



# Coventry DBF Policy on Fee Payments for Additional Ministry (Weddings, Funerals and other services)

Worship and pastoral care are key aspects of our shared life in the diocese. Sometimes there are situations where additional authorised ministry is required to enable this to happen, and the Bishop's Core Staff Team are really grateful for the help and support offered that makes this possible. This policy outlines the arrangements for ensuring that services are appropriately covered and that all eligible ministers who take additional services are properly remunerated.

## **When will Coventry Diocesan Board of Finance (DBF) pay fees for additional ministry?**

Coventry DBF will make service-fee payments to eligible authorised ministers who take services when the incumbent or priest in charge is absent due to:

- A vacancy;
- Being on sabbatical;
- Prolonged ill health,
- During a phased return to work;
- Maternity leave;
- Paternity leave;
- Adoption leave;
- Parental leave.

## **Who is eligible to claim a fee?**

Ministers eligible for a fee are:

- Self-supporting and house for duty ministers;
- Retired ministers with current Permission To Officiate (PTO);
- Licensed Readers.

The agreed working practice within the diocese is for self-supporting ministers, retired clergy and licensed readers to give a certain amount of their time voluntarily to support the mission of the Church either in the benefice in which they live, are licensed, or in an adopted parish. This might include occasional offices (if so authorised) and/or regular public worship. This is referred to as a "usual pattern of ministry." Fees are not payable for conducting a service on this basis (other than legitimate travel expenses which may be claimed from the PCC concerned by prior agreement).

Service-fees may be payable, however, to ministers officiating at acts of public worship or occasional offices in the location of their usual pattern of ministry if it is over and above their normal agreed commitment. The point at which fees become payable should be agreed in advance by the Archdeacon Pastor.

## What additional ministry is eligible to be claimed for?

- Weddings;
- Funerals;
- A maximum of two other services per claimant per Sunday or main festival.

Eligible 'main festivals' exclude those which can be moved to a Sunday and are: Christmas Day; The Annunciation of Our Lord to the Blessed Virgin Mary; Ash Wednesday; Maundy Thursday; Good Friday; Ascension Day; Patronal Festival.

NB Cover for weekday services that fall outside these criteria cannot be claimed from the DBF. Fees for such services must be claimed from the PCC.

## How much will Coventry DBF pay?

Type of service	Fee
Funeral service (including the committal)	£115.00
Committal service taken on a separate occasion (different day)	£40.00
Marriage service	£160.00
Other services (maximum claim of two per Sunday or main festival)	£50.00

Recipients of fees for services are responsible for declaring their fee income to HMRC and for any associated tax or national insurance. The effective date is the date of the service, not the claim.

## How do I claim?

A claim form can be downloaded from the diocesan website at <https://coventry.anglican.org/info-for-ministers/info-for-clergy/parochial-fees/parochial-fees.php>. Each entry should be signed by a churchwarden, PCC Secretary, or PCC Treasurer.

This can then be sent by post address to the Archdeacon Pastor, or by scanning it and sending by email to [Simon.Taylor@Coventry.Anglican.org](mailto:Simon.Taylor@Coventry.Anglican.org) with "fee claim" in the subject line.

If you are eligible for a fee and choose not to claim it then any savings made will be used with gratitude to further the mission of the diocese.

Area Deans can enquire of the Archdeacons' Office if they would like a copy of any claims pertaining to their deanery.

## When should I claim?

Claims should be made by the end of the following month, and submitted directly to the Archdeacons' Office for verification. Fees relating to the month of December must be claimed by 15 January of the following year.

## Exclusions

Stipendiary ministers and licensed ministers in receipt of a salary such as school or hospital chaplaincy are ineligible to claim any fees during a vacancy unless they have specific dispensation from the Bishop. Part-time ministers should speak to the Archdeacon Pastor if unsure.

Ministers (licensed or with PTO) who offer non-stipendiary ministry in a particular benefice are ineligible to claim for that ministry within that benefice when it is in vacancy, unless this represents a significant change to their usual pattern of ministry. This includes Readers. Any such change should be authorised in advance by the Archdeacon Pastor.

### **Can ministers receive a fee directly from a funeral director?**

No. Since 1st January 2013 the Church of England rules have made it clear that the only legal recipients of Statutory Fees are the PCC and the DBF. Clergy (whether retired or not) must not therefore receive any part of these fees. Funeral Directors should pay the Statutory Fees and related expenses to the PCC. It is then for the PCC to pay the expenses to the licensed minister or those with PTO, and to pay the full DBF portion of the fee to the DBF.

