

St. Matthew Lutheran Church of Sandy Hill Cemetery and Burial Policy
As amended by Congregation Meeting
November 15, 2020, November 19, 2023 and November 17, 2024

Church Cemetery Description.

- A. The cemetery is divided into two sections. The section to the south of the access road is the “old section.” The section to the north of the access road is the “new section.”
- B. Burials in the “new section” will start in the southwest corner and be placed in rows from south to north, and from west to east as outlined in the cemetery map.
- C. Plots in the “new section” shall be marked according to the drawing and measurements of the cemetery map.

Cemetery Committee Structure.

- A. The Cemetery Committee is comprised of four voting members:
 - 1. Chairperson—calls and organizes meetings; oversees follow-up of activities; reports to the Church Council and to the Congregation.
 - 2. Treasurer—keeps records of checking account; writes checks; submits the Annual Report for Annual Congregational Meeting in February.
 - 3. Secretary—prepares and distributes meeting minutes; keeps copies of minutes on file in church office.
 - 4. The offices of Treasurer and Secretary may be combined (Treasurer/Secretary) under one individual. If this is done, a fourth voting member must sit on the Committee.
- B. Members are volunteers, approved by Council; members serve terms until (a) their resignation or (b) the committee determines they have stopped participating.
- C. Additional congregational member/members, approved by Council, will assist in measuring and marking grave plots, and maintain records. They will not have Committee voting privileges.

- D. The Church Council of St. Matthew Lutheran Church has the authority to make the final decision should any conflict or discrepancies arise pertaining to the Rules of the Cemetery Policy.

Cemetery Committee Financials.

- A. The Committee will maintain the Cemetery Checking Account in the same bank as the church's General Fund checking account. Together with the Cemetery Committee Treasurer (or Treasurer/Secretary), both the Congregation Treasurer and Congregation Chairman, officiating at the time the account is established, will be signatories on the account. When a new Congregation Treasurer and/or Congregation Chairman are elected, he/she must be signatories on the account.
- B. The Cemetery Checking account will be funded from the Cemetery Savings Account and Cemetery CD's, as necessary, and from the Irene Bohne Schroeder Endowment, as approved by the Church Council.
- C. Money designated for the "Cemetery" will be deposited in the Cemetery Savings Account by the Congregation Financial Secretary.
- D. Any expenditures of \$1,000.00 or more must be approved by Council, with informational notice to the Congregation via bulletin, newsletter, or verbal announcement.
- E. Cemetery projects in excess of \$5,000.00 must be presented to the Council. The Council must present the project for a congregational vote with a "recommendation for approval" or a recommendation for rejection."

Cemetery Committee Responsibilities.

- A. Routine cemetery maintenance.
 - 1. Write detailed specifications, including tasks and frequency, for maintenance of cemetery, cemetery entry, and pavilion.
 - 2. Solicit bids, contract, oversee, and pay for maintenance work. Mowing and trimming of cemetery grounds will be paid from church's General Fund.
 - 3. Assure maintenance of cemetery grounds is done before funerals, Christmas, Easter, Mother's Day, Father's Day, and Veteran's Day.

4. Provide dirt/sand for backfilling sunken grave sites.
5. Maintain grave sites that are neglected.
6. Dumping the trash bin will be responsibility of the Cemetery Committee.

B. "Special" cemetery projects.

Identify, write specifications, solicit bids, contract, oversee, and pay for "special" cemetery projects, which could, for instance, include fence maintenance, grave marker repair, cemetery upgrades, etc. Funding for "special" projects may come from the Cemetery Checking Fund, Cemetery Savings Fund and/or the Irene Bohne Schroeder Endowment.

