

The Payment of Parochial and Other Fees

Introduction

Since the Church of England introduced new rules on the payment of parochial and other fees in 2013 there has been a degree of uncertainty in some quarters about the rules as they are applied in this diocese, which has resulted in inconsistent – and in some cases illegal – application.

These notes are designed to provide clarity. In individual cases not sufficiently covered by these notes further guidance should be sought from the Archdeacon, who will liaise with the Registrar and Diocesan Secretary where necessary.

Parochial Fees

This note is meant to complement, and should be read in conjunction with, the Church of England document 'A Guide to Church of England Parochial Fees', which was updated in January 2015 and is available from the Church of England website¹.

The scale of parochial fees is laid down by General Synod in an annual *Parochial Fees Order*. A copy of any updated scale is sent by the Commissioners to each stipendiary incumbent and priest-in-charge and is published on the Church of England website and also the diocesan website².

It covers those services which the incumbent is under a duty to perform, e.g. marriages and funeral duties in church, churchyard and the consecrated parts of a cemetery. Fees for these services are known as *statutory fees*. Fees for church services not covered by the *Order* (e.g. Memorial Services, Renewal of Vows or Blessing after a Civil Marriage) can be determined locally. The incumbent and the PCC should agree the level of charges from time to time and inform the Archdeacon.

Extra Fees

The Church of England guidance is very clear on what costs and expenses are covered by Parochial Fees, which are prescribed by the *Order*, and what may be considered 'extras', for which a PCC may charge additional fees. This is a matter of law and incumbents are not at liberty either to charge extra for services that are covered by the statutory fee nor make the take-up of any additional services compulsory.

The services covered by the statutory fee include any costs and expenses incurred in respect of routine administration, including arranging dates and times and the making of entries in registers, making the church available and lighting it. 'Extras' include: heating; the services of a vergger; the services of an organist, choir or bell-ringers; sheet or recorded music that has to be specially

¹<https://www.churchofengland.org/more/clergy-resources/national-clergy-hr/life-events-parochial-fees-and-guidance/guide-church#na>

² <https://www.chichester.anglican.org/parochial-fees/>

purchased; the provision of taped or recorded music; the taking of films, video or sound recordings (where permitted); flowers; special furnishings; and so on.

All additional services must be optional, and explicit agreement must be sought in advance from the person paying the charge before providing the service or levying the charge. PCCs should provide for those paying fees a check list of the additional services they may choose to opt into, and what they cost. They should send their check list with details of their charges to the Archdeacon.

Ownership of Parochial Fees

Since January 2013, Parochial Fees have comprised two elements: a fee payable to the DBF (sometimes zero) and a fee payable to the PCC (between 2020 and 2024 also sometimes zero). The PCC acts as agent for the DBF in collecting – and then passing on – the DBF fees.

Under the Church of England rules, the DBF can direct either generally, or in particular cases, that any fee, or part of a fee which would otherwise be payable to it shall be payable to a minister performing the service. Chichester DBF has directed that where a service has been provided by a minister who has retired from stipendiary ministry, part of the statutory fee payable to the DBF should be paid to the minister providing the service.

Ministers are regarded as retired from stipendiary ministry if they were formerly stipendiary clergy; have reached state pension age; are not in stipendiary ministry, secular employment or self-employment; and are beneficed, licensed or hold permission to officiate. It therefore includes retired house for duty clergy even if they are in receipt of an honorarium and/or housing allowance but no stipend or secular employment income. It does not include ministers who are over the state pension age but have earnings from part-time employment or self-employed work. Ministers who have taken early retirement may apply to the Remuneration Committee to be granted the right to claim fees. This will normally be granted in the case of ill health retirement, but not in the case of early retirement on financial grounds.

For occasional offices conducted by ministers with Permission to Officiate, the fee should be paid to the appropriate PCC in full, and the PCC should retain its portion, pay 80% to the minister if applicable, and remit the remainder to the DBF.

Please note that it is diocesan policy to treat funerals at the premises of Funeral Directors in the same way as funerals at crematoria (i.e. a fee of £35 (2025) is payable to the PCC).

In some cases there can be confusion about which DBF or PCC is due a fee for a particular service. Guidance is included in the Church of England guide.

Waiver of Parochial Fees

Guidance on the limited rights available to an incumbent to waive fees (both the DBF and the PCC element) is included in the Church of England guide. The Diocese of Chichester endorses the Church of England's general guidance and in particular that the power to waive fees should only be exercised in cases of clear financial hardship. Any waiver must be specific, not general, and should be agreed in advance with the Archdeacon. They must be the exception rather than the rule.

Occasional Duty Fees

Occasional Duty Fees are those paid to visiting or retired priests for conducting public worship, taking occasional offices, preaching and taking communion to the sick during a vacancy or while an incumbent is unable to do so for reasons of health, absence on holiday or otherwise.

The scale of fees is set out in *Financial Aspects of Ministry* (the 'Blue Book'), available on the diocesan website³. Rules on reimbursement of travel and other expenses are also included.

Occasional duties may be performed by ministers coming from various walks of life. Fees are payable as follows:

Stipendiary ministers & salaried ministers in other roles

Since any fees paid would be netted against stipendiary income, Occasional Duty Fees are not payable to stipendiary ministers or salaried ministers in other roles (e.g. school or hospital chaplains). Travel expenses are reimbursable.

Self-supporting ministers

An SSM performing occasional duties in another parish should not be paid a fee, but his/her travel expenses should be reimbursed.

Retired ministers

The bulk of occasional duties are performed by retired ministers with permission to officiate. Occasional Duty Fees are payable and expenses are reimbursable.

Readers

Readers are not entitled to receive Occasional Duty Fees.

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This document updates the version first produced in 1991 and updated in 2007, February 2015, December 2018, January 2021 and January 2022.

³ <https://www.chichester.anglican.org/documents/financial-aspects-ministry/>