### **What is the process if an authorised minister is approached by a funeral director and asked to take a service?**

Strictly speaking funeral directors should only arrange Church of England funerals through the relevant parish concerned. Often, however, they will contact ministers directly to ascertain their availability. If this happens there are some factors that the minister must be able to clarify before they can agree to take the service.

Firstly, they should ask why they have been contacted and not the parish priest. They should make a note of this reason.

Secondly they need to know which parish the deceased lived in. This can be found by putting their address into [www.achurchnearyou.com](http://www.achurchnearyou.com) or by asking the funeral director.

Finally, they need to know if the parish is in vacancy or prolonged absence. If it is, then the minister can agree to take the service and should instruct the funeral director to pay the full Statutory Fee to the relevant PCC and to send a copy of the arrangements to the parish for their records. The minister can then claim travel expenses from that PCC and the service fee from the DBF in accordance with this policy.

If the parish is NOT in vacancy then the minister should not agree to take the service until they have made contact with the parish and informed them of the request. They should let the parish know why they have been contacted and ask if they are willing for them to agree to take the service and to receive travel expenses and a fee from the PCC equal to that usually paid by the DBF. With that agreement in place, they can agree to take the service and to instruct the funeral director to pay the Statutory Fee directly to the PCC.

### **What if we need additional cover and the parish is NOT in prolonged absence? The incumbent is busy/on holiday/taking a rest day?**

It is expected that stipendiary members of deanery chapters will play a role in supporting each other with additional cover on rest days, during holidays, and when incumbents are committed elsewhere. This should be offered mutually and generously. The legal recipient of the statutory fee remains the PCC of the parish for which the ministry is being delivered.

Parishes may invite authorised ministers to take services at times other than when in prolonged vacancy, but any payments are made by the PCC (not by the DBF) and it is recommended that they pay the fee at the same rate as the DBF.

If the parish only receives part-time ministry they should seek clarification from the Archdeacon Pastor as to whether fees may be claimed from the DBF.

## **What if parish does NOT have a prolonged absence and asks an eligible minister to take a funeral service at a crematorium? Do they lose money?**

Stipendiary or local (i.e. non-eligible) ministers should always be approached first for such services, removing the need for the PCC to offer a service fee.

If the PCC does offer a service fee then they should be aware that the total statutory fee for a funeral in 2026 is £234 which is paid to the DBF. It should be noted, however, the total DBF fee of £244 will be credited back to the parish in the next full financial year.

## **Can clergy leaders become independent “funeral celebrants” and bypass the parochial fees system?**

No. Fees prescribed in the current Parochial Fees Order are payable to the relevant PCC whenever a clerk in holy orders of the Church of England officiates at a funeral service, even if only at a crematorium. That is so irrespective of whether the clerk in holy orders is beneficed, licensed or holds permission to officiate. There is therefore no legal scope for the exercise of an independent or freelance ministry by any clergy of the Church of England. An Anglican clergyman/woman cannot lawfully claim to be taking a funeral in a private, unofficial capacity, and accept payment for his or her services on that basis, rather than as a clerk in holy orders.

The only way in which a clerk in holy orders can render himself or herself free from the provisions of the 1986 Measure, and of the obligations imposed by the Canons, is by executing and enrolling a deed of relinquishment in accordance with the provisions of the Clerical Disabilities Act 1870. Only where a deed is executed and enrolled under that Act and subsequently recorded by the bishop is the person concerned freed from the legal constraints and obligations that apply to clerks in holy orders. They are then no longer able to call themselves a minister in the Church of England.

The terms of the Bishop’s Licence do not allow for Readers to take funerals independently of the Church of England.

## **Can I ask a minister who already receives a stipend to cover a service?**

Yes. This is the preferred option where there is not a prolonged absence, but also applies when there is an absence as defined by this policy. Neighbouring parishes, your Area Dean, the cathedral clergy or central diocesan ministers may be available to help. The Statutory Fee for occasional offices should be received by your PCC as normal, and only expenses should be offered to the minister involved. The minister will not claim a service fee at all.

## **Any other questions about fees?**

We hope this information is useful to you.

Any questions about fees should be addressed to Simon Taylor at [Simon.Taylor@Coventry.Anglican.org](mailto:Simon.Taylor@Coventry.Anglican.org), or on 07376 981284

Date of commencement of policy 01/11/2018. Changes take effect from 1 January 2026.