

# Parish Finances during a Vacancy

During a vacancy, most aspects of your parish's finances will remain unchanged. However, there may be additional costs as retired or non-stipendiary clergy cover your services, and you may wonder why your Ministry Share request has not decreased.

Although a vacancy can be an exciting time for a congregation as it looks to future possibilities, it can also be a source of anxiety. We hope that this document will answer some of your questions about finances during this time, but please do not hesitate to reach out to the diocesan office team for support with specific queries.

## Covering Services

### Regular Services

The Bishop has authorised payment for:

- Up to one service a week in each benefice.
- Additional special liturgical services, such as Maundy Thursday, Good Friday, Ascension Day, Patronal Festival and Christmas, etc.
- Other services approved by the Archdeacon on an exceptional basis.

For these services, retired clergy who do not consider the benefice their "home church" are entitled to be paid £40.91 per service. This should be paid by the PCC then reclaimed from the WDBF. A spreadsheet to reclaim these costs can be found on the diocesan website.

### Occasional Offices

For occasional offices, clergy not in receipt of a stipend should be paid by the PCC, with the PCC reimbursing itself from the proportion of the fee for the occasional office that would usually be passed on to the DBF.

Currently, these payments are:

- £122.85 for a wedding
- £95.53 for a funeral in a church or crematorium.
- £40.91 for a committal or burial service (including cremated remains) occurring on a different day to the funeral.

For example, from 1 January 2024, the fee payable for a marriage service is £531 - £290 for the PCC and £241 for the WDBF.

However, if the church is in vacancy then the PCC receive £290, the minister receives £122.85 and the WDBF receives £118.15.

This should be noted on the quarterly return sent to the WDBF.

## Ministry Share

During a vacancy, there is no change to your Ministry Share request, unless your Archdeacon agrees that there will be a change to the pattern of your future ministry, such as changing from a full-time post to a half-time post.

There are several reasons behind this.

Firstly, costs to the Diocese do not reduce significantly, as we still pay for ministry, we often use this opportunity to do larger projects on the vicarage, and we still pay for the training of new priests (all of which are components of the Ministry Share requests).

Secondly, where savings are made during a vacancy, they are averaged out across the Diocese. Where other dioceses have taken the approach of reducing Ministry Share in a vacancy, and then increasing it again when an appointment has been made, this has been found not to work resulting in a permanent reduction in Ministry Share collection, with longer-term negative implications for sustainability across the Diocese.

In 2024 each benefice has had their Ministry Share reduced by £2,367 (with income adjustment) due to the savings across the Diocese from vacancies.

## For further information go to:

[www.cofe-worcester.org.uk/payments-occasional-offices](http://www.cofe-worcester.org.uk/payments-occasional-offices)

[www.cofe-worcester.org.uk/patterns-of-service-during-clergy-vacancies](http://www.cofe-worcester.org.uk/patterns-of-service-during-clergy-vacancies)