

A guide to Parochial Fees

What are parochial fees?

Parochial fees are the fees charged for certain services (sometimes called “occasional offices”) conducted by the Church of England. These are set by the CofE’s England’s governing body, the General Synod, and Parliament. They are legally chargeable and recoverable as a debt. The table of fees is listed on the Church of England website: www.churchofengland.org/weddings-baptisms-funerals/fees.aspx

Why is the system changing?

Concerns about parochial fees and how they are calculated have been discussed for many years. Since 2005 two successive working groups have considered how to address these concerns. These changes reflect the outcome of the deliberations of the Fees Policy Working Group. It applied four general principles to its proposals for parochial fees. These are that:

- Fees should be justifiable and relate to the costs incurred;
- There be uniformity across the Church of England;

- Fees should be as inclusive as possible, so that “extras” to apply only to those items over which people have a genuine choice;
- Fees should be affordable, though also noting the right to waive fees in clear cases of hardship.

What’s changing?

For most people, the most noticeable change is that the level of fees will change from 1 January 2013. In future, the fees will be calculated using assumptions about the costs of ministry and the likely number of hours needed to provide a good ministry for the service in question. In the past, fees were almost always paid to the parish priest (“the incumbent”), who then handed the fee over to the diocese. Now the fee will automatically belong to the diocesan board of finance, or DBF. (In a few cases, where an incumbent has notified the Bishop, the incumbent will still receive the fee direct, but this is exceptional.) Fees that used to be paid to the PCC will continue to be paid to the PCC. Some of the fees formerly payable to the incumbent will now be payable to the PCC. You can see this if you compare the tables for 2011 and 2013.

the PCC of the parish where the church or churchyard is situated,

(b) In the case of a burial or funeral service that takes place somewhere other than a church or churchyard, and the deceased was entered on a church electoral roll, the PCC fee belongs to the PCC of the parish on whose electoral roll the deceased was entered. If the deceased was entered on the electoral roll of more than one parish, the fee shall be shared equally between each of the PCCs of those parishes,

(c) In the case of a burial or funeral service which takes place somewhere other than in a church or churchyard and the deceased was not entered on any church electoral roll, the PCC fee belongs to the PCC of the parish where the deceased had his or her usual place of residence,

(d) in any other case, the PCC fee belongs to the PCC of the parish where the service or other event to which the fee relates takes place.

Burial of cremated remains

Fees are specified for burial of cremated remains in a churchyard or other lawful disposal of remains. Sub-paragraph 4(b) of Canon B38 specifies what this means:

‘The ashes of a cremated body should be reverently disposed of by a minister in a churchyard or other burial ground in accordance with section 3 of the Church of England (Miscellaneous Provisions) Measure 1992 or on an area of land designated by the bishop for the purpose of this sub-paragraph or at sea.’

What about fees for services in chapels?

The Measure uses the word ‘church’ as a general word for buildings in which services are conducted for which a fee is payable, including chapels which have been licensed or otherwise authorised under the 1983 Pastoral Measure or the 1949 Marriage Act, but does not include any church or chapel in or belonging to any extra-parochial place which is licensed by the bishop under the 1949 Marriage Act.

Who do we ask for help if we have questions?

Every diocese has been informed of the new arrangements, and questions should be directed in the first instance to the person in the diocesan office who has the information about fees. There is further information on the Church of England website: www.churchofengland.org/weddings-baptisms-funerals/fees.aspx

QR codes



CofE Fees page
and link to Full Q&A

QR Codes

Scan these QR (Quick Response) codes and your smartphone or tablet device will display the relevant pages on the Church of England’s website where full details of the 2013 and 2014 Parochial Fees can be found.

SERVICES ETC SPECIFIED IN THE ECCLESIASTICAL FEES MEASURE

BAPTISMS

Certificate issued at time of baptism
Short certificate of baptism given under Section 2 of the Baptismal Registers Measure 1961

MARRIAGES

Publication of banns of marriage
Certificate of banns issued at time of publication
Marriage service in church

FUNERALS AND BURIALS OF PERSONS AGED 16 YEARS OR MORE

A Service in church

Funeral service in church, whether taking place before or after burial or cremation
Burial in churchyard immediately preceding or following on from service in church
Burial in cemetery immediately preceding or following on from service in church
Cremation immediately preceding or following on from service in church
Burial of body in churchyard on separate occasion
Burial of cremated remains in churchyard or other lawful disposal of remains on separate occasion
Burial in cemetery on separate occasion

B No service in church

Service at graveside
Service in crematorium or cemetery
Burial of body in churchyard
Burial of cremated remains in churchyard or other lawful disposal of remains

C Certificate issued at time of burial

MONUMENTS IN CHURCHYARDS

Permitted in accordance with rules, regulations or directions made by the Chancellor including those relating to a particular churchyard or part of a churchyard (but excluding a monument authorised by a particular faculty) including inscription on existing monument

