

Payment of fees to Voluntary Ministers
CONDUCTING SERVICES, WEDDINGS & FUNERALS

Key Principles

All SSMs, OLMs and Readers *and* those retired from stipendiary ministry, who have Permission-to-Officiate, will be assumed to be Voluntary Ministers* and treated on the same basis.

Every Voluntary Minister is urged to make a Working Agreement with the incumbent, indicating the usual level of voluntary leadership they wish to offer. This includes Sunday ministry and Occasional Offices. The purpose is to avoid unreasonable demands on the Voluntary Minister.

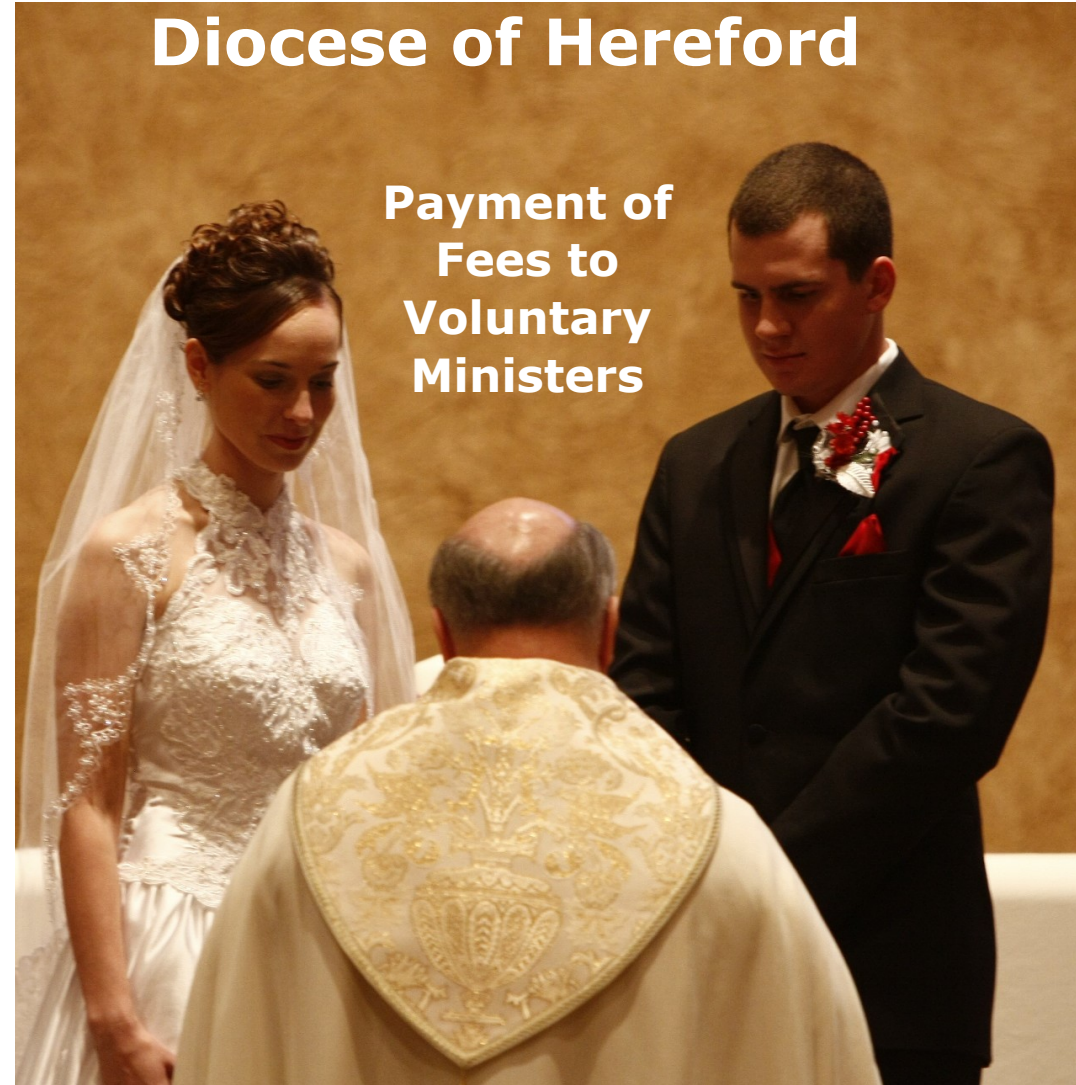
When a parish asks the Voluntary Minister to carry out duties beyond the Working Agreement, the appropriate fee should be offered.

