

# MEMORIALS AND GIFTS

## Guidance note

from the Diocesan Advisory Committee for the Care of Churches  
2016

Grieving families may sometimes wish to remember a loved one through some sort of memorial in the church. This may take the form of:

- A gift of furniture or other item for use in the church.
- A memorial plaque/tablet.

### SPECIFIC GIFTS

When a specific gift in memory of someone is proposed be prepared. Do not make an instant response; thank the donor, but explain that there is a process and that you, as an individual or PCC, have not the authority to agree to the placing of the item in the church. Encourage the PCC to look at the proposal with care

- Are there sensitive issues around the gift?
- Is it a memorial to someone well-known in the parish?
- Is it the kind of gift that could cause offence to some?
- Would the gift stick out like a sore thumb?
- In summary, would the gift enhance the building and mission of the Church or would it compromise either?

A Faculty will be required to introduce items of furniture, so contact should be made with the Church Buildings office at an early stage in the process. Problems can occur should an individual or a family order any memorial or gift before obtaining a Faculty first.

Small plaques commemorating benefactors and their gifts should be discouraged; instead, such records could be incorporated by the artist into the design or suitably and artistically inscribed on the gift itself (e.g. a piece of furniture, the base of a chalice). Alternatively, a commemorative book in which to record such gifts could be kept in the church.

### MEMORIAL TABLETS IN THE CHURCH

The DAC recommends that several years have elapsed between the date of death and the date of petitioning for a Faculty for a commemorative tablet. Such delay is to allow time for measured reflection on the life and contribution to the church and community of the person concerned.

To avoid the proliferation of tablets, the DAC must be consulted at an early stage as to whether one is in principle acceptable in a particular church. There will need to be some compelling reason for



allowing a tablet, as, for example, when the person to be commemorated has had an exceptionally long and distinguished connection with the church or with the life of the Church nationally, or of the nation.


If a tablet is to be allowed, the DAC can suggest names of suitable designers who will ensure an object of beauty and distinction is achieved. There are a number of excellent people at work in this field who can be relied upon to produce a high standard of lettering.

## MATERIALS AND DESIGN

- In general, materials such as slate, wood, local or at least English stones are preferred. If a metal is appropriate, bronze is preferred to brass as it does not require polishing.
- A memorial tablet becomes an architectural feature of the church and therefore the material chosen, the quality of design, the skill of the lettering and the felicity of the inscription all contribute to a memorial which will embellish and enhance the interior of a church. It follows that the design must be first class.
- The wording should be concise but informative so that the distinction of the person commemorated is clear, and the appropriateness of the memorial in the particular church is obvious.
- All fixings should be stainless steel, inserted with minimal disturbance to the fabric. Tablets/memorials should be mounted on the face of the plaster unless it is guaranteed that no wall paintings exist. If the tablet is to be sunk into the plaster it should be protected from damp in the masonry behind, and a certificate from a conservator provided saying that they have examined the wall, and no decorations, sgraffitto or wall paintings exist beneath.
- Sympathetic painting of letters, e.g. grey on slate; buff on limestone etc, should be agreeable.
- Avoid gilded lettering, unless it suits the building (i.e. lots of other gilding already exists).
- Avoid polished stone surfaces, except marble or alabaster.
- Check with your church architect or surveyor that the plaque will cause no damage to the ancient fabric or impact on archaeological remains/features (such as hidden wall paintings). Make sure that confirmation of this fact is included in the petition for a Faculty.

When an application is made for a Faculty for a memorial the drawings provided should

- (a) Show the memorial and its location in the church;
- (b) State clearly the material to be used;
- (c) Indicate edge mouldings and depth and style of incised lettering, and
- (d) Specify how it is to be fixed.
- (e) Good photographs of the site chosen (with position marked in) showing its relationship to other features in the church will also be required.



THE LIGHT

## MEMORIALS IN CHURCHYARDS

The Chancellor has delegated authority to incumbents to allow them to authorise particular types of headstones and these types are covered by the Churchyard Regulations 2013, of which the incumbent has a copy.

If anyone wishes to erect a headstone which is either beyond or at variance with those permitted in the Churchyard Regulations, they should be advised that they are at liberty to apply for a Faculty to permit the desired monument.



## BENCHES IN CHURCHYARDS

Since January 2016, the introduction of benches into churchyards has not required a faculty. List B consent is needed however, and will include the standard condition that *“No bench has an inscription on it which would not be permitted on a monument in the churchyard under the applicable churchyard regulations made or approved by the chancellor.”*

Applications for list B consent to introduce a bench into a churchyard should include:

- Photographs and plan of the proposed location
- Image and description of the proposed bench,
- FSC certification\* for the timber (if applicable),
- Details of any plinth, fixings etc,
- Details of any commemorative plaque including wording and materials,
- PCC minute approving the installation.

\* <http://www.fsc-uk.org/en-uk/about-fsc/what-is-fsc>

