



Diocese of Newcastle

Changes to fees system from January 2013

Briefing for Retired Clergy

From 1st January 2013 there will be significant changes to the way that the fees system works in the Diocese of Newcastle, prompted by changes at national level (Archbishops' Council and General Synod).

The major change is that the present incumbent's fee will become the fee due to the Newcastle Diocesan Board of Finance (NDBF). The PCC fee remains.

From 1st January 2013 the Fees Order increases substantially the level of fees applicable to occasional offices. For a wedding the total fee due is £381 and for a funeral service (whether in church or at the crematorium) it is £160.

For a funeral at the crematorium the overall fee will now include a PCC fee. The NDBF's fee will be £139 and the PCC fee will be £21.

It is proposed that retired stipendiary clergy be entitled to receive 80% of the NDBF's fee, in line with the recommendation made by Archbishops' Council. This will be relatively straightforward when the occasional office is a wedding (they will receive 80% of £175, that is £140 and the balance of £35 is due to NDBF) or a church funeral (they will receive 80% of £88, that is £70.40, £17.60 is the balance due to NDBF).

The rationale for 80% is this: the full fee represents a realistic assessment of what it costs the Diocese to provide authorised public ministry. In the case of retired stipendiary clergy whose pensions are outwith the diocesan budget, 20% represents an acknowledgement of the fact that retired clergy officiate under the jurisdiction of the Diocesan Bishop as Church of England clergy and enjoy the support that is given from the diocese.

It is potentially more complex both practically and pastorally for a funeral at the crematorium (and also at the cemetery). A retired stipendiary clergyperson is entitled to receive 80% of £139, which is £111.20; the

balance of the NDBF fee is £27.80 and the PCC fee is £21. The question arises 'how is this fee distributed?'

We are proposing to parish priests that the current flow of fees remains as it is even though the legal ownership of the fee is changing. This is because the vast majority of clergy have assigned their fees and so there will be no practical difference from 1st January 2013. In other words, couples and Funeral Directors will pass the fee to the incumbent who will disperse the fees according to the directions given by the Fees Order. However, a change for retired stipendiary clergy is that their fee will be received directly from the incumbent rather than (at present for some) from Church House.

This raises the question of the relationships between parish priests, retired clergy and Funeral Directors. The change in the fees ownership and system is an opportunity to reinforce and where necessary re-establish good practice. A Funeral Director contacts the parish priest who is responsible for that funeral. If the parish priest is not able to officiate he or she is responsible for directly identifying a colleague – licenced or with Permission to Officiate who will officiate on their behalf.

Where in exceptional circumstances a retired stipendiary priest receives a 'phone call directly from a Funeral Director, who for good reason has not been able to contact the parish priest, then good practice requires consultation with the parish priest and the fee received must be passed over to the parish priest.

The new legal ownership of the fee – NDBF and PCC, are two bodies with charitable status – reinforces the importance of partnership between parish priests, retired clergy and funeral directors. It is important that retired clergy colleagues do not work independently with Funeral Directors and receive the full fee. This practice which may well still exist in some parts of the diocese does not honour the ownership of the fee, the

importance of working to good pastoral practice nor the level of trust that we wish to see between ordained colleagues.

In the case of good practice not being observed then the Archdeacon should be consulted to find a way forward. We appreciate that the changes required to achieve good practice will not happen overnight, but we also feel that the proposed changes carry with them an opportunity to establish the vital relationship between all parties (parish priests, Funeral Directors and retired stipendiary clergy) for the sake of the pastoral care of our parishioners.

When a retired clergy person receives their permission to officiate upon retirement from the diocese or upon moving from another diocese, it is proposed that they will receive an outline Statement of Particulars which contains the Bishop's expectations of his clergy, expenses, fees practice, access to Continuing Ministerial Development and relationship to the Clergy Discipline Measure. This we hope might be developed through conversations with the Retired Clergy Officer and other retired colleagues in the first half of 2013.

Those eligible to receive fees for occasional offices continue to be retired stipendiary clergy. Stipendiary and Non Stipendiary clergy (licenced and with PTO) do not receive fees and nor do Readers. In case of a need to clarify this point please refer your enquiry to your Archdeacon.

Retried stipendiary priests continue to be entitled to receive fees for 'casual duty' for Sunday and midweek services, but not at the parish church at which they regularly worship (see separate leaflet).

The Ven. Peter Robinson, Archdeacon of Lindisfarne
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