



# Christ the King Parish

Office: 123 Good St. Houtzdale, PA 16651  
814-378-7653 · [ctk-ic.org](http://ctk-ic.org) · [office@ctk-ic.org](mailto:office@ctk-ic.org)

January 22, 2025

Dear Parishioners and Community,

I as pastor, after reviewing the financial and various situations that have occurred in our cemeteries with Christ the King Parish's Pastoral and Finance Councils and receiving their consent, have made the following changes to our pricing and policy for our cemeteries to take effect on March 1, 2025.

Below is the listing of our new fees for the cemeteries.

<b>Reservation Fee</b> to be Buried in a Parish Cemetery	<b>\$800</b> <i>Per Person</i>
<i>Includes \$300 for Perpetual Care</i>	
<b>Burial</b>	
Full Body	<b>\$900</b>
Cremation	<b>\$500</b>
<b>Christ the King Parish Cemeteries</b>	
Immaculate Conception, Madera	
Immaculate Conception, Osceola Mills	
Sacred Heart, Brisbin	
Saint Barbara, Brisbin	
Saint Joseph, Osceola Mills	
Saint Lawrence, Houtzdale	

Our cemeteries are in fair financial condition. We have the funds currently to pay for continuing maintenance for the medium term (next twenty years) but to prevent the cemeteries' upkeep from becoming a burden on the parish in the future we need to set our pricing to be in line with today's expenses and be prepared for the future.

You will notice that the reservation to be buried fee is *per person* instead of the prior wording of *per grave*. This is a necessary change due to the frequency of cremation burials. When the cemeteries were established and their pricing structure was set Catholics were not allowed to be cremated. This meant that each person who made a reservation in the cemetery by default reserved one grave per person. This resulted in people including the priests encouraging people to pay ahead of time to "reserve a grave". Many families, to keep current and future descendants buried in the same area of the cemetery, reserved multiple graves as a block for future family members.

For instance, if a person wanted eight people buried together you reserved eight graves. From the cemeteries' point of view this resulted in eight reservation fees being collected for current and future care of the cemetery.

The situation changed in the 1980's when the Roman Catholic Church began to allow people to be cremated. Instead of requesting a new grave for each new burial, people started being cremated and requesting to be buried on top of a prior full body burial. Since people were thinking of reservations as *per grave* the second burial did not result in the payment of a reservation fee. While this was a rare situation initially, half of our burials are now cremation burials. This has affected our cemetery's financial health because the reservation fee is our source of funding for the long term care of the cemeteries.

A second issue that our cemeteries now face is the situation of multiple marriages, mixed families and various other family dynamics that have resulted in disputes about who has the authority to modify a cemetery reservation. At the time the cemeteries were established this was a rare situation but now it is much more common.

Many times our cemetery records only indicate the person who originally made the reservation, the location and number of graves reserved, and perhaps a few names for whom the reservations were made. When the person who made the original reservation has died, and it is not clear who has authority to modify the original reservation, Pennsylvania inheritance law has been followed. This means that control passes first to the spouse who was married to the person who originally made the reservation at the time of death. Then it passes to the children AS A GROUP of the person who made the original reservation. If all the children are deceased then it passes to the grandchildren AS A GROUP of the person who made the original reservation.

As you can imagine this has led to some very distressing discussions when the children or grandchildren cannot come to a consensus about any modifications to be made to a cemetery reservation. Many times this results in graves being orphaned because a consensus cannot be reached about who can be buried in the reserved grave.

The final issue to address are the cemetery monuments. Until the most recent decades just some basic information and designs were on a monument. Now with the ability to add artwork and more extensive writing on a monument, it is necessary to clarify what is appropriate for a monument in our cemeteries.

Therefore the policy for graves in our cemeteries has been created and included with this letter.

All prior reservations will be grandfathered in with the assumption that when the reservation was made specifying a particular number of graves that reservation was for an equal number of people because only one person could be buried in a grave.

