**Memorial tablets in churches: DAC Guidance**

**The DAC frequently receives applications for the installation of memorial tablets in churches. All such applications are considered by the DAC on a case-by-case basis. Such tablets become a permanent part of the church fabric: it is important that they are appropriate in form and that there is not an excessive proliferation of tablets. In a** **recent (2020) judgement in the Oxford Consistory Court, it was commented that, “There is a consistent line of authority in English ecclesiastical jurisprudence to the effect that the grant of faculties for the erection of memorials should be ‘sparingly exercised’ “. Memorials may be expected to remain in place for a considerable time and the space for them in a church is finite and has potentially to serve many generations.**

**The Chancellor will therefore apply the test of ‘exceptionality’: there will need to be a compelling reason for allowing a memorial tablet. For example, the person commemorated should have made an** **especially significant contribution to the life and work of the church in question, or to the community, or to have been an individual of national significance. The DAC is aware that the Chancellor will need to be satisfied that sufficient time has elapsed between the death of the person commemorated and the application for a commemorative tablet**to **allow** **for**a **measured reflection on the life and contribution to the church and community of the person concerned. It is not acceptable to commemorate a living person, such as the spouse of the deceased, on the tablet. The wording of the tablet should be such as to make clear to a visitor to the church from outside the area why this individual has been considered worthy of commemoration.**

**It should also be remembered that where a family or a congregation wishes to commemorate the life of someone associated with a particular church, this can also sometimes be achieved by means other than a commemorative tablet, such as the gift of a prayer ‘kneeler’ or some other item useful to the particular church.**

**Memorial tablets**always **require a faculty from the Chancellor. The petition will need to make the case for the “exceptionality’ of the monument. Applications should be accompanied by life-size or scale drawings of the proposed tablet. They should:**

* **Show the proposed location of the memorial in the church. There should be photographs of the proposed site showing its relationship to other features in the church.**
* **State clearly the material to be used.**
* **Indicate the edge mouldings, font used and the depth and style of any incised lettering. State whether the lettering is to be hand or machine cut.**
* **Specify how the tablet will be fixed to the wall.**
* **Include the wording of the inscription.**

**Materials and design:**

* **Materials such as slate, wood, or English stones are preferred. If metal is used, bronze is preferred to brass as it does not require polishing.**
* **A memorial tablet becomes a permanent 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. The design must therefore be of high quality.**
* **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 an architect or conservator provided saying that they have examined the wall, and no decorations, sgraffitto or hidden wall paintings exist beneath.**
* **Check with your church architect or surveyor that the plaque will cause no damage to the ancient fabric. Confirmation of this should be included in the petition for a Faculty.**

**After installation, the tablet should become the property of the church, rather than the person who presented or commissioned it. It should be recorded as such in the church terrier. Legal ownership will therefore pass to successive incumbents.**

**The Chancellor has made it clear that the fact a commemorative tablet has already been commissioned or created before seeking a faculty will not influence the decision as to whether or not permission will be granted.**

For any query on this subject, please contact Nicholas Cannon, DAC Secretary, at: nicholas.cannon@dioceseofnorwich.org