

PAROCHIAL AND OTHER FEES

Information for Clergy, Self-Supporting Ministers and Licensed Lay Ministers who hold their *Office with Common Tenure* (and in some cases Freehold) terms

A GUIDE TO PAROCHIAL FEES

For Clergy, LLMs, Churchwardens, PCC Treasurers and Parish Administrators

What are Parochial Fees?

Parochial fees are the fees charged for certain services (sometimes called occasional offices) conducted by the Church of England (CofE). These are set by the CofE's governing body, the General Synod, and Parliament. They are legally chargeable and recoverable as debt. The table of fees is listed on the CofE website.

Parochial fees automatically arise and are payable when any of the duties listed on the official table of parochial fees issued by the CofE are carried out by a clerk in holy orders, or by a licenced LLM or lay worker.

How much are the fees?

The CofE publishes the table of fees on its website (<https://www.churchofengland.org/resources/clergy-resources/life-events-parochial-fees-and-guidance>). Any increase in fees comes into effect 1 January of each year, and the details of any increases are published in the preceding October.

The amount to be paid is a legally set amount and is the same for all parishes in England. The fees due may be waived only in exceptional circumstances, and the service should still be included in the quarterly fees return (see below), along with a brief explanation.

The fee includes any costs and expenses incurred in relation to a service (eg, routine administration, making the church available). Any element that is essential for the service to be conducted is included in the fee. It is unlawful to make any additional charge for these items. However, there are elements that can be charged as 'extras', such as the services of an organist or choir, specially purchased sheet music, heating or flowers. A parish must make clear in advance of the service how much will be charged.

Who are the fees payable to?

The fees are the legal property of two charities – the Winchester Diocesan Board of Finance (WDBF) and the PCC. Fees **must** be paid in full to the PCC, who will then pass on the WDBF's portion, and settle the costs of any additional 'extras'.

It is illegal for a payment to be made directly to any individual, except for travel expenses if applicable. Where possible it is advisable for payments to the PCC to be made by cheque or internet banking.

What does a PCC do with fees?

The fee is split into 3 parts – that which belongs to the PCC, that belonging to the WDBF, and where applicable, any extras.

The PCC must record their portion as fee income, but there are no restrictions on how the money can then be spent.

Each parish must return a form (Record of Parochial and Crematorium Fees, known as a fees return form) to the WDBF every quarter, unless there are a large number of monthly services, in which case a form should be returned monthly. There must not be any part of a year which is not covered. The amount due to the WDBF must be sent in with the fees return form detailing all the chargeable services conducted (including any for which the fee was waived).

If there are no fees payable, and/or no relevant services have taken place a fees return form must still be submitted (a nil return).

Blank copies of the fees return form can be downloaded from the diocesan website.

The details on the return must match those in the service registers maintained by each parish, and it may be useful to compare them as the return is filled in to ensure that both the return and the registers are up to date and accurate.

It is recognised that many parishes have administrative help (paid or voluntary), and that completion of the records may be dealt with by them. It remains the legal responsibility of each PCC, however, to ensure that the quarterly return is made, and that all fees due to the WDBF are paid promptly.

What does the WDBF do with the fees it receives?

As with parishes, there are no legal rules for how fee income is to be spent. However, the WDBF, in common with other dioceses, spends the majority of the money on clergy stipends.

What if the service is taken by a Self-Supporting Minister, Chaplain, LLM, or other Lay Worker within the benefice they are licensed to?

The fee should be dealt with in exactly the same way as when the incumbent takes a service. No fee is due to the person taking the service, although they may be paid travel expenses. If you have an SSM, then during a vacancy, the SSM may claim for some services in their home benefice if these services are in addition to their regular pattern of ministry.

What happens during an interregnum or when the incumbent is on holiday?

If the service is held in a church building, the fees are to be paid to the parish the building is within, regardless of who has taken the service. The portion due to the WDBF will remain the same.

Is it permitted to ask for a deposit for a wedding service?

A deposit may be taken and it is advisable to ask for full payment in good time before the service. If the wedding is cancelled, however, it is illegal to retain any part of the statutory fee.

What about a crematorium service when the parish the deceased was from is in interregnum, or the incumbent is unable to take the service?

If a funeral service is held in a crematorium, the parish which receives the fee is dependent on the deceased. If he/she was on an electoral roll, the fee is paid to that parish, otherwise it is paid to the parish in which they had resided.

What happens when the service is taken by a retired member of clergy?

If the service is taken by a retired member of clergy they are entitled to a proportion of the amount due to the WDBF. Two thirds of the WDBF fee should be paid to the retired clergy and the remaining third should be returned to the WDBF in the usual way. Money paid to retired clergy in such circumstances must be clearly shown on the return, and there is further information in the notes on the fees return

form regarding this. We suggest that the clergy person completes an 'Occasional Offices Claim Form' for each service which they take, which can then be submitted to the PCC Treasurer of the parish to which the fees are due. Full details of 'Who Can Claim Fees' are available on the diocesan website.

What happens when the service is taken by an SSM or LLM who are on the Clerical Registry list?

SSMs or LLMs who are on the Clerical Registry list and take a funeral outside of the benefice where they regularly minister, may make a claim to the PCC to receive a payment of 2/3 of the DBF fee for funeral services.

How should the officiant claim travel expenses?

The best thing is to agree an amount with the undertaker in advance. This is the only circumstance in which the undertaker may make a payment directly to the person taking the service.

PAROCHIAL FEES RETURNS

Common problems associated with the process of returning fees to the WDBF

1. **Fees returns not made on time**

Parishes are asked to make quarterly returns (or monthly if there are a lot of services or if this is their preference) and to submit these by the 10th day following the end of the period. If no services have taken place in the quarter then for completeness parishes should submit a NIL return.

2. **Monies but no form**

Sometimes parishes send in a cheque but give no detail of the services taken. For completeness of our records we ask please that a quarterly return is always filled out and sent in.

3. **Incorrect fees charged or returned.**

Sometimes parishes fail to charge the correct fees or divide the fee incorrectly between WDBF/PCC/Other. The published fees table should answer any questions in respect of the amounts to be charged. There is also a breakdown of the parochial fees table as it applies in this diocese on the diocesan website. Otherwise please contact Luke Maundrell in the Diocesan Office.

4. **Payments made incorrectly to officiants.**

Often parishes make payments to clergy or others officiating when no payment is due. The only people who may receive payment for conducting weddings or funerals are stipulated above or on the 'Who Can Claim Fees' document on the website. In such cases the officiant may receive two thirds of the WDBF portion of the fee.

5. **Parishes fail to complete all sections of the fees return form**

It is important please that all sections are completed and in particular details of who officiated. As clergy numbers fall it is important to the diocese to see how the ministry of the occasional offices is being shared between serving clergy, retired clergy, SSMs, LLMs, etc.

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