SEARCHES IN CHURCH REGISTERS

Searching registers of marriages for period before 1st July 1837—
(for up to 1 hour, subsequent hours or part of)
Searching registers of baptisms or burials (including provision of one copy of any entry)
(for up to 1 hour, subsequent hours or part of)
Each additional copy of an entry in a register of baptisms or burials
Inspection of instrument of apportionment or agreement for exchange of land for tithes deposited under the Tithe Act 1836
Furnishing copies of above (for every 72 words)
The parish priest will have a right of waiver, after consultation with the churchwardens for PCC fees. However, fees can only be waived in *particular cases*, rather than in general, and the parish priest should be able to account for a particular decision to waive a fee.

What does this mean in practice?

New levels of fees will come into effect from 1 January 2013.

For the first time, the parochial fees include any costs and expenses incurred in relation to a service for routine administration (including arranging dates and times and the making of entries in registers), making the church available and lighting it. It will therefore be unlawful to make any additional charge, besides the parochial fee, for these items.

Parochial fees will in future be prescribed for the list of services and other duties specified in the Ecclesiastical Fees Measure, and there will be a comparatively simple legislative mechanism for amending the list. (See shaded box opposite.)

What is the process for handling fees?

Each diocese will already have arrangements for handling incumbents' assigned fees (which because of assignment are legally payable to the DBF). It is for each diocese to make its own arrangements, but there is no reason why a diocese can not continue with current arrangements if it considers they are adequate.

Further Qs

What about baptisms?

It is illegal to charge a fee for the administration of baptism. However, there is a fee payable for the supply of a certificate of baptism. It is made clear in the 2012 Order that this means a certified copy of the entry in the register of baptism, in the form prescribed by the Parochial Registers and Records Measure 1978. No fee is specified for the issuing of "souvenir cards" that have no status in law.

What about the funerals or burial of those under 16?

Under the new arrangements no fee is payable for the burial of a stillborn infant or for the funeral or burial of a person who dies aged under 16.

Why are there fees set for 2014 as well as 2013?

Under the new arrangements, fees Orders can set fees for periods of up to five years. However, the General Synod took the view that the first Order under the new arrangements should be for only two years, to allow the new arrangements to bed in.

When do the new arrangements come into place?

The new fees come in on 1 January 2013. It is for each diocese to decide when to issue its own guidance for policy matters relating to parochial fees that are not covered by legislation, for example in the management of handling income from parochial fees and providing for adequate delivery of the services for which parochial fees are payable.

What 'extra' items are covered by the new parochial fees?

The Order specifies that parochial fees include any costs and expenses incurred in relation to a service for routine administration (including arranging dates and times and the making of entries in registers), making the church available and lighting it. So from January 2013, it is unlawful to make any additional charge for these items.

Examples of elements that can be charged as extras now and will continue to be charge-

able include (please note this list is not exhaustive or prescriptive):

- the services of an organist, choir or bell-ringers;
- sheet or recorded music that has to be specially purchased;
- the provision of recorded or taped music;
- the taking of films, video or sound recordings (where permitted);
- flowers;
- special furnishings.

What about a larger fee if the parish church is a large building?

There is no provision for variable charges according to the size of the building. The working group suggested that in exceptional cases an additional voluntary contribution may be invited (following consultation in every case with the archdeacon or other diocesan advisor). The working group had in mind here situations where unusual extra costs were incurred, for example where the service was a civic occasion or a situation where a service was to be televised.

What happens if a retired or self-supporting minister takes the service?

Legal entitlement If a parochial fee is payable, the DBF part of the fee is legally payable to the DBF, and the PCC part is legally payable to the PCC, in the same way as if stipendiary clergy take the service.

Payments to non-stipendiary ministers
It is for each DBF to decide whether payments are to be made to those ministers who are not in receipt of a stipend. It is now the practice in some dioceses to make such payments to retired stipendiary clergy who take services, but it is possible for a diocese to make payments to other ministers who are not in receipt of a stipend.

What about chaplains?

Chaplains have never been entitled to receive parochial fees. Where a chaplain officiates at a service where parochial fees apply, the fees belong to the DBF and PCC in the same way as they do when the parochial clergy officiate. However, where chaplains take a service they may receive a payment if the DBF has decided that they should.

What about fees for services at a Cathedral?

Parochial fees for a parish of which a cathedral is the parish church, which would otherwise be payable to the PCC or the DBF, will be payable to the corporate body of the cathedral.

Marriage Certificate fees

These fees are not parochial fees – they are set by the Secretary of State. From July 2011 they are payable to the PCC.

PCC fees – how to decide which PCC gets the fee

(a) In the case of a burial or funeral service that takes place in a church or churchyard, the PCC fee belongs to