

## **Representative Body of the Church in Wales Guidance Reservation of Grave Spaces**

### **Introduction**

People sometimes wish to ensure that a particular churchyard will have a space for their burial after death.

Reserving a grave space can only be done by obtaining a faculty from the Diocesan Chancellor. The Churchyard Regulations of the Constitution (Volume 2 Section 2.2.8) state:

*'No permanent or exclusive right of burial in any grave or vault shall be acquired except by Faculty'*

This is because of the general duty under the Welsh Church (Burial Grounds Act) 1945, which obliges the church to bury people regardless of membership of the church, if the churchyard has space. The reservation of space must be considered formally through the Chancellor to ensure that a reservation does not impact on the general public duty under the Act. In other words, reservation should not prevent the churchyard being publicly available.

### **Principles**

The reservation of grave space should be an exception and certainly not a general policy. Churchyards are for the interment or burial of the whole community not simply the church members.

The Representative Body would recommend the following principles when considering a petition for a faculty to reserve a grave space. These are not binding on Chancellors who must arrive at their own decision after the advice of the Diocesan Advisory Committee.

1. The petition must be supported by the PCC who should consider the pastoral aspects of the proposal and the precedent it might create.
2. The person for whom the reservation is sought should have good reasons for having a space reserved (e.g strong ties with the community, family already buried in the churchyard etc)
3. The reservation should only be for a space for burial and should not be for a particular memorial. A faculty will be needed at the time of the actual burial for any memorial outside that defined by the Constitution at the time.
4. The location of the reserved space needs to be clearly identifiable. A plan with measurements and dimensions to calculate the precise location should be prepared.
5. A secure means of recording the reservation must be found. Documentation can go astray over the intervening years leading to distress for all. Consider marking the reserved space with a small tablet set into the grass.
6. Faculties are normally subject to a five-year time limit for implementation. A Chancellor will need to record on the faculty if this is to be extended for the long term reservation of a grave space.
7. Generally, a faculty to reserve a space should only be granted where use of the plot is expected within a reasonable period. This is a sensitive issue but

reserving a plot for a person of twenty years old will mean the plot could be reserved for many decades and could be inappropriate.

8. It should be clear for whom the plot is reserved. General reservations for a family should be avoided given the uncertainties this implies (e.g which members of a family and who has priority?)

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