ST. JOHN'S CEMETERY

Rules & Regulations

EFFECTIVE OCTOBER 15, 2026

St. John's Cemetery

4605 E. Trindle Rd.
Mechanicsburg, PA 17050
717-761-5121
cemetery@stjohns1787.org
www.stjohns1787.org
Authored by: Isabel Vitale

St. John's Lutheran Church
Grow in Faith. Share God's Love. Serve Others.

Table of Contents

ADMINISTRATIVE INFORMATION **2**

OUR MISSION **3**

GENERAL INTENT AND GOVERNANCE **3**

HOURS OF OPERATION **3**

ADMISSION TO THE CEMETERY **3**

INTERMENT POLICIES AND PROCEDURES **4**

DISINTERMENTS **5**

PROPERTY AND INTERMENT RIGHTS OF LOT OWNERS, IMMEDIATE FAMILY, RELATIVES, AND DIVORCE **5**

FLORAL AND DECORATION POLICY **6**

PERPETUAL CARE **6**

MEMORIALS AND MARKERS **7**

MAUSOLEUMS AND ABOVE-GROUND CRYPTS FOR CREMATED REMAINS **8**

DEPTH AND LAYOUT OF GRAVES **8**

AUTHORIZATION **8**

RIGHTS OF OWNERSHIP **9**

SPECIAL FEES **9**

DISCLAIMER **9**

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS **10**

ADMINISTRATIVE INFORMATION

These rules and regulations are hereby enacted under the authority and discretion of the Church Council of St. John's Lutheran Church. All inquiries, requests, and correspondence regarding these policies should be directed to the cemetery office at **717-761-5121**. This document supersedes any prior versions and serves as the governing standard for all cemetery operations.

OUR MISSION

St. John's Cemetery welcomes all families with unwavering honor, dignity, and respect. We are committed to maintaining the highest standards of care while preserving the historic elegance of the grounds surrounding Peace Church. As a non-profit entity, our mission is to provide a tranquil and reverent resting place for the departed and a sanctuary for the living to remember and reflect.

GENERAL INTENT AND GOVERNANCE

These regulations are established to safeguard the rights and interests of all lot owners and to ensure the uniform and equitable use of every space within the cemetery. They apply to all burial plots utilized after October 15, 2026. The Cemetery Manager, along with the supervisory guidance of the pastors of St. John’s Lutheran Church, hold sole authority over the interpretation, enforcement, and amendment of these rules, acting in the best interest of the cemetery community.

HOURS OF OPERATION

The cemetery is open to the public for visitation and authorized activities daily from dawn until dusk. Access is permitted through any of the ungated entrances off Trindle Rd or St. John’s Church Rd. The cemetery reserves the right to close or restrict access at any time for maintenance, safety, or special observances.

ADMISSION TO THE CEMETERY

- **Private Property**: The entirety of St. John's Cemetery is private property. Entry implies consent to these rules.
- **Speed Limit**: A maximum speed of 10 miles per hour must be observed on all cemetery roads.
- **Identification and Entry**: Cemetery staff may require identification from any person on the grounds and reserve the right to refuse entry to anyone who cannot provide satisfactory identification or who poses a disruption.
- **Behavior**: All visitors are expected to conduct themselves in a quiet, orderly, and respectful manner. Loud, disruptive, or disorderly conduct is strictly prohibited.

- **Funeral Adherence**: Funeral processions and services must follow the direction of cemetery or funeral home staff and adhere to all posted guidelines to ensure the dignity and safety of all attendees.

