the limits set out in regulation B4 below.

(vii) No order should be placed with a stone or monumental mason unless the order has been approved in writing by the incumbent or by the Chancellor.

(viii) Grave mounds are not permitted irrespective of whether or not a memorial has been placed or is going to be placed over the grave.

B4. The authority of the incumbent to permit monuments or memorials

Provided he or she keeps a written record of the same, an incumbent may give written permission for the erection of a monument on a grave in the following circumstances:

(i) The monument must be in the shape of an upright headstone or of a book, which is basically rectangular in shape but the top edge should be flat, or in the shape of a cross. There must not be a sculptured figure protruding from the top of the headstone.

(ii) The headstone or cross may be no larger than 1.25m x 0.65m x 0.11m [4ft x 2ft x 4in] and no smaller than 0.60m x 0.50m x 0.08m [2ft x 1ft8in x 3in].

(iii) The rectangular flat slab may be no larger than the grave itself and must lie flush with the ground. It must be carefully installed.

(iv) The headstone or cross may stand on a stone base provided the base is an integral part of the design, and does not project more than 0.11m [4in] in any direction beyond the upright stone, unless a vase hole is included when the front projection may be extended to 0.18m [7in] in front of the stone.

(v) The upright stone, or base if used, is fixed onto a foundation slab which must extend 0.08m [3in] to 0.15m [6in] beyond the stone or base in every direction and lies flush with the ground [not the grass] so as to allow a grass cutter to pass freely over it.

(vi) The headstone, cross or slab is made of unpolished natural stone sympathetic to the fabric of the church, or of English oak.

(vii) Generally, the inscription is in words and numbers only (but see the exception below) and is incised without any colouring, gilding or silvering. The inscription must include the full names of the person or persons buried with dates or years of birth and death. The incumbent may permit brief additional words provided that:

- a. They are not tactless or inapt;
- b. They are consistent with Christian scripture, teaching and doctrine;
- c. They do not intentionally, impliedly or otherwise draw a comparison of any sort with anyone else buried in the churchyard.

The incumbent may permit the side bearing the inscription to be polished.

(viii) If it is sought to have an incised carving representing a special aspect of the life of the deceased on the headstone then in addition to the incumbent's agreement specific permission from the Chancellor must be sought. Such a carving must not be inappropriate for a Christian place of burial and must be no larger than 0.15m x 0.15m (6in x 6in).

(ix) The name of the mason making the monument is not to be on the front of it and if permitted at all by the incumbent [whose permission shall only be granted if he considers the appearance of the name will not be unsightly] should be in words not exceeding 0.02m [0.75in] in height.

B5. The incumbent has no authority to permit a memorial or monument which does not comply with the conditions contained in (B4) above and in particular the incumbent has no authority to permit:

- (i) Monuments made of marble or granite (other than unpolished grey granite), artificial stone or plastic and in particular monuments made of black granite or marble
- (ii) Monuments made of more than one type of stone
- (iii) Monuments in the shape of hearts, urns or statues depicting humans or otherwise
- (iv) Monuments with more than one side polished
- (v) Monuments with pictures or photographs on them
- (vi) Kerbing, railings or chippings
- (vii) Any kind of lighting.

B6. The role of the Chancellor

Any memorial that does not come within that permitted by the above Regulations may only be erected with the express written consent of the Chancellor and formal approval must be sought from him. The latter may choose to consult with the Archdeacon, the incumbent or the Diocesan Advisory Committee before deciding whether the application for such a monument shall be made by way of petition for a Faculty [obtainable from the "Looking After Your Church" section of the diocesan website at www.birmingham.anglican.org].

The Chancellor is approachable and sensitive to the stress a bereaved family goes through. Representations by letter can be made (prior to any Faculty application) to the diocesan registrar, which will be carefully considered.