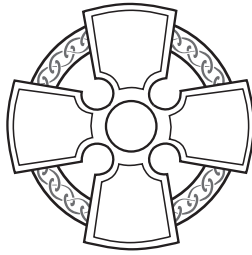


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Fees for Occasional Offices in the Church in Wales

Guidance

February 2015

A Guide to Fees for Occasional Offices in the Church in Wales

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I. Introduction

A New Parochial Fees Structure and New Fee Levels

Following a detailed review of the Church in Wales' parochial fee structure and fee levels by a provincial working group, the Representative Body has agreed a new fee structure for funerals, burials and marriages with effect from 1 February 2015. In addition, a comprehensive review of fee levels has been carried out, and new fee levels have also been introduced on 1 February 2015.

Proposals for a new fee structure and fee levels were finalised following a period of consultation with all stipendiary clergy in October and November 2013. The response of clergy was overwhelmingly (over 80% of respondents) positive, but detailed comments were taken into account in preparing the final arrangements.

This guidance booklet is intended for use by clergy and others to ensure that the new fee structure is understood and to encourage good practice in the charging of fees for occasional offices.

What is the purpose of the changes? On what basis have they been made?

The two key objectives of the changes are:

- To simplify the fee structure for the benefit of all who use it;
- To ensure that fees, whilst remaining fair and reasonable, contribute more realistically to the costs of parishes, in particular the Churchyard Maintenance Fund.

The fee structure

Occasional offices are among the most significant opportunities for formal contact between the Church and the wider community. It is important that the financial aspect of that relationship is open and transparent, is handled sensitively and enhances the Church's reputation within the wider community. It is also apparent from consultations with clergy and funeral directors that the outgoing funeral and burial fees schedule is not generally felt to be clear and understandable.

Fee Levels

In addition, fee income provides important funding for the work of the Church. It is felt to be appropriate that fees should continue to be charged: it is a well-established practice in society; the provision of such services requires the Church to incur certain costs; and the Church in Wales has a legal duty to marry and bury those with a qualifying connection to the parish. Fees should relate to the practical aspects of a marriage, funeral or burial, and should not be intended to cover pastoral support that would normally be provided by a minister.

The proposed new level of fees has been set taking into account the cost of providing a minister and building for services and, in the case of a burial, some recognition of the ongoing cost to a parish of maintaining the churchyard.

How will Church in Wales fees be set in future?

As now, the Representative Body will continue to be responsible for setting Church in Wales' funeral and burial fees, with some burial fees to be agreed in consultation with the Welsh Government as required by law. However, from 2015 the Representative Body will also be responsible for setting marriage fees. The practice of marriage fees being recommended to clergy by the Bench of Bishops as "suggested maximums" will cease; the level of marriage fees will in future be set for use across the province.

The level of fees will be reviewed annually taking into account inflation (CPI), although in the interests of keeping fees to round figures the level of fees may not increase every year. The basis on which fees are charged will be subject to a more comprehensive review every five years. A schedule of fees for funerals/burials and marriages will be published annually for 1 January.

How should money be received and distributed?

The new fees are currently payable to the Officiating Minister and to the PCC. It is expected that in all cases, an invoice is provided to the couple, family or funeral director giving details of the fees incurred.

It is suggested that all fees, including the Ministry fee, be invoiced by the PCC, with appropriate reimbursement then made to the officiating minister. Alternatively, the officiating minister may issue a separate invoice for the Ministry element and receive a separate payment.

Payments should generally be by cheque or direct bank transfer.

What about other costs incurred by occasional offices?

Parishes will continue to be able to charge for additional costs incurred in providing occasional offices. These additional charges may be set locally (subject to other guidance available), but it is important that they are set out clearly to those seeking to book a wedding or funeral at the beginning of the planning process.

Additional charges for travel costs outside the parish or ministry area may be levied by the officiating minister. Standard Church in Wales mileage rates should be used.

Additional charges can be made for organist, choir, sexton/verger and the reasonable cost of additional heating. It is anticipated that a basic level of heating to make the church comfortable should be covered by the church fee. However, during colder periods it is appropriate that an additional charge is made given the extra costs to the parish. This should be based on a reasonable estimate of additional costs. The Royal School of Church Music provides guidance on fees for organists and choirs, and parishes are encouraged to refer to these: <http://www.rscm.com/>

PCCs might also provide bells or flower arrangements which can also be charged in addition. Parishes may also wish to negotiate a charge for private filming of a service (commercial filming requests should be referred to the Representative Body's Property department [029 2034 8200], which handles all such agreements).