INTERMENT POLICIES AND PROCEDURES

- **Eligibility:** Interment rights are limited to individuals who hold a valid deed or other documented authorization from the cemetery or deed holder.
- **Fees:** All interment fees must be paid in full prior to the day of any service. Fees may be paid to the coordinating funeral home or directly to the cemetery. Checks may be made out to "St. John's Lutheran Church." St. John's Cemetery reserves the right to adjust these fees at any time.
  Current fees for interment are:
  - $1,300 for full-body burial
  - $900 for cremation burial
- **Notice Requirement:** A minimum of **48 hours** advance notice is required for all interments. This notice period excludes Sundays and public holidays.
- **Funeral Director Coordination:** Funeral directors must contact cemetery staff at least 24 hours prior to the service to confirm arrangements, fees, and logistics.
- **Outer Burial Vaults:** The use of a concrete outer burial vault or a structurally equivalent container is mandatory for all casket interments. This requirement applies to all full-body burials.
- **Inurnment Dimensions:** Urns and other containers for cremated remains placed in in-ground plots, niches, or columbaria must not exceed **12x12x12 inches** without prior approval.
- **Weather Delays:** Interments may be postponed due to inclement weather, ground conditions, or other factors outside the cemetery's control. The cemetery will make reasonable efforts to reschedule at no additional cost.
- **Pets and Animals:** No pets or animals, with the exception of service animals, are permitted on cemetery grounds during interment services.

DISINTERMENTS

- **Authorization:** Disinterments may only occur upon receipt of a valid court order or the written consent of all individuals holding interment rights (including the Record Owner, all heirs, and any other parties with a vested interest in the lot).
- **Hold Harmless Release:** The party requesting the disinterment must execute a legally binding hold harmless agreement, indemnifying the cemetery against any claims, costs, or damages arising from the process.
- **Assumption of Risk:** The requesting party assumes all risks associated with the disinterment, including the condition of remains, casket, and vault. The cemetery shall not be held liable for any damage or deterioration discovered during the disinterment.

PROPERTY AND INTERMENT RIGHTS OF LOT OWNERS, IMMEDIATE FAMILY, RELATIVES, AND DIVORCE

- **Deed and Ownership:** A deed to a burial lot confers **perpetual interment rights** but does not transfer legal ownership of the land itself, which remains the property of St. John's Cemetery.
- **Record Owner Rights:** The Record Owner (the person in whose name the lot is registered) retains the primary right to determine interment usage, subject to these rules.
- **Rules of Descent:** Upon the death of the Record Owner, interment rights descend to the surviving spouse, then to children, and thereafter according to the laws of intestate succession of the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania.
- **Spouse Vested Rights:** A surviving spouse holds a vested, indefeasible right of interment in the lot, which cannot be revoked or transferred without their consent.
- **Family Lot Doctrine:** Lots designated as family lots are considered inalienable—they cannot be sold, transferred, or subdivided without the unanimous consent of all eligible heirs, unless otherwise approved by cemetery staff.

- **Order of Preference:** When multiple individuals hold interment rights, the order of preference is determined by the closest degree of relationship to the deed holder, following the Pennsylvania intestacy hierarchy:
    1. Surviving spouse
    2. Children (including adopted children)
    3. Parents
    4. Siblings
    5. Grandparents
    6. More distant relatives per the statute
- **Divorce Decrees:** A final divorce decree may expressly restrict the interment rights of a former spouse. The cemetery will honor such court-ordered restrictions upon receipt of a certified copy of the decree.

FLORAL AND DECORATION POLICY

- **Removal Schedule:** All floral arrangements, wreaths, and decorations will be removed on an as-needed basis after the first week. The cemetery is not responsible for items removed.
- **Memorabilia Items:** Small personal mementos (e.g., flags, small figurines, photographs) are allowed. The grave site must be kept tidy. St. John's Cemetery is not responsible for any items left outside of graves. We reserve the right to remove items if they are damaged or interfering with maintenance.
- **Prohibited Items:** The following are strictly forbidden on any grave or lot:
    - Glass containers or objects
    - Candles (open flame or enclosed)
    - Pots, urns, or vases not permanently affixed to the memorial
    - Living plants, including ivy or other invasive groundcover

PERPETUAL CARE

St. John's Cemetery maintains both a General Endowment Fund to ensure the ongoing upkeep of the grounds, roads, buildings, and infrastructure. The General Endowment Fund covers standard maintenance of common areas. All endowment funds are managed with fiduciary responsibility for the long-term benefit of the cemetery.

