

December 2025

## Payment of Fees to Voluntary Ministers

**Effective: 1 January 2026**Available from the diocesan website at [www.hereford.anglican.org/ministry/clergy-ministry/ssm/](http://www.hereford.anglican.org/ministry/clergy-ministry/ssm/)

### Introduction

In 2013, the Church of England changed the basis for calculating, collecting and distributing fees for occasional offices (funerals and weddings). Voluntary Ministers [VMs] such as Self Supporting Ministers, Ordained Local Ministers, Readers, and ministers holding Permission to Officiate (PTO) take many occasional office services. We acknowledge the value of their enormous contribution to the Church's ministry. The national church has issued guidance to dioceses concerning fees offered to VMs. The following is the Casual Ministers fee policy which will now operate in the Diocese of Hereford.

For complete transparency, casual duty fees are payable to "visiting" unpaid ministers who deputise for regular ministers at a regular Sunday service or major feast day. A "visiting" minister is one who is neither licensed to, nor habitually worships within, the benefice. Stipendiary clergy are never entitled to these fees.

This guidance updates the version issued in November 2024 and will take effect from **1 January 2026**.

### Working Agreements

It is a requirement that every Voluntary Minister should hold a Working Agreement, negotiated between that minister and the incumbent of the benefice(s) to which they are licensed or (in the case of ministers with PTO) where they commonly serve. The agreement should indicate the minister's usual level of availability within the benefice: including Sunday ministry, occasional offices, and other pastoral functions. The Working Agreement guards against misunderstandings, and protects the VM from unreasonable demands.

### Church of England Parochial Fees today

The 2013 fee structure involved a one-time increase forbidding parishes to charge extras, except those specifically listed in the fees table, which they had traditionally added to the cost of a wedding or funeral. The fee which a parishioner now pays is divided into two portions: one portion goes to the PCC, the other (the former "incumbent's fee") to the Diocesan Board of Finance (DBF). When a fee is offered to a Voluntary Minister, it comes from the DBF portion of the fee.

The following policy applies during a vacancy, as well as when there is an incumbent in post. When a VM leads a funeral (in church or crematorium) or conducts a wedding, he/she may ask for the payment of a fee. For any funeral or wedding, the fee offered is according to the following scale:

- Weddings: £171
- Funerals – service in church, or at graveside / in churchyard: £88
- Funerals – service at crematorium or in cemetery: £138
- Funerals – service in premises belonging to funeral director: £163
- Burials – of body / cremated remains in churchyard (no service, committal only): £36

These fees will be reviewed annually.

## Process for a Voluntary Minister to claim a fee

The VM should notify the parish or benefice treasurer when s/he wishes to claim a fee. The VM should complete the appropriate claim form available at [www.hereford.anglican.org/ministry/clergy-ministry/ssm/](http://www.hereford.anglican.org/ministry/clergy-ministry/ssm/) and pass it to the treasurer who will forward it to the [Hereford DBF Finance Team](#). There is no need for a counter-signature. When the treasurer remits the occasional office fee to the DBF, they will note the fee payable to the VM – and his/her contact details – on the parish's accompanying form. The diocesan Finance Team will make the relevant payment to the VM within a few days of receipt of both forms. We appreciate that many VMs do not claim fees (and we are doubly grateful for the benefit this is to the whole diocese).

If two (or more) VMs share the service, they may divide the fee between them – but they may only claim one single fee per service. In all cases, whether or not a fee is requested, the VM is expected to claim expenses. In most cases, a VM should claim expenses direct from the parish when the service takes place in the church, not from the DBF: the PCC portion of the fee is calculated to take account of likely expenses. The current HMRC mileage rate is 45p per mile.

However, mileage for funeral services, whether in church or at a crematorium, should always be charged direct to the Funeral Director, alongside the service fee(s) due. The VM must notify the Funeral Director of their exact mileage and should not simply accept a flat fee.

## Scale of Service Fees

**Effective: 1 January 2026**, revised in January each year. Subject to the provisions of the forgoing sections of this code of practice, fees payable to retired clergy, in the circumstances indicated above, are as follows:

**Sunday service in parish** in which they do not normally worship and subject to a maximum of two services in any Church/es in a week: **£50** per service, up to a maximum of **£100**.

