

## Parochial Fees – Frequently Asked Questions

In addition to the Portsmouth DBF policy in relation to parochial fee payments which can be found [here](#), there is further guidance on our website [For Treasurers - Diocese of Portsmouth \(anglican.org\)](#) or on the national Church of England website [Life events parochial fees and guidance | The Church of England](#). You will also find the most up to date table of fees for the current year here.

### ***Why do we have to charge fees for occasional offices?***

The Ecclesiastical Fees Measure 1986 defines when a fee must to be charged and guides how to decide the relevant fee. There is a legal obligation to provide or conduct these services (weddings and funerals) and the measure makes them legally chargeable.

### ***What is covered by the parochial fees?***

In the case of a marriage service or a funeral service in church, any costs and expenses incurred in respect of routine administration (including arranging dates and times and the making of entries in registers), making the church available and lighting it are included in the fee prescribed as payable to the PCC. It is illegal to anything additional to the defined fee for making the church available, however extra items may be charged in addition.

Extra items might include charges for heating, the services of a verger, music (eg, organist, choir), bells, and flowers, which are fixed by the Parochial Church Council and should be agreed in advance of the service. Optional extras should be charged at a reasonable fee and policy should be set locally by the PCC to agree this.

### ***How should the PCC treat the DBF share of the fee if we only pay quarterly?***

The PCC holds the DBF portion of the fee as agent for the diocese and therefore should not include this as part of their income, or withhold payment of this to support cashflow.

### ***Can the DBF fee be waived?***

Yes, in certain circumstances the DBF fee can be waived. This cannot be a generic policy and the decision should be taken on a case by case basis. The Ecclesiastical Fees Measure 1986 gives the incumbent the right to waive the DBF fee. Since this has an impact on the diocesan finances including our ability to meet the costs of ministry and mission, we have in place local guidelines that require the Archdeacon to be consulted. A waiver form must be completed and submitted with the quarterly fee form to confirm that there is no fee due and the reasons for this.

### ***If an officiant who is entitled to claim a fee chooses not to, what is due to the diocese?***

If the eligible minister chooses to waive their fee, this may still be deducted from the DBF fee payable if approved by the Archdeacon.

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***Is this still the case if our incumbent takes a service elsewhere?***

Yes; as the fee contributes to the ministry of the diocese, and is not paid to the clergy person directly.

***In what instance might the fees be waived?***

Archbishop's council advise that the power to waive fees should only be used in cases of clear financial hardship. Archbishop's Council do not encourage the practise of waiving fees for long standing members of congregations.

The PCC can choose to pay the DBF element of the fee where this has been waived, as the fees contribute to the cost of ministry across the diocese, so any loss of this income may have an impact elsewhere.

Before a decision to waive a fee is made, it should be recognized that the fees are approved by General Synod and parliament and are therefore legally payable.

***What does the DBF share of the fee go towards?***

As with parish share, income from parochial fees contributes towards the costs of providing ministry across the diocese, including (but not limited to) stipends and housing, training and administrative support for clergy.

***Who pays expenses for travel eg to a crematorium?***

These should be claimed from the funeral directors (or other as arranger of the office) as these are over and above the set fees. Expenses should be paid for the actual mileage travelled, not a flat amount. Any expenses not paid at the current HMRC approved rate (45p per mile) could be seen as additional income and subject to income tax so it is important not apply a flat rate for expenses.

***Can we claim expenses for eligible ministers providing casual duty during a vacancy?***

Yes the costs of expenses for the eligible minister can be claimed from the diocese along with any honoraria payments.

***Can fees be refunded eg if a marriage doesn't go ahead?***

Yes; the fee is due when the service is performed so where payment has been taken in advance, this should be refunded if the life event does not go ahead. If no payment is received, you cannot refuse to officiate at a marriage or funeral however this is recoverable under law.

***Are there any fees due for baptisms?***

The fees is currently set at £0 for baptisms however there is a small charge for a baptism certificate.

***Are there any fees due for marriage blessings or memorial services?***

There are no parochial fees for such events however due to the amount of work that may be involved, it may be suitable to request a fee. The relevant parochial fees could be used as guide. No fees would be due to the diocese in these circumstances however if the PCC does receive the

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equivalent of the DBF fee, they are encouraged to pay this to the diocese to support with the costs of ministry.

***Do we have to submit a return every quarter? What if we haven't had any occasional offices during the last quarter?***

A form should be submitted along with the relevant funds each quarter. Where no such life events have taken place in the quarter, a nil return should be submitted to confirm that no occasional offices have taken place.

***What should we do if we identify a mistake on the form or an event that we forgot to include?***

Any errors or omissions should be corrected on the next submission, however if they relate to the last quarter of the year they should be notified to the diocesan office to ensure we have the correct figures for the calendar year. It is much easier to correct any changes retrospectively rather than making smaller adjustments and refunds.

*For arrangements with Crematoria, please contact the Diocesan Office, who will be able to work through the details with you.*

## Additional resources

For further information please see the following:

- [A guide to Church of England Parochial Fees | The Church of England](#)
- [Life events ministry fees FAQs | The Church of England](#)
- [For Treasurers - Diocese of Portsmouth \(anglican.org\)](#) (this includes the necessary forms for reporting fees to the diocese)
- [Resource pack for the first meeting with a wedding couple - Church Support Hub](#) – to help guide additional costs that may be relevant

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## Appendix 1- Glossary of terms

Eligible Minister	<p>All retired stipendiary, self-supporting, lay readers and ministers who have served in secular chaplaincies who meet the following criteria may receive an honorarium</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"><li>1. The minister has retired from stipendiary ministry and is:<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• in receipt of the state pension and</li><li>• holds the Bishop's Permission to Officiate (PTO), or if still licensed, receives neither a stipend nor a house for duty.</li></ul></li></ol> <p><b>OR</b></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"><li>2. The minister is a self-supporting minister (i.e. SSM/NSM or Reader) holds the Bishop's PTO, or, if licensed, does not occupy a house for duty.</li></ol>
DBF	Portsmouth Diocesan Board of Finance, 'The Diocese'

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