MEMORIALS AND MARKERS

- **Payment:** St. John's Cemetery does not sell memorials, monuments, or markers. Memorials may be purchased from and installed by local business.
- **Monument Dimensions** (all measurements include the base):
    - For single lots:
        - Maximum height: **34 inches**
        - Maximum width: **30 inches**
        - Maximum depth: **14 inches**
    - For double lots:
        - Maximum height: **36 inches**
        - Maximum width: **48 inches**
        - Maximum depth: **14 inches**
    - **Foundation size:** Must not exceed 34 inches wide for a single lot or 60 inches wide for a double lot.
    - Monuments placed before the adoption of these policies are grandfathered in and do not need to comply with size standards. If you have any questions or concerns, please contact us.
    - Larger/family memorials are considered on a case-by-case basis. All family-sized memorials must receive prior written approval from the cemetery.
- **Flush Markers:** Flush (ground-level) markers are permitted anywhere within the grave site. They must be flat, with a maximum dimension of **24 inches by 12 inches** and no protrusion above grade.
- **Corner Markers:** Corner markers, if used, must not exceed **4 inches in diameter** and must be set flush with the ground.
- **Bevel Markers:** Bevel markers are only permitted if placed within an existing row.
- **Approval Process:** St. John's Cemetery does not require prior approval of monument inscriptions, materials, or designs (just oversized family memorials). However, if a monument exceeds the maximum allowable dimensions, St. John's reserves the right to remove the monument.
- **Government Flag Holders:** The cemetery permits government-issued flag holders (e.g., for veterans) in designated areas. Personal flag holders are allowed and must be kept tidy. St. John's reserves the right to remove damaged flags.

MAUSOLEUMS AND ABOVE-GROUND CRYPTS FOR CREMATED REMAINS

St. John's Cemetery does not permit the building of mausoleums or above-ground crypts. Cremated remains must be buried in a burial lot.

DEPTH AND LAYOUT OF GRAVES

- **Depth Limits:** All full-body burials must be excavated to a maximum depth of **6 feet**, measured from the ground surface to the bottom of the grave.
- **Vault Requirements:** A concrete outer vault is required for every full-casket burial. Cremated remains may be interred with or without a vault.
- **Maximum Burials per Grave:** Each grave may contain up to:
    - One full-body casket, plus four containers of cremated remains; or
    - Four containers of cremated remains.
    - All combinations must be pre-authorized and recorded by the cemetery office.

AUTHORIZATION

- **Authorization:** All interments, disinterments, and permanent memorial placements require the authorization of the appropriate next-of-kin. Authorizations may be given over the phone, email, or in-person.
- **Priority Hierarchy:** The next-of-kin authorized to make decisions must follow the priority established by Pennsylvania intestate succession law:
    1. Surviving spouse
    2. Adult children (majority age)
    3. Parents
    4. Siblings
    5. Grandparents
    6. Other legal heirs. If no next-of-kin exists, the cemetery may act on the advice of the Church Council.

RIGHTS OF OWNERSHIP

- **Deed Issuance:** Upon full payment for a burial lot, a deed conveying perpetual interment rights is issued to the purchaser. This deed is recorded in the cemetery's records. All burial lot sales are final.
- **Fees:** The price to purchase a burial lot is $1,100.
- **Replacement Deeds:** Lost or destroyed deeds may be replaced upon satisfactory proof of ownership and payment of $100.
- **Repurchase Terms:** St. John's Cemetery does not repurchase burial lots. It is the responsibility of the deed holder to transfer deed ownership or resell the lot if ownership is no longer desired. On rare instances, if the burial lot is in demand from another party, the cemetery will facilitate the resale.
- **Private Sales:** Lot owners may sell their interment rights to third parties and **must notify the cemetery** of the transfer of ownership.