Every PCC should offer the casual duty fee to visiting Voluntary Ministers for taking Sunday or major feast day services, and reimburse any travelling expenses. The service fee and mileage are the responsibility of the PCC.

## During a vacancy period

If a parish does not have a permanent priest due to a vacancy or long-term sickness, a Voluntary Minister may reclaim fees for qualifying services and related travel expenses from the Hereford DBF.

Qualifying services are:

- Sunday Services as regularly held (mid-week services remain the responsibility of the PCC)
- A patronal festival for your Church(es)
- A service on each of the Principal Feasts and Holy Days

Marriage service in church	<b>£171</b>
Funeral service in church or at graveside	<b>£88</b>
Burial of ashes (committal only) on separate occasion	<b>£36</b>
Funeral service at crematorium or in cemetery	<b>£138</b>

Other statutory fees not mentioned above will be paid at the rate equivalent to two-thirds of the statutory DBF portion of the fee.

The relevant PCC remains entitled to their full fee. Note that the 2026 Table includes a fee of £37 payable to a PCC when there is a funeral service at a crematorium or in a cemetery.

## The Role of Incumbent

The incumbent (or the Rural Dean and wardens during a vacancy) has responsibility for arranging funerals and weddings from the parish, and VMs should not agree to take services without first being sure that this has been cleared with the incumbent. (There have been a few instances of funeral directors calling VMs before the incumbent, and occasionally this has led to unhelpful confusion and pastoral distress.) The incumbent is responsible for arranging the 'staffing' of a particular service, and where appropriate may invite the participation of the relevant VM. There are many factors to balance when deciding this: for example, which minister has the best pastoral relationship with the family concerned, and whether it is reasonable to add this task to the workload of a volunteer?

Incumbents must also be aware that their role requires of them the primary oversight of pastoral care of the parish, and that they must be models and exemplars of this ministry too. They should be cognisant of the importance of supportive partnership with assistant ministers.

## Regular worship during vacancies, sabbaticals, short- and long-term sickness

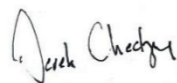
During vacancies, sabbaticals and in case of the incumbent's long-term sickness, it is the responsibility of churchwardens with Rural Deans to arrange services. When VMs come from outside the parish, or when those from within the parish undertake work over and above their normal Working Agreement, they are offered a fee (presently **£50** per service up to a maximum of two per week) and travel expenses from the DBF. The VM should submit a claim to the DBF countersigned by the incumbent (if available) or the Rural Dean. In certain circumstances, such as a minister having an unexpected short-term illness, the Archdeacon may authorise emergency cover from a VM which will be covered by the Hereford DBF.

## In conclusion

Our Diocese could not function without the contribution made by its Voluntary Ministers including SSMs, OLMs, Readers and retired ministers with PTO, and we are grateful for it beyond words. We hope these notes clarify the procedure for arranging services, payment of expenses and the offer of a fee to VMs for work undertaken in respect of work undertaken in vacancies above the level of Working Agreements, and when taking occasional offices.

### Key Principles

1. All SSMs, OLMs, Readers, and those retired from stipendiary ministry who have Permission-to-Officiate, will be assumed to be Voluntary Ministers\* and treated on the same basis.
2. Every Voluntary Minister is urged to make a Working Agreement with the Incumbent, indicating the usual level of voluntary leadership they wish to offer. This includes Sunday ministry and Occasional Offices. The purpose is to avoid unreasonable demands on the Voluntary Minister.
3. When a parish asks a Voluntary Minister to carry out duties beyond their Working Agreement, the appropriate fee should be offered.
4. Fees for services at a Crematorium should be passed to the Hereford DBF and then the Voluntary Minister will be reimbursed in the normal way. These fees should never be retained by the VM.
5. Hereford DBF will not pay a Voluntary Minister until it has received the relevant fee from the Parish.
6. 'Habitually worship' is defined by the Church where the Voluntary Minister would choose to attend worship when not conducting duties elsewhere, or where they hold a licence or have a Working Agreement with the Incumbent.
7. Parochial or District Church Councils should always pay the expenses of all Voluntary Ministers.



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