

The Churchyard at St. Paul's Chapel

General Rules and Regulations

1. Cemetery

The Churchyard at St. Paul's Chapel ("TCSPC") is an LLC incorporated under the laws of Alabama. Its governing body is its Board of Directors ("BOD").

2. Hours

The Cemetery is normally open from sunrise until sunset (dawn to dusk) 365 days per year. Visitors are required to call in advance to arrange the opening of the gates.

3. Decorations & Flower Policy

3.1 Purpose

Decorations must uphold the cemetery's prayerful beauty, comply with maintenance needs, and reflect Orthodox reverence for the departed.

3.3 Cut-Flowers and Wreaths

- Fresh cut-flowers and seasonal wreaths are welcome and may be placed in non-breakable holders set flush with the marker or in approved vases.
- Funeral arrangements will be removed at the discretion of staff.

3.4 Candles and Vigil Lamps

- Bees-wax candles or oil vigil lamps may be used on Soul Saturdays, Memorial Day weekend, Pascha week, and on the anniversary of repose, provided they are in metal or glass fire-safe containers with a stable base and are extinguished before departure. The BOD may remove any object at their discretion.

3.5 Prohibited Items

- Plastic or silk flowers, balloons, stuffed animals, glass jars, breakable statues, windmills, shepherd hooks, and any decoration depicting non-Christian or commercial imagery.
- Decorations judged unsafe, irreverent, or unsightly will be removed without notice.

3.6 Liability

The Cemetery assumes no responsibility for loss or damage to any decoration, whether by theft, vandalism, weather, routine maintenance or removal.

3.7 Respectful Appearance

Families are asked to keep decorations orderly; the BOD reserves the right to limit the number or type of items on a grave so the overall grounds remain dignified and prayerful.

4. Non-Orthodox Christians

Interment of a non-Orthodox spouse or other person in a relationship with a member requires (a) written approval by the Priest on the BOD.

5. Temporary Markers

Simple wooden or metal Crosses are allowed for up to 90 days until the permanent stone is installed, ensuring every new grave is visibly Christian from day one.

6. Waiting Period

A 90-day waiting period following interment is required before a monument or marker can be set to allow the ground to settle.

7. Payment Requirement

Markers may only be installed on lots that are paid in full.

8. Number of Stones Markers on a Single Lot

Only one marker per body may be placed on each lot, it shall be flush foot-stone or veteran's plaque, provided the layout remains orderly. Maximum two markers per grave, (if two bodies are buried on a single lot). No vertical Monuments or Markers are allowed.

9. Application / Approval Process

The BOD must approve all Markers—including size, design, etchings, epitaphs, verses, and engravings—prior to fabrication. Only the lot holder or next of kin may erect a Marker. Applications are submitted through the Marker dealer via the official Marker Application Form.

10. Installation

- Markers may only be installed by licensed and insured professionals. Work, materials, and methods must meet Cemetery specifications.
- The Cemetery is not responsible for defects in foundation, structure, or workmanship of any Marker, nor for negligence of contractors.
- The Cemetery does not set Markers.

11. Indemnity

The Cemetery assumes no liability for damage to markers, or decorations from theft, vandalism, weather, acts of God, pesticide use, or normal maintenance activities.

12. Government Markers for Veterans

Markers from the Veterans Administration are permitted.

13. Marker Specifications

Materials:

Markers must be constructed of quality granite, or monument-quality limestone or slate. Marble is permitted but discouraged due to humidity; concrete is not permitted.

Foundations:

All Markers require a foundation.

Marker Size:

- Flush tablet (24 × 12 × 4)

Engraving / Content:

The Cemetery may disallow content that promotes illegal behavior or is offensive, including vulgar language, copyright violations, gang names, or extensive commercial logos. Brief military branch insignia or government-issued emblems may be acceptable with prior approval.

14. Name of Right-of-Interment on Lots

14.1 Eligible Owners

Each burial lot shall be in the name of one or two natural people (no corporations or trusts). No person may own more than two lots. All purchases and transfers must be recorded in the Shelby County Probate Office. It is the official record of who owns this right.

14.2 Human Remains

No more than two bodies may be buried on any one lot.

14.3 Nature of Ownership

Purchase conveys a right-of-interment only; legal title to the land remains with the TCSPC.