For all additional charges, an estimate of the likely level should be provided to the couple, family or funeral director in advance of those charges being incurred. The level of additional fees might be discussed locally in deanery/synod meetings.

Will it still be possible to waive fees?

In every parish there may well be situations where the officiating minister believes that it would be right for certain fees to be waived. This is a sensitive area, and guidance on how such a decision might be made may be found in the Annex. The key principles are that:

- i. In some circumstances it is appropriate to waive fees, either in response to financial hardship or as a gesture of love and compassion where there are exceptional pastoral considerations.
- ii. It is the person officiating at the relevant service who exercises the discretion to waive fees, as he or she alone has the necessary pastoral information. If the officiant is not the incumbent, the incumbent must be informed of the decision to waive but not the reasons for it (unless disclosing these reasons is in accordance with the guidance on sharing information in the Clergy Terms of Service).
- iii. This guidance relates to Church and Minister's Fees. Waiver of Fees payable to third parties must be subject to the particular contractual arrangements and customary expectations in place.
- iv. Legitimate reasons to waive fees include: financial hardship, funerals of persons under 18, hurt caused by the church and adult death in especially tragic circumstances. It is not appropriate to waive fees simply because an individual or family has a long-standing church connection.
- v. The decision to waive fees should be recorded but not the reasons for this. This avoids inappropriate and unnecessary disclosure of pastoral confidences but also allows dioceses to monitor patterns within parishes.

2. Funeral and Burial Fees

Table of Fees (from 1 February 2015)

	Fee
Ministry Fee <i>(payable to the officiating minister)</i>	£80
Committal* <i>(payable to the officiating minister)</i>	£20
Church Fee <i>(payable to the PCC)</i>	£100
Burial Fee in Church in Wales Burial Ground - Body - Cremated remains <i>(payable to the PCC for the Churchyard Maintenance Fund)</i>	£450 £150
Memorial Fee - Plain wooden cross - Grave headstone - Cremated remains tablet - Additional Inscription <i>(payable to the PCC for the Churchyard Maintenance Fund)</i>	£22 £170 £90 £40
Search of Burial Registers <i>(payable to the PCC)</i>	£20 per hour (or part thereof)

* *For a committal following a separate funeral service elsewhere, at which a different minister has officiated.*

This guidance seeks to explain the new structure and level of funeral and burial fees and to assist parishes with implementation. The guidance is provided in a series of Frequently Answered Questions (FAQs).

The new fee structure has been devised to make it as simple as possible to understand. This is to help both the parish, in being able to charge the correct fee, and families and funeral directors, in being clear about what charges will be incurred.

A key change to the structure is that there have been some changes to how the fees are allocated. Whilst the general principles behind this decision are explained elsewhere in this guidance, some specific changes have been included in respect of funerals and burials. Specifically:

- All the fees for the erection of monuments are to be allocated to the PCC for their Churchyard Maintenance Fund
- The previous fee for the signing of the Green Form is included in the new Ministry Fee
- A new charge for searching burial registers has been introduced.

These changes are explained in greater detail in the FAQs overleaf.

FAQs

I. What does each Fee cover?

The **Ministry Fee** covers attendance by the officiating minister at i) a funeral service, or ii) a funeral service followed by burial, or iii) a funeral service followed by a cremation and the subsequent interment of cremated remains. This applies whether the attendance is at a Church in Wales church or elsewhere. The Ministry Fee also includes the signing of the Green Form by the officiating minister. Additional charges for travel costs outside the parish or ministry area may also be levied by the officiating minister.

The principle here is that the officiating minister should charge a single Provincial fee for all their activities in respect of the deceased's funeral. It is accepted that the amount of time involved will vary depending on the complexity of the funeral. Pastoral support is not covered by the fee; this is part of a cleric's normal ministry.

Where a burial or interment of cremated remains follows a funeral service in another place with a different minister to the funeral service, a fee of £20 will be charged as a ministry fee for the committal. A typical example would be where ashes are interred by a minister in a family grave following a cremation elsewhere.

The **Church Fee** covers use of the church for a funeral or memorial service. Additional charges can be made for organist, choir, sexton and the reasonable cost of additional heating.

The **Burial Fee** is for the burial of a body or cremated remains in the allocated grave or cremated remains plot. An additional charge, set locally, will be made for grave digging. The fee is also applicable to a burial or interment in an existing grave or plot.