SPECIAL FEES

St. John's Cemetery charges special fees for certain occasions. These include:

- **Graveside service:** If you would like one of St. John's pastors to lead a graveside service, the fee is $200.
- **Weekend fee:** For burials over the weekend, the fees are $200 for full-body and $150 for cremation. These are in addition to the regular opening fees.
- **Layout fee:** St John's does **not** charge a fee to funeral homes or memorial dealers for marking graves for memorial placement. This activity is considered under the Cemetery Manager and Caretaker's normal day-to-day responsibilities.

DISCLAIMER

The cemetery and St. John's Lutheran Church pastors and employees shall not be held liable for damages to property, injury to persons, or loss resulting from the acts of third parties (including but not limited to vandalism, theft, or natural forces) or from conditions of which the cemetery had no notice and that were not reasonably discoverable. It is the responsibility of visitors and lot owners to exercise reasonable care and to report any hazardous or unusual conditions promptly to the cemetery office. By entering or using the grounds, all persons acknowledge these limitations of liability.

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

How much does a plot cost?

A plot currently costs $1,100 each. That is the cost to own the plot and for perpetual care at our cemetery. There is a separate opening and closing fee at the time of burial. Prices are subject to change over time.

What is an opening fee?

An opening fee is a fee for digging a hole, placing a body, and refilling the hole. This fee is separate from the fee to purchase a plot. The opening fee for a full body burial is $1,300. The opening fee for a cremation burial is $900. Multiple cremains can be placed at the same time for one opening fee. If placed at different times, the opening fee will be charged for each interment.

I don't want my plot anymore. Will you buy it back from me?

All plot sales are final; we do not purchase plots back. However, you may sell your own plot to another individual or, if there is a waiting list for your plot, we can facilitate the sale. Please notify us if you plan to transfer a deed.

How many cremains can I put in a plot?

You may place up to 4 cremains into one plot. The urns may be placed at different times or the same time. If they are buried at different times, a separate $900 opening fee will apply to each. For example, if you buried 4 different cremains at 4 different times, you would owe a total of $3,600 ($900 at the time of each burial). If you buried all 4 at the same time, you would only owe $900.

Can I have a full body and cremains in the same plot?

Yes, a plot can fit one full body with up to 4 cremains.

Can I bury my pet with me?

You may bury your cremated pet's remains with you at the time of your burial. Full body pet burials are not allowed. We will not open a grave for the sole purpose of burying pet cremains.

Can I just dig a hole myself and bury cremains?
No, all digging must be authorized by the cemetery and performed by cemetery staff.

Can I buy a headstone from you?
No, we do not sell headstones or memorials. We recommend working with a local funeral home or memorial business.

Can you place a headstone that I bought online?
Yes. The fee to lay the foundation and set the headstone is $200.

Do you place flags? Where did my flag go?
We do not purchase or place veteran flags for the cemetery. Other community organizations do this. If we see a damaged or fallen flag, we will dispose of or put back flags as necessary. Please contact the VFW or DAV if you have further questions.

Why are there weeds around my plot?
We maintain the cemetery by mowing and weed whacking; however, we do not spray for weeds. You may provide more extensive maintenance for a plot if desired.

Do you own Peace Church?
Although Peace Church is a part of our history, we do not own it. Instead, Friends of Peace Church does. Services and weddings are still held in the facility. For more information, visit www.westshorehistoricalsociety.org/peace-church.

Can I visit a plot in the wintertime?
Yes, but we do not plow, so we would advise visiting when there is no snow.

Will you lead a graveside service?
Yes. The fee for one of our pastors to lead a graveside service is $200, usually paid to funeral home. If you aren't working with a funeral home, you may pay St. John's Cemetery directly.