14.4 Transfers

Transfers require prior written approval of the BOD and payment of the transfer fee and are recorded in the Shelby County Probate Office.

14.5 Abandonment

If seventy-five (75) years pass with no burial or transfer contact, the lot reverts to TCSPC.

15. Vaults

- Concrete or fiberglass vaults are recommended to prevent ground subsidence and ease maintenance.
- Natural Burial Option: Families may forgo a vault if burial meets Alabama health regulations and either (a) a biodegradable liner approved by the BOD is used and (b) the family pays the actual additional labor cost (quoted in advance).
- Fee Review: The BOD may adjust natural-burial fees to cover maintenance expenses; current fees are posted annually.
- No Penalty Intent: These provisions protect the grounds and are not a penalty for choosing natural burial.

16. Temporary Relocation of Markers

- The Cemetery may lift and move Markers when required for interments, heavy maintenance, or to avert damage from an act of God.
- Markers, crosses, and icons will be handled with reverence, stored safely, and returned to their precise position when conditions allow.
- The BOD will document any relocation and notify the plot holder or next of kin.
- The Cemetery is not liable for any damage.

17. Liturgical Use

- No secular events may be held in the cemetery without the Priest on the BOD advance written approval.

18. Quiet Hours

Visitors should maintain prayerful silence; amplified music is prohibited at all times.

19. Environmental Stewardship

- Pesticides and herbicides are applied only when necessary and with eco-safe products.
- No release of balloons or sky lanterns is permitted.

20. Funeral-Burial Coordination

20.1 Point of Contact. The TCSPC shall appoint a Cemetery Liaison Committee, and will designate a single point of contact for bereaved families, funeral directors, and grave-opening contractors.

20.2 Family Guidance Sheet. At the time a death is reported, the Liaison Committee shall provide the next-of-kin with a one-page “Steps for Burial in our Cemetery,” including:

- Verification of deed / lot number.
- Choice of vault or natural burial.
- Approved grave-opening contractors list.
- Marker specifications & timeline.
- Scheduling with clergy, cemetery access, and payment details.

20.3 Access & Scheduling. The Liaison Committee coordinates gate access, confirms the service date with clergy, and issues written clearance to the grave-opening contractor. No excavation may begin without this clearance.

21. Cemetery Records & Mapping

21.1 Register. The Cemetery maintains the official record at the Probate Office of the Shelby County of each lot owner and location of the lot. They shall also keep records of exact plot coordinates, date of burial, marker date, and any transfers.

21.2 Master Plat. A scaled map showing every numbered lot is kept by the BOD and backed up digitally, however the official controlling record is at the Probate Office of Shelby County.

21.3 Annual Audit. Each January the Liaison and a BOD member will review the Register and Plat; discrepancies are reported at the next BOD meeting.

22. Grave Opening & Verification

22.1 Approved Contractors. Families may select any licensed, insured grave-opening service pre-registered with the BOD.

22.2 Pre-Dig Verification. Before excavation, the Liaison Committee (or delegate) meets the contractor onsite, references the Master Plat, and marks the exact lot corners.

22.3 Depth & Dimensions. Graves must be dug to state code depth (normally 42" minimum to the top of vault or casket) and dimensions supplied by the Liaison Committee.

22.4 Post-Dig Inspection. The Liaison Committee signs off once the grave is open and correctly located.

22.5 Backfill Supervision. After the burial, the Liaison Committee verifies that the grave is properly closed and the turf restored.

22.6 Unauthorized Excavation. Any digging without written clearance is grounds for contractor removal from the approved list and possible civil action.

23. Grave Orientation

23.1 Liturgical Orientation. All burials shall be laid with the feet toward the East so that, at the Resurrection, the faithful rise facing the dawn of Christ.

23.2 Headstone Placement. Headstones or primary markers are set at the West end of every grave..

23.3 Plat Alignment. Cemetery plats are surveyed West-to-East in keeping with the eastern orientation of St. Paul's Orthodox Chapel behind which the cemetery lies. The Cemetery Liaison Committee shall verify proper orientation before any grave is opened.

24. Amending These Rules

The Rules can be amended by a majority vote of the entire BOD after twenty (20) days' written notice.