The following is an example of the effects of this new policy on a prior reservation.

- In 1965, prior to cremation being an option, Bob reserved eight graves for his family for burial. He only had four people living in his family but he wanted to reserve a location for future generations to be buried together in the cemetery. Therefore, he paid eight reservation fees for the eight people to be buried in eight graves.
  - Today, since cremation is now an option for Catholics, we would think of his reservation as being for eight people to be buried in the cemetery instead of thinking he reserved eight graves because due to cremation up to sixteen people could be buried in eight graves.
- Now in 2025 Bob's wife Sherly dies. She told her son William she wants to be buried as a cremation burial on top of her husband Bob who was a full body burial. Her son now has a choice.
  - A) Bury Shirley using one of the reservations that Bob originally purchased. (default) Since this would result in a grave being orphaned William chooses which grave to release from the ones originally reserved back to the cemetery for another person to reserve.
  - B) William pays the current reservation fee for Shirley's burial thereby maintaining control of all the original graves reserved by Bob. This would result in now having reservations for nine people in eight graves.

These changes will take effect on March 1, 2025. You can contact the office from now until March 1, 2025 to make a reservation in one of our cemeteries at the current pricing. You are welcome to call the office to update your cemetery reservations, particularly to specify who has the authority to modify a cemetery reservation.

Thank you for your continued support as we strive to keep our cemeteries well maintained and a dignified place for your loved ones for many years to come.

Peace in Christ,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Rev. Johnathan Schmolt". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a prominent flourish at the end.

Rev. Johnathan Schmolt

Pastor



# Christ the King Parish

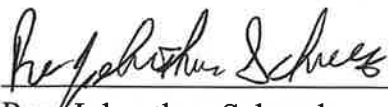
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## Cemetery Grave Policy

- A. The cemeteries managed by Christ the King Parish are the following:
  - a. Immaculate Conception, Madera (Bigler Township, Vulcan Road)
  - b. Immaculate Conception, Osceola Mills
  - c. Sacred Heart, Brisbin
  - d. Saint Barbara, Brisbin
  - e. Saint Joseph, Osceola Mills
  - f. Saint Lawrence, Houtzdale (Woodward Township)
- B. The cemeteries are owned by Christ the King Parish. The cemeteries are blessed ground dedicated for the purpose of interning the remains of deceased Roman Catholics. Burial in the cemeteries is available for people of any faith.
- C. The grounds of each cemetery are divided into graves of 10 feet by 3.5 feet. When a person makes a reservation for burial a grave is selected and designated for the person upon death. The parish maintains ownership of the grave. The parish is responsible for the groundskeeping of the cemetery for the indefinite future.
- D. **A maximum of two people** can be buried in one grave. The following scenarios can occur for a grave.
  - a. One Full Body Burial
  - b. One Cremation Burial
  - c. One Full Body Burial then One Cremation Burial
  - d. Two Cremation Burials
  - e. Note: A full body burial in a grave cannot occur after a cremation burial because you would have to remove the cremated remains to intern the full body.
- E. A reservation to be buried in a cemetery is made **per person** regardless of how the person will be interred. A person can either reserve one's own grave or to share a grave with another person.
  - a. Note: This is a change from the viewpoint that reservations are made per grave because more than one person can be buried in a grave. A person reserves the privilege to be buried in a cemetery regardless of how the person will be interred (cremains or full body)..
- F. **All prior reservations are grandfathered in** with the understanding that going forward the intention of the original purchaser was to have one person buried in each grave.

