

PAYMENT OF OCCASIONAL OFFICE FEES TO READERS

"With reducing numbers of stipendiary clergy and fresh patterns of shared ministry the Church relies heavily on Retired Clergy, OLMs and Readers. The Church should be seen to promote good practice in ministry and a proper balance between the financial needs of the Church and the principle of the labourer being worthy of hire.

In the light of this, this Diocesan Synod believes that all ministers not in receipt of a full stipend or in full time employment should be entitled to receive two thirds of the Diocesan Board of Finance (DBF) fee for weddings and funerals, undertaken at the request of the incumbent, provided they undertake the associated pastoral visiting and preparation. Fees should be reimbursed at the agreed rate and all claims should be via the DBF on an appropriate claim form and the DBF should develop policies and procedures to enable good practice."

DS127/05 Parochial Fees
Bolton Deanery Synod Motion
127 Session Diocesan Synod
12th Feb 2013

Occasional Offices

By decision of the Diocesan Synod (in February 2013) Readers and Readers emeritus who are licensed or who hold PTO in the Diocese of Manchester and who are not in full-time employment are entitled to claim two-thirds of the DBF fee on condition that they have undertaken the associated pastoral visiting and preparation. The appropriate claim form also will need to be completed and they must not receive any part of the fee locally.

These guidelines apply only to services that take place either within the geographical borders of the Diocese of Manchester or for a deceased parishioner who was on the electoral roll of, or otherwise resident in, a parish within The Diocese. The DBF cannot accept fees for or issue payments against services that do not satisfy one of the above requirements.

All payments for fees from funeral directors should be submitted to the parish with which the deceased had a connection either through residence or membership of its electoral roll, to be included in its fees return and remitted to the DBF alongside the parish's other fees. The DBF is unable to process cheques which are written to the DBF directly from funeral directors which are not accompanied by a parish fees return form. The DBF reserves the right to withhold payments of fees where cheques are remitted to the DBF and parishes do not confirm the service on their fees return.

Readers in receipt of fees from the DBF are responsible for declaring these as income to HMRC for tax purposes. The DBF requests that everyone claiming occasional office fees provide their UTR (Unique Tax Reference) number as confirmation of this. Where an individual's income is less than the threshold for a tax return to be completed, correspondence from HMRC to that effect will be accepted.

Travelling expenses are non-statutory payments and therefore, are not included in statutory fees. The DBF is unable to be involved in collecting, reimbursing or administering these. The payment of expenses for travelling to or from funerals should be arranged and paid locally by agreement between the Reader and the funeral director. Mileage for pastoral visiting should be approved by and claimed from the parish whose fees return shows the fee payable to the diocese. It is recommended that the HMRC mileage allowance is used.

Where a Reader incurs loss of earnings in order to conduct a funeral they may claim additional expenses from the PCC which records the service on their fees form, provided that PCC agrees to the arrangements. Any such additional expenses should not exceed one half of the DBF fee for a funeral service and the total of the fees received should not exceed the lost earnings.

Where Readers provide cover for Sunday and weekday services not in the parish/parishes they are licensed to they should claim appropriate expenses from the parish where they are undertaking the service. If the parish is in vacancy, these expenses can be claimed back by the parish from the DBF in line with the sequestration guidance. Readers may not claim a fee for Sunday or weekday services.

Claims process

The DBF has produced a claims form for occasional offices. The claim form for the service conducted should be completed electronically and emailed to finance@manchester.anglican.org. Wet signatures are no longer required on the forms and completing the excel spreadsheet digitally and returning that is the preferred method. Paper forms can be submitted but before your first claim you should contact the finance team if this is how you wish to claim.

To receive an expedited payment, claims should be accompanied by evidence of the Readers having been asked to take the service by the parish e.g a letter/email from the incumbent/Churchwarden confirming they took a funeral. As per the synod resolution, the DBF can only accept confirmation from an incumbent. During vacancy the Churchwardens will fulfil this requirement. No payment can be made where confirmation is not received from the parish and DBF reserves the right to withhold payment in order to independently confirm a service with representatives of the parish. Where supporting documentation is not provided claims will be paid on receipt of parochial fees forms, which must show both the name of the officiant and service details in the space provided on the bottom of the sheet.

In parallel with the Diocesan Expenses Policy, claims should be submitted within two months of the service being conducted wherever possible. Claims for the previous calendar year must be submitted before the end of January in the following year or they may not be paid.