*It is, of course, expected
that all Voluntary Ministers
will always have their expenses paid*

* These categories of minister are collectively referred to as 'Voluntary Ministers' throughout this leaflet

Diocese of Hereford

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as from 1st July 2015

Confirmed and reissued March 2017

Also available to download from the Diocesan website at
<https://www.hereford.anglican.org/voluntaryministers/>

parish, and that they must be models and exemplars of this ministry too. Obviously this involves them in taking a full part alongside assistant ministers, and that is a factor they should take into account.

Regular worship during vacancies, sabbaticals and long term sickness

During vacancies, sabbaticals and in case of the incumbent's long-term sickness, it is the responsibility of churchwardens with Rural Deans to arrange services.

When VMs come from outside the parish, or when those from within the parish undertake work over and above their normal working agreement, they are offered a fee (presently £35 per service up to a maximum of three per Sunday) and expenses from the diocese. The VM should submit a claim to the diocese countersigned by the incumbent (if available) or the Rural Dean.

In conclusion

The diocese could not function without the contribution made by its Voluntary Ministers including SSMs, OLMs, Readers and retired ministers with PTO, and is grateful for it beyond words. We hope the above notes clarify the procedure for arranging services, payment of expenses and the offer of a fee to VMs for work undertaken in respect of work undertaken in vacancies above the level of working agreements, and when taking occasional offices.

Guidelines for the Payment of fees to Voluntary Ministers

In 2013 the Church of England changed the basis for calculating, collecting and distributing fees for occasional offices (funerals and weddings).

Many occasional-office services are taken by Voluntary Ministers [VMs] such as SSMs, OLMs, Readers and ministers holding PTO. We acknowledge the value of their enormous contribution to the church's ministry. The national church has issued guidance to dioceses concerning fees offered to VMs.

The following is the policy which will now operate in the Diocese of Hereford.

Working agreements

It is strongly recommended that every VM should hold a working agreement, negotiated between that minister and the incumbent of the benefice(s) to which they are licensed or (in the case of ministers with PTO) where they commonly serve. The agreement should indicate the minister's usual level of availability within the benefice: including Sunday ministry, occasional offices, and other pastoral functions. The working agreement guards against misunderstandings, and protects the VM from unreasonable demands.

Church of England Fees today

The 2013 fee structure involved a one-time increase, but forbids parishes to charge extras which they had traditionally added to the cost of a wedding or funeral.

The fee which a parishioner pays is divided into two portions. One portion goes to the PCC. The other portion (the former "incumbent's fee") goes to the Diocesan Board of Finance [DBF]. When a fee is offered to a VM, it comes from the DBF portion of the fee.

Claiming a fee

The following policy applies during a vacancy, as well as when there is an incumbent in post.

When a VM leads a funeral (in church or crematorium) or conducts a wedding, he/she may ask for the payment of a fee. For any funeral or wedding, the fee offered presently is £60 (this will be reviewed from time to time).

The VM should notify the parish/benefice treasurer when the fee is to be claimed. The VM completes a claim form (available at <https://www.hereford.anglican.org/voluntaryministers/>) and hands it to the treasurer to be passed to the diocese. No countersignature is required. When the treasurer remits the occasional office fee to the Diocese, the fee payable to the VM—and his/her contact details—is also noted on the parish's accompanying form. When the diocesan office receives both forms, the payment to the VM is made.

We appreciate that many VMs do not claim fees (and we are doubly grateful for the benefit this is to the whole diocese).

A single fee of £60 is offered for any one service. If two (or more) VMs share the service, they may divide the fee between them. Only one fee per service is claimable.

It is common for the incumbent to decline a fee for a separate service of interment of a body or of ashes in a churchyard. If a fee has been charged, and a VM conducts the service, the fee offered to the VM would be £20.

In all cases, whether or not a fee is requested, the VM is expected to claim expenses. Expenses should be claimed direct from the parish (crem funeral: from the funeral director), not the diocese: the PCC fee is calculated to take account of likely expenses.

The role of the incumbent

The incumbent (or the Rural Dean and wardens during a vacancy) has responsibility for arranging funerals and weddings from the parish, and *VMs should not agree to take services without first being sure that this has been cleared with the incumbent.* (There have been a number of instances of funeral directors calling VMs before the incumbent, and occasionally this has led to unhelpful confusion and pastoral distress.)

The incumbent is responsible for arranging the 'staffing' of a particular service, and where appropriate may invite the participation of the relevant VM. There are many factors to balance when deciding this: for example, which minister has the best pastoral relationship with the family concerned, and whether it is reasonable to add this task to the workload of a volunteer?

Incumbents also have to be aware that their role requires of them the primary oversight of pastoral care of the