- G. New multiple reservations for burial, or when a burial occurs for a past reservation for multiple people, will require at a minimum the following information be recorded:
- a. The names for whom the reservations have been made.
  - b. If a person will have a full body (default) or cremation burial.
  - c. Whether one (default) or two people will be buried in a grave.
  - d. The burial location for each person.
  - e. A listing of each person who **will have authority to change the reservation** after the person who made the original reservation dies. The designation can be made in two ways.
    - i. An individual's name.
    - ii. An individual's relationship to the person making the original reservation.
- H. Each grave can have at most one upright monument.
- a. A monument cannot be wider than a grave (3 feet). An upright monument wider than a grave is allowable with permission granted by the pastor.
  - b. If a second burial occurs in a grave the person can be listed on the upright monument or a second marker flush with the ground can be added to the grave. The marker has to be flush with the ground in order to not interfere with the groundskeeping of the cemetery.
  - c. The executor or the family of the deceased is responsible for acquiring and setting a monument.
  - d. While the cemetery grants creative license to those who design the monument, the information and images on the monument cannot be objectionable to Roman Catholic Church teaching (ex. Promoting sinful acts). The pastor shall remove any monument that is objectionable to Roman Catholic Church teaching.
- I. This policy shall go into effect on March 1, 2025.
- J. This policy can be modified by the pastor after consulting the parish's pastoral and finance councils.



Rev. Johnathan Schmolt  
Pastor



Date



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## Cemetery Decoration and Visiting Policy

*These policies apply to all cemeteries managed by Christ the King Parish.  
Catholic Cemeteries are blessed ground, so please treat the cemeteries and  
those who visit them, with respect.*

*Contact the parish office for cemetery pricing and other information.*

***Visiting Hours: Dawn to Dusk***

***All pets and motorized vehicles are to remain on the cemetery driveways.***

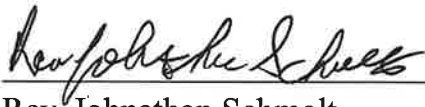
***Only people are allowed to walk through the graves.***

### Cemetery Decoration Schedule

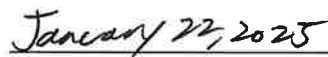
Winter: November 1 to April 30	<u>Permitted Items</u> Vase or Saddle: Artificial Flowers Wreaths, Lanterns Honorary Medallions
Cleanup: May 1 to May 14	<b>ALL ITEMS REMOVED</b> <i>Except: Monuments, Vases, Durable Flower Pots and Honorary Medallions</i>
Summer: May 15 to October 15	<u>Permitted Items</u> Vase, Saddle, or Flower Pot Cut Flowers, Artificial Flowers or Living Flowers in a Flower Pot Flags, Lanterns Honorary Medallions
Cleanup: October 16 to October 31 [Flags Removed after Veterans Day Nov. 11]	<b>ALL ITEMS REMOVED</b> <i>Except: Monuments, Vases, Durable Flower Pots and Honorary Medallions</i>

1. Decorations are to be placed either on the upright monument or to the right or left side of the monument.

2. Decorations are NOT to be placed in front of the upright monument or anywhere around a monument flush with the ground marking a second burial in a grave because it interferes with the mowing and trimming of the cemetery.
3. All decorations are to be secured so they are not separated from the upright monument during high winds. This means the decorations need to be attached to the monument or staked into the ground to the right or left side of the upright monument.
4. Nothing that grows is to be planted in the cemetery ground. Flower pots with planted flowers can be placed to the right or left side of the upright monument.
5. All items that are not permitted and any items not secured either to the monument or the ground will be removed. This especially means that nothing is to be planted or added to the grounds of the cemetery.
6. The Christ the King groundskeepers are responsible for maintaining a clean and orderly cemetery. Decorations deemed by the groundskeepers to significantly detract from the cemetery being clean and orderly will be discarded. Reasons for removal include but are not limited to the following:
  - Faded or torn artificial flowers, wreaths or flags
  - Decayed cut flowers
  - Broken vases, saddles, flower pots or lanterns
  - Items not attached to a monument or secured to the ground, or items separated from a monument due to high winds
7. At the discretion of the pastor, items deemed offensive or that go against the Catholic faith will be removed immediately.
8. Christ the King Parish reserves the right to modify this policy at any time.



Rev. Johnathan Schmolt  
Pastor



Date