C. Revisions to "St. Matthew Lutheran Church of Sandy Hill Cemetery and Burial Policy."

Revised policy, including procedures and rules, should be presented first to the Council for approval, and, if approved by Council, then to the Congregation. Notice of proposed policy revision should be given to the active voting members of the Congregation at least two weeks in advance of a Congregational vote. If approved, the revised document in its entirety is to be distributed thusly:

- A. to the local monument companies and funeral homes
- B. to the church files on computers and file cabinets
- C. to the church website (replacing any older version)
- D. to new members/families joining the church
- E. to any person(s) requesting burial of a loved one in our cemetery
- F. to all members (active and inactive only) of record at the time of the update

D. Document maintenance and posting.

A file for cemetery records, documents, meeting minutes, should be established in the church office files. The committee is responsible for maintaining this file system. Computer created documents should be backed up on the church computer. All relevant documents, including, Cemetery Committee Meeting Minutes should be posted on the bulletin board. The record of grave plots is to be updated each year.

E. Long-term planning.

The Cemetery Committee may formulate a long-term plan for the cemetery in order to plan for and manage funding from the Irene Bohne Schroeder Endowment, which was designated for “cemetery and physical plant improvements”.

Plot and Burial Rules.

- A. Plots for burial will be assigned in order as deaths occur. Reservations for plots adjacent to an interred family member may be made by the surviving spouse. Reservations for plots adjacent to an interred family member may be made for a surviving spouse, minor child (18 and under), and parents of a minor child. The reservation shall be made immediately upon the interment of the family member. (These are reservations only, and do not constitute ownership of the reserved plot(s). Cemetery records will be updated to indicate the reservation, contact information, and any fees paid.)
- B. When standing at the head of the graves and looking toward the graves, the man shall be buried on the right side and woman shall be buried on the left side. This order shall be followed in the “new section”.
- C. Two cremated remains, (husband, wife, or adult/minor child) may be buried in one 3 ft. x 8 ft plot. It must have a minimum of 18 inches of soil above the top of the container/urn. Recommend that the first grave be dug near the head of the plot in case a second cremated person is to share the plot at a later date.
- D. Graves for cremated remains shall be dug and filled by a grave digging service, and should be large enough to provide for lowering of the container into the grave and safe removal of the lowering straps or device.
- E. Burial liners are required for all burials.
- F. Mausoleums, above ground vaults, ledgers, or cradles are not allowed in the “new section”.

Grave Marker Rules.

- A. A permanent grave monument with the deceased person's full name, date of birth, and date of death shall be placed only at the head of the grave. If the family of the deceased fails to place a permanent monument within two years after burial, the Cemetery Committee is empowered to do so at the expense of the nearest of kin. If nearest of kin cannot be located or refuses to pay, the cost of a suitable monument chosen by the Cemetery Committee will be taken from the Cemetery Fund. This will become the permanent marker and cannot be removed.
- B. Veteran plaque markers may be placed at the foot of the veteran's grave as long as they are set deep enough into the ground to allow mowers to mow over them without striking them. Family of the deceased will be responsible for compliance.
- C. All monuments must be set on a concrete base, and must be guaranteed by the maker not to sink or tilt for five years. The concrete base must be reinforced with steel re-bar.
- D. In order to minimize settling or tilting on casket burial plots, stone monuments should not be placed until the new grave is fully settled and leveled. This will take a minimum of 1 year and a maximum of 2 years from the date of burial. Meanwhile, the temporary marker provided by the funeral home is not to be removed or relocated from its original position. Once the permanent monument is in place the temporary marker shall be removed, either by family or cemetery committee.
- E. Monuments for burials of cremated remains may be ordered in advance of the burial and placed on those plots immediately upon burial.
- F. A single plot is a 3 ft. x 8 ft. plot. For a single plot, the concrete base for a monument shall not exceed 4 ft. with a minimum of 6 inches thick and no more than 2 inches above the ground. The width shall be no wider than 14 inches. The concrete base must be reinforced with steel re-bar.
- G. A double plot is a 7.5 (7-1/2) ft. x 8 ft. plot. For double grave sites, the concrete base for a monument shall not exceed 84 inches, with a minimum of 6 inches thick and no more than 2 inches above the ground. The width shall be no wider than 14 inches. The concrete base must be reinforced with steel re-bar.
- H. For a single plot or a double plot, no monument, including the monument base, shall exceed a height of 3 feet (36 inches) above the concrete base.

