

Guidance on Parochial Fees in Durham Diocese from Jan 2013

From Jan 2013

- the incumbent's fee will become the DBF fee; the PCC fee remains.
- there is new legal clarity about what 'extra' fees may be charged.
- there are no fees payable for funerals of those under 16.

We propose making the least possible change to current systems, and keeping it simple.

- We do not want to discourage Funeral Directors from coming to the Church of England,
- we continue to value those who assist clergy with cover and support, and
- we want clergy as little burdened as possible by administration.

Nevertheless, the new model will place even more emphasis on the Parish Priest (Incumbents and Priests in Charge) taking responsibility for the funerals which happen in their parish, even when they are taken by retired clergy.

Handling fees in the Parish.

Parishes should continue to decide whether the Parish Priest or the PCC will handle and distribute fees. *(National advice suggests the Parish Priest should avoid administering fees if possible. Whoever does it, a single in-coming cheque has to be paid into an account and then cheques have to be written to the DBF, retired clergy, organist, bell-ringers etc..)*

Parishes are to tell Funeral Directors each year (as they do at present) what the fees will be in that parish, and whether the cheque should be payable to the Parish Priest or the PCC. (Fees will include those set nationally, and show clearly any extras offered by the parish.)

There will be a Monthly Fees form (based on the current form for those who assign fees) to send from the parish to the Diocesan office with the fees due to the DBF, including a record of payments made for services taken by retired or SSM clergy in connection with that parish.

What happens to DBF fees?

The DBF has decided that those eligible to receive fees for occasional offices continue to be retired clergy with Permission to Officiate and Self-Supporting clergy not licensed to the parish where the ministry occurred.

It has also decided to follow national advice that 20% of the DBF fee should go towards the training, development and support of ministers. The other 80% will go into the Diocesan Stipends Fund for the payment of stipendiary clergy, or be offered to the retired or SSM clergy who took the service.

Despite this 80/20 split, retired or SSM clergy will receive increased fees in 2013 because fee levels have gone up. For example, for a funeral at the Crematorium a retired or SSM priest gets £102 in 2011/12 but will get 80% of the £139 fee in 2013, which is £111.20.

Retired and SSM clergy will receive their own part of the fees from the parish to which the ministry they offered relates. Any DBF or PCC fee they receive (for example, from a Funeral Director) must be handed to the parish concerned for distribution.

For example, the Parish Priest or PCC will receive the £160 Crematorium fees from the Funeral Director. £21 is paid to the PCC. The remaining £139 is the DBF fee, which will be sent to the Diocesan Office with the monthly return unless the service was taken by a retired or SSM priest. If so, that priest is offered 80% of the DBF fee (£111.20) and 20% of the DBF fee (£27.80) is returned to the Diocese. *(Retired clergy will no longer be the only recipients of the Crem fee: a proportion is also legally payable to the DBF and to the PCC. Retired clergy need to work closely with the Parish Priest.)*

Any travel expenses paid by the Funeral Director are in addition to these fees.

Extras

The intention of the new legislation is that there should be transparency about fees, and that there should be a standard fee for a particular service across the whole Church of England. *(The assumption is that, in an internet age, people compare charges made by different churches, and unjustifiable levels of fee are subject to challenge.)* Thus there is new legal clarity about what is included in the fee, and those things for which extra fees may not be charged. The statutory fee includes the use of the building, its lighting and any administration in connection with the service.

Extra fees may be charged, as at present (for example for organist, bell-ringers, choir etc.) but these must be genuinely optional to those who are paying.

Two new charges, where the option lies with the person who is paying, are for **heating** and a **verger**. *(The intention was to allow churches which cost a great deal to heat to charge more than those which are cheaper, but the charge must bear some relationship to the actual cost.)*

Heating can only be charged if it is provided, so some parishes may wish to give Funeral Directors a 'summer' season rate during certain months when heating will not be provided unless requested.

Most churches need someone offering verger-type support during funerals but PCCs may think that the increased PCC fee (from £45 to £72) covers that. If a PCC wants to charge an extra fee for the services of a verger, that must be an option which the person paying could reject. Parishes which pay a verger may wish to quote Funeral Directors a total fee for a Funeral, with a breakdown showing the inclusion of a verger's fee as one of the extras.

Waiving fees

The Parish Priest may waive a fee "in a particular case". There must be consultation with the churchwardens before waiving a PCC fee. The advice is that fees should only be waived in cases of financial hardship (not, for example, for long-standing members of the congregation), and that DBF and PCC fees should be treated even-handedly. The DBF will expect the fact that a DBF fee was waived to be recorded on the Monthly Fee form, with an indication of the reason.