The **Memorial Fee** is for the grant of the right to erect a monument on the grave in accordance with the Churchyard Regulations. There will be no reduction for a total replacement of the memorial and a partial replacement will be charged pro-rata. The maintenance of the monument remains the responsibility of the family that erected it.

2. What is the new fee for a search of the burial registers?

Local Authorities and the Church of England have established a standard charge for searches of the burial registers and this has now been introduced by the Church in Wales. The increase in public interest in genealogy is to be welcomed but can place a burden on parishes and clergy.

The fee is based on an hourly charge and assumes that a particular search is relatively straightforward such as where the approximate date of baptism, marriage or burial is known. If a more general search of a church register is requested then the fee should be negotiated. Copies can be provided but an appropriate charge should be made to cover costs.

3. Why has the burial fee been increased substantially?

The burial fee is increasing substantially from previous years. In 2014, the total burial fee paid by families was £279 for a full burial and £169.50 for cremated remains. Given the particular pressure on space for full burials in our churchyards, the significant cost burden of churchyards on PCCs and the fact that, unlike in England, when churchyards are full they cannot be transferred to Local Authorities, it is felt that an above-inflationary increase is justified. The new level of fee is also much more comparable with charges made by Local Authorities.

The new fees have been approved by the Welsh Government in accordance with the Welsh Church (Burial Grounds) Act 1945.

4. What about the Green Form?

The Green Form is the Certificate for Burial under the Births and Deaths Act 1926. This must be signed and sent to the local registry by the officiating minister as the person responsible for the burial.

It should be noted that it must be the person who oversaw the actual, physical burial who must sign the Green Form and thus the officiating minister should sign it.

The previous fee regime allowed the incumbent to charge for the signing of the Green Form. This is now included within the Ministry Fee so no additional charge will be made for this.

5. Fees are allocated differently than in the past – what are the changes and why?

The main change is that fees are expressly to be paid to the officiating minister. This reflects widespread practice even though the previous system stated payment should be made to the incumbent. Furthermore, it is fair that the person undertaking the service should receive the fee.

Previously, the incumbent received part of the fee for the erection of a monument. Whilst the incumbent is required to approve any proposals for monuments, it is not felt this represents a significant burden. Furthermore, it is felt more appropriate that the PCC receive the full income for the erection of a monument given that the PCC will have to bear the long term cost of the graveyard and its maintenance.

6. What is the charge for a monument erected for a burial that took place before 1 January 2015?

The fee should generally be the fee in place at the time the request for the monument was approved.

7. In what circumstances can the fees be waived?

Please see general guidance and Annex in respect of waiving of fees.

It is suggested that no burial fee will be charged in respect of the death of a person aged 18 years or younger.

3. Marriage Fees

Table of Fees (from 1 February 2015)

Marriages	Ministry Fee <i>(payable to the officiating minister)</i>	Church Fee <i>(payable to the PCC)</i>	Total Fee
	£	£	£
Marriage Service <i>(including fee for Publication of Banns)</i>	180	240	420
Where Banns are called outside the parish where the marriage service will take place			
	£	£	£
Publication of Banns <i>(to include certificate of Banns)</i>	-	35	35

The outgoing fee structure for marriages has been simplified further. In addition, fee levels have been subject to a comprehensive review as a result of which fees relating to marriages have been increased for 2015 above the rate of inflation. From 2015 the level of marriage fees is set across the Province. (In the past the Bench of Bishops has informed clergy of “suggested maximum” marriage fees each year.)

What has happened to the fee for the publication of Banns?

Arrangements for the fee for the Publication of Banns have changed in two ways. First, this fee has been included in the Marriage Service fee where Banns are called in the parish where the marriage service is to take place. Where Banns are called outside the parish in which the marriage will take place, a separate fee may be charged.

Secondly, to help parishes to meet general administrative costs (not necessarily those related to marriages), in future fees for the Publication of Banns and the issuing of a Certificate of Banns at the time should be paid to the Parochial Church Council, rather than to the officiating minister. This represents a change from previous Church in Wales practice.

Why have marriage fees increased by more than inflation for 2015?

The Representative Body has conducted a major review of fee levels. In doing so, it has aimed where possible to reflect both the cost of ministry (that is, the cleric’s time and expertise) and the use of the building in setting the level of fees. It has been possible for marriages to draw on recent work carried out by the Church of England; it is felt that the Church of England represents an appropriate comparator for the Church in Wales, as the costs of ministry and buildings maintenance are very similar in both Churches.