General Grave Site Rules.

- A. Fences, rooted vegetation, or other items which impede the mowing and trimming of the grave site, are prohibited.
- B. Floral arrangements consisting of cut flowers, artificial flowers, potted plants, or other items may be placed on grave sites for the first year after burial or until the monument is placed, but not to exceed two years. After two years all items must be removed from the grave site and placed on the base of the monument. Flower vases shall be placed in the middle or on each side of the monument. All glass items are prohibited for use in this cemetery.
- C. Flowers and plants displaced by wind will be discarded.
- D. Grave site maintenance such as removing wreaths, old flowers, backfilling sunken sites, straightening stones, etc. are the responsibility of family/friends of the interred.
- E. For graves bounded by cradles, family/friends of the interred are responsible for grounds keeping within the bounds of the cradle.
- F. Relatives or friends of a deceased person buried in this cemetery shall remove the excess soil from the area of the grave within 1 year after the burial to create a flat surface.
- G. The Cemetery Committee Chairperson, or the Pastor, must be notified before any construction for the permanent monument is begun so that the correct location can be verified and monuments are kept in line and orderly. If a monument is not set in proper alignment according to the chairperson's direction, then it will be removed, and reset at installer's expense.
- H. The Cemetery Committee has the authority to govern and enforce these rules in perpetuity on behalf of St. Matthew Lutheran Church of Sandy Hill.

Pastor's Responsibilities.

The Pastor will call cemetery maintenance as soon as he is aware of an impending funeral and/or burial.

Cemetery Plot Fees.

Cemetery plots in this cemetery are not sold or deeded, and do not become the personal property of the family member(s) who may reserve them according to this procedure. Family members cannot buy or sell a cemetery plot in this cemetery. The fees specified below are strictly administrative/maintenance fees for the plot only, and bear no ownership value.

- A. Active members and active associate members of this congregation and their minor baptized children as defined in the Constitution and Bylaws, are entitled to a free burial plot.
- B. The fees for cemetery plots for non-members will be \$7,500
- C. Advance payment of the administrative fee for a plot guarantees space will be held, but a particular plot cannot be reserved.
- D. The Cemetery Committee has the right to reassign a “reserved” plot should the reservation be cancelled or unused by the persons for whom it was reserved.
- E. Actual ownership of the physical plot remains the property of the Cemetery Association as defined in the church constitution, but an occupied plot is recorded as such as long as the original occupant’s remains and monument are present. Should any remains be exhumed and removed from the cemetery, that plot may be reassigned by the Cemetery Committee, if needed.

Requesting Burial in this Cemetery.

- A. The family of the deceased, or the funeral home representing same, shall call either the pastor of this church or the chairperson of the cemetery committee at the earliest possible time to arrange for a burial. No one else is authorized to approve the burial.
- B. The pastor, or Chairperson of the Cemetery Committee, will provide a copy of this policy at the time the services are being planned, and cover any critical items with the family.
- C. No burials will be authorized in this cemetery without prior approval and coordination. Each of the funeral homes will be notified of this policy, and their contact information updated.
- D. The funeral home will coordinate any requests with the pastor of St. Matthew Lutheran Church, or Chairperson of the Cemetery Committee, and should if possible, include the pastor in the funeral service/burial planning meeting. As part of this meeting:

- a. Determine who will officiate at the services and burial.
- b. Determine the dates and time of the services and burial.
- c. Where will the viewing and services be held?
- d. Will there be an open casket viewing at the church?
- e. Determine whether or not the person was a military veteran. If so,
 - i. Does the family want military honors at the gravesite?
 - ii. Will the family want to order monument and/or markers from VA?
- f. Will this be a casket burial or a cremation?
- g. List any requested scripture readings and hymns to be sung
- h. Will a musician be required?
 - i. Agree on any honorariums due the musician(s) and pastor
- j. Will there be a luncheon required for the family and guests after the burial?
- k. Gather the contact information for the person(s) responsible for the maintenance of the grave and record it in the cemetery records.