

In the matter of All Saints and St Nicholas, Icklesham

Judgment

1. By a petition dated 27 November 2013, Daniel Rosewell seeks a faculty for the introduction of a memorial at the grave of his son, Oscar Emmett Peter Rosewell, in the churchyard of St Nicholas, Icklesham.
2. The petition is supported by the curate, Canon Hugh Moseley, and there is a recorded minute of the PCC expressing its consent. As Canon Moseley recognises, the proposed headstone falls outside the range for which there is delegated authority, hence the need for a faculty. The cost of the memorial is to be funded by a charity 'Jack's Dream'. The parish has waived its fees for the funeral and related expenses, and Canon Moseley has prevailed upon the court similarly to waive the faculty fees.
3. Oscar lived for barely six weeks. He died of a chromosome deficiency. In his short life, he was loved and cherished by his parents, and his older brother Theo.
4. The artwork proposed for Oscar's memorial is generally not permitted in consecrated churchyards. It comprises an infant lying in a crib, several stars, and doves bearing olive branches, and concerns were properly raised by the DAC. Canon Moseley has spent some time with Oscar's parents discussing how best Oscar should be remembered both immediately, in the rawness of his recent neonatal death, and in the future, when perhaps a more reflective mood may emerge. The proposal now before me differs from that originally presented in two material ways:
 - (a) The dates are to be expressed in words: 22 March 2013 – 8 May 2013
 - (b) The inscription is to be:

Be near me, Lord Jesus; I ask you to stay
Close by me for ever and love me, I pray.
5. In the tragic and exceptional circumstances of this case, an exceptional response is called for. I have no hesitation in approving the petition as presented subject to the two variations outlined above. I also endorse the view of the DAC, that finishing the engravings in black enamel may make them appear excessively sombre and I commend that consideration be given to a lighter colour, silver perhaps, as may be recommended by the monumental mason. However, this is an aesthetic consideration on which I am content to defer to the view of Oscar's parents.
6. I wish to extend my condolences to Oscar's parents and his extended family, and to record the court's gratitude to Canon Moseley.