Comparisons have also been made with charges made by other providers in Wales, such as hotels and Register Offices. However, in practice like-for-like comparisons with such organisations are difficult as the services provided are often so different from those

provided by the Church in Wales. It is also noted that clergy normally devote considerably more time to preparation for weddings than Civil Registrars, and the costs of maintaining buildings such as Register Offices are not comparable.

In addition, it needs to be borne in mind that other denominations in Wales do not have the same duty to marry as the Church in Wales, and in most cases Church in Wales clergy have additional legal responsibilities to ministers from other churches. For these reasons it is felt that the Church of England is the most realistic body with which comparisons might be made, and the Church in Wales marriage fees for 2015 have been set at a very similar level to those in the Church of England. However, these fees will be reviewed annually by the Representative Body, and so in time the fee levels in Wales may differ from those in England.

I already have a number of weddings booked for 2015, and had indicated when the bookings were made that the fees were likely to be largely similar to 2014 levels. How should I deal with this situation?

This is likely to be a fairly common situation, as weddings are often booked a year or more in advance. But it must also be borne in mind that the additional cost of the new marriage fee is likely, statistically, to be a very small proportion of the total cost of the wedding. In most cases, it should be possible for clergy to explain the increase in fees without undue awkwardness or bad feeling. However, where a cleric considers that charging the marriage fee at the new level would create significant financial difficulties for the couple concerned, he or she may consider waiving part of the new fee (see Annex).

Can marriage fees be waived?

Yes, but please refer to Annex for further guidance on this sensitive area.

What about fees for Services of Blessing?

It is not appropriate to charge a Ministry Fee for services of blessing. However, if additional costs are incurred by the parish in hosting a service of blessing, a charge for the use of the church building may be made (see section on additional costs in general guidance, page 4).

ANNEX

Waiving of Fees

The following guidance is intended to help inform the decisions of officiating ministers and incumbents, and discussions with Parochial Church Councils, about the waiving of fees for occasional offices.

Why should Christian Churches Waive Fees?

- The concept of the labourer being worthy of his/her work is affirmed in Scripture (Luke 10.7 and I Tim 5.18). It can be justified by Reason; pragmatically both individual Christians and churches need worldly resources in order to survive and function. It also is enshrined in Tradition; it has for centuries been enshrined in the practice and teaching of the Church. Consequently, charging fees is unquestionably compatible with Anglican theology. However, it is equally uncontroversial that we should waive them in appropriate circumstances.
- Our fundamental calling to show love, compassion and generosity means that there are times when charging fees would not be appropriate for a Christian community.
- When individuals cannot afford to pay or at least to pay without leaving themselves in distress, waiver is appropriate; The Law of Moses made exceptions for those too poor to afford the standard sacrifices and Jesus repeatedly condemned the Temple authorities in his day for exploiting the vulnerable.
- There are times when it is a gesture which symbolises our love and compassion; as, for example, when there is a funeral of a child. The material issue is secondary; really the action is about showing in a small way how sorry we are for the pain of our brothers and sisters and how much we wish that we could do more to ease it. It might be seen as a little like the way in which Mary poured perfume over the feet of Jesus, perhaps sensing his fear and sorrow as he prepared himself for the ordeal of the Cross. Our gesture is not much for those in an ocean of grief, but like Mary we have done what we could.

Who should waive fees?

- The kinds of circumstances in which fees are waived often relate to very sensitive and confidential matters. A family may not wish others to know that they are struggling financially and some tragic circumstances surrounding a death may not be for public disclosure and consumption.
- For these reasons, the only person who can make a judgment about whether to waive the fee is the Officiating Minister of the service; he or she will be the one to whom the pastoral confidences are disclosed.

- It might be suggested that this is difficult, as the incumbent or in some cases the PCC will be the parties technically entitled to receive the fee. However, it is submitted that if they are trusting a third party to receive the confidential information required to conduct the service and carry out the accompanying pastoral work, then they must trust this third party to use this information appropriately. In stark terms, if they cannot make such judgments they really should not be conducting offices.
- In light of the sensitivities which may surround waiving fees, it is suggested that if the incumbent is **not** the Officiant, he should be informed of the decision to waive the fee but not of the reasons for it (unless there are pastoral reasons which justify and require such disclosure to be made; and it is compatible with the Clergy Terms of Service guidance on confidentiality).

