

ANGLICAN DIOCESE OF BUNBURY

POLICY: Memorial Gardens, Monuments, Plaques and Niche Walls, Cemeteries

Approved:

Preamble

Memorial gardens are a witness to the Christian belief in the resurrection of our Lord Jesus Christ and to our assurance we share in his resurrection to eternal life.

Policy

Memorial gardens, monuments and plaques, Niche Walls and cemeteries are provided for by the Diocese of Bunbury but are subject to a range of management measures which must be followed by the parish, the priest-in-charge, wardens and parish council together with the appropriate notice and discussion with the Diocesan Office and the Trustees.

Practices

Memorial gardens must be limited in area and adjacent to a permanent wall of the parish church. Ashes should not be interred in a zone 1.5m wide immediately next to the building.

The area set aside for a memorial garden should be set aside through a special service of blessing or dedication.

A Faculty must be used to set aside the land for the memorial garden and provided to the Property Manager and Diocesan Secretary for consideration by the Trustees. The Faculty must include a map of the land, scope, size and drawn to scale, and location of the proposed garden; a copy of the parish council's resolution supporting the Faculty; and, a photograph/s of the proposed area to give clear understanding of its location and impact in the wider environment.

A process to amend or change the Memorial Garden must be in place at the time of establishment of the Garden and be included with the Faculty Request. This process must include the giving of notice to those who have scattered ashes in the future and at what point this would be deemed to have been fruitless due to loss of contact or death.

Memorials and memorial gardens, like Niche walls, must be maintained in a safe and proper condition for the duration of their existence.

Memorial Register

A memorial register must be established by the parish when a memorial garden is approved and established. The register must give the details of those whose ashes have been interred, including, the name, date of birth, death, and interment of ashes.

The Register may be a book with inscriptions suitable for display within the church building to family, friends and parishioners.

Interment of Ashes in a Memorial Garden

The right of interment of ashes will be considered to have been exercised if human remains (including bodily remains, body parts or cremated human remains are interred at the place of interment; or a memorial is created at the place of interment (regardless of whether any human remains have been interred).

A right of interment for a place of interment that can only accommodate cremated remains, such as a Niche wall or rose bush, can be either perpetual or limited to 25 years.

The length of the right of interment must be specified at the time the right is granted. The parish can commit to a further 25 years at the request of a family member.

A parish which has a Niche wall must maintain the Niche wall for 25 years after the last interment.

If the holder of a limited tenure right (25 years) does not take action in response to the notice within the time specified by the parish, the parish may disinter the ashes and dispose of the remains within the grounds of the cemetery or church grounds and remove any memorial relating to the remains.

The Order of Service includes the words 'earth to earth, ashes to ashes, dust to dust' in reference to the words of Genesis 2.7, "the Lord God formed man from the dust of the ground, and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life; and the man became a living being". Our Christian practice is to mingle the ashes with the earth.

This is quite different from the practice in some public crematoria where ashes are buried in the ground enclosed in a plastic container and may be removed at the end of a contracted period and disposed of where the contract is not renewed.

Ashes should be interred in a memorial garden should be emptied from the container into the soil.

On no account should a container be buried. In addition, ashes should not be scattered but deliberately interred into the earth. The exact location of the ashes thus deposited should not be marked.

A priest must be present for the interment of any ashes.

Visitors to the Memorial Garden

Family and friends are welcomed and encouraged to visit a memorial garden for remembrance and quiet reflection. It is not appropriate to bring and leave large bunches of flowers, vases or ornaments. The garden should be tidied regularly.

Monuments and Plaques in a Memorial Garden

The memorial garden as a whole is a place of remembrance for all whose remains are interred there. Approval will normally be given for a monument or memorial plaque to commemorate the establishment of a memorial garden. Approval will not normally be given for individual monuments or memorial plaques in a memorial garden because it is an intimate space with many ashes being interred.

Relocation of Memorial Gardens

Any relocation should be undertaken with utmost sensitivity and care, ensure the whole garden is carefully removed to a depth of about half a metre. Removed earth should then be deposited in either a new memorial garden within the parish church grounds or in another memorial garden in another parish church.

The area of land no longer to be used for this purpose should be deconsecrated by a special service in conjunction with the removal or relocation. Any plaques should also be kept safe and moved and their locations noted in the memorial register.

Monuments and Plaques in Church Buildings

Church buildings are set apart by dedication or consecration for the celebration of worship, the administration of the sacraments and due performance of all other rites and ceremonies of religion according to the order and use of the Anglican Church of Australia and other activities consistent with the mission and ministry of the Church to the glory of God.

Approval will normally be given for monuments or memorial plaques to commemorate the establishment of church buildings and other significant events in the life of the Worshipping Communities gathering.

Approval will not normally be given for individual monuments or memorial plaques in church buildings because they raise significant financial, missional and practical difficulties for parishes and the Diocese because of the finite nature of space within church buildings and the ongoing maintenance of such items through successive generations. In prayerful recognition of the lives and contributions of deceased parishioners, details such as names, births, deaths and bequests and memorial gifts should be included in the Memorial Register.

The Anglican Church of Australia in the Diocese of Bunbury has also established a policy in relation to monuments and plaques that bear the name of someone who has been found guilty of child sexual abuse. Where this can be done sensitively and appropriately, these plaques and monuments should be removed; and, names of buildings, rooms and locations where possible, should be renamed.

Niche Walls

The Diocese does not support the building of any new Niche Walls.

For those parishes that have existing Niche Walls, plans of the Niche Wall, its location on the Church Site, the details of each plaque and the date of establishment of the wall is to be maintained.

There must be a Niche Wall Register and details of the individual's birth and death maintained.

For those parishes with pre-existing Niche walls, these should have received permission from the Shire or City Council and there should be an existing Faculty provided to Trustees who would have had to have approved this Wall being built.

When the ashes are interred into the Wall, the Priest must be present at the interment and only ashes may be interred.

Parishes can charge a fee for this and set parameters for the plaques on the wall to maintain uniformity.

The right of interment for a place of interment that accommodates only cremated remains can be either perpetual or limited to 25 years.

A Niche wall must be maintained for 25 years after the last interment took place.

A charge should be made for the cost of the interment, that is sufficient for the parish to maintain the wall for the 25 plus years and this fund should be identified in the parish financial accounts as a special fund to fulfil this obligation. After 25 years, unused funds can then go into parish funds

Cemeteries

The majority of cemeteries on Church property were transferred to the control of local shires and City Council by the Cemeteries Act 1986. It has been updated.

The management of cemeteries and repair of grave markers are also impacted by the requirements of the Heritage Council. Repairs are now done at the cost of the family members when requested and the repairs must be approved by the Heritage Council prior to work being done.

St Werburgh's cemetery is the only cemetery in the Diocese of Bunbury where permission has been given by the State Government for certain members of the family to be buried there.

Queries in relation to burials at this Church should be directed to the Southern Ranges Parish or to the Diocesan Office.

Please Note: The Cemeteries and Crematoria Act 2003 should be followed along with any other relevant State law in relation to interment of human remains.