Which fees can be waived?

- If a decision is made to waive the Church Fee and the Ministry Fee, then it ought to have been done in accordance with the principles of this guidance.
- However, it should be borne in mind that the decision to waive **any other fee** has to be very carefully considered as it may impact upon the person or group who would be entitled to that fee.
- It is suggested that such fees ought not be waived in anything other than exceptional circumstances, and never unilaterally, since to do so could at the very least, lead to resentment on the part of that person or group (which is unlikely to be pastorally sensible), and at its worst could have legal consequences.
- On this latter point, some churches may have a contractual obligation to pay fees. In most cases this is likely to be primarily the organist (but may include others e.g. a vergger). While many organists may be “occasional” or play on an informal basis, there are those who will have a written contract in appropriate form (either RSCM or similar) and there is a real risk that to attempt to waive a fee on their behalf could place the church in breach of contract.
- It is probably arguable that even those who are paid on an “as and when” basis have some sort of contractual relationship and it would clearly cause considerable ill will to assume that the fee can be waived unilaterally. Remember too, that, in some cases, the fees may, in reality, be a significant part of that person’s primary income.
- There is undoubtedly an understanding among many of these individuals and groups that in particular circumstances, the fee may be waived, but this ought to be a consensual decision. In cases involving the funeral of a child, for example, there is a general acceptance that a fee will not be charged, but there should be no assumptions about this particular or any other circumstance where the Officiating Minister takes the view that the individual or groups should consider not taking the fee.
- Remember that it is the undertaker who will be sending the account to the family and, in most cases these additional fees will simply be part of an overall cost to the family, who will generally be under no illusions as to the costs involved.

- It is appreciated from this guidance that the Officiating Minister may not wish to divulge the reason for waiving the church and ministers fee but with diplomacy and sensitivity it should be possible to reassure the group or individual concerned that there is a bona fide reason for asking that their respective fees ought, perhaps, to be waived too. It is submitted, however, that the occasions when a waiver of such fees will occur will be exceptional and generally confined to the examples set out in the next section of this guidance.

When should fees be waived?

- Applying the theological principles outlined in the first section above, there are two sets of circumstances when fees should be waived:
 - 1) Financial hardship and
 - 2) As a gesture of compassionate human solidarity.
- This underlying justification illustrates why it is not necessarily appropriate to waive fees simply because an individual or family has a long-standing church connection. This fact in no way relates to points 1 or 2.
- Point 1 really requires no elaboration. Rigid guidelines on income levels/savings would be inappropriate and trying to apply them would potentially cause deep distress to all concerned. Officiating Ministers will simply have to make a judgment call based on the facts as disclosed. However, with the second category, the following examples may be relevant.
- **Child funerals**-Although the secular authority and English guidance deals with funerals of those under 16, we would suggest that fees should be waived for under 18s. It seems appropriate to treat those whom our law and society regards as children, as children.
- **Resolving Upset**-There may be occasions where the way in which the Church has handled an occasional office has caused upset, and in some cases it might be felt to be appropriate to waive all or part of the fee.
- **Adult deaths which are especially tragic** -There may be occasions when Officiating Ministers are moved to make some gesture of compassion: 'we did what we could'. Trying to rigidly categorise these cases would not be beneficial, all cases and circumstances are unique. Three possible examples are murder victims, suicides and those who die rescuing or helping others e.g. firemen, lifeboat crews, police officers on duty.

Recording the waiving of fees

- Where the Officiant has a bona fide reason for suggesting a waiver to the individual or group, the key is ensuring that there is sound communication.
- Leave nothing to assumption and you will more often than not, find that a sensitive situation can have a positive outcome for all concerned. In particular, where pastoral relationships are working well and there is trust within parishes, it should be possible to convey that fees are being waived for pastoral reasons without being pressed or tempted into inappropriate disclosure of confidential matters.
- In some dioceses in the Church of England, practice has developed, when submitting the appropriate returns to the Diocesan Office to include the reason for waiving fees. In the proposed regime, we believe this to be ill advised and unnecessary.
- The decision to waive the fee should be recorded, but not the basis upon which that decision has been reached, which for reasons indicated could be extremely sensitive.
- It is suggested that if a random scrutiny of a diocesan return should reveal an abnormal pattern of waivers, then that might raise concerns over the implementation of this guidance, but it should not form the basis of an exercise in “second guessing” a particular Officiating Minister’s decision making.