

Paper Reference	8.1 Calne Deanery Fees Proposal
Paper Submitted by	Diocesan Secretary/ Bishop Karen as Warden of LLMs
Last considered by this meeting on (meeting if applicable)	The July Synod was informed that this proposal had been made by Calne Deanery Synod. The Chair informed Synod that since it concerned arrangements for ministry and parish fees it would be considered first by Bishop’s Leadership Team and the Bishop’s Council.
Background including any previous outcome(s)	Bishop’s Leadership Team considered the options and issues and made recommendations to the Bishop’s Council at its meeting on September 25th
What is required of this meeting? <i>Decision</i>	Synod is asked to consider the issues and to support the recommendation of its Standing Committee, in light of which parish fee rules will be changed in January 2025.
State the relevant mandate of this committee that enables it to take the above action. <i>(Decision-making vs advisory as per TOR / SO / legislation)</i>	Synod standing orders make provision to consider matters raised by Deanery Synods.

1. Calne Deanery resolution

Proposal for the equitable treatment of funeral ministers from Calne Deanery

At present in the Diocese of Salisbury retired clergy with a PTO are entitled to claim two-thirds of the DBF portion of a funeral fee, as well as other reasonable expenses. This rises to the full fee when a benefice is in vacancy. By contrast, neither LLMs nor self-supporting clergy (SSMs) are permitted to claim anything except expenses. This seems unfair, especially in the light of reducing stipendiary clergy numbers and an increased reliance on voluntary ministry of all sorts.

At a typical church funeral, a vergers will be in attendance – someone who is a member of that church. Also, an organist, who may well also be a member of that church. Both these people will quite rightly receive a fee for their duties. Why not an LLM or an SSM, either of whom will have put a great deal more work into this service than either the vergers or the organist?

Of course, the principle of LLM and SSM ministries is that they are volunteer roles, and the vast majority of each ministry will continue to be done on a voluntary basis. But when the church is actually receiving a fee for a funeral service, which is entirely contingent on the hard work of the LLM or SSM, it seems unjust to treat them differently to a PTO priest, when PTO ministry is also voluntary.

Many LLMs and SSMs may choose not to claim this fee, anyway, were it to be available. But surely, they should be given the same opportunity to claim as a PTO priest does. As a point of comparison, many (though not all) other dioceses of the Church of England do permit non-stipended ministers to claim a proportion of the DBF fee (from 50% in Liverpool Diocese to 80% in Truro Diocese).

Resolution:

This synod requests that the Diocesan Synod asks the Bishop's Council to change the rules on who may claim a fee for conducting a funeral such that all authorised ministers are treated in the same way as PTO clergy.

Brought by Revd Caspar Bush
Team Rector of Marden Vale Benefice

2. Response

Ministry

1. For all licensed clergy the Ministers Fee is the property of the DBF. All those who have PTO (whether former SSM Clergy or stipendiary clergy) all have the option of retaining 2/3rd of the Ministers fee when conducting funerals or marriages. Many do not retain these fees especially if they continue to have an active part in their local church in retirement. The 1/3 fee is assigned to the diocese via the incumbent.
2. The current bishop's regulations for Reader (LLM) ministry which all dioceses follow state: 'Readers are voluntary and unpaid ministers and do not accept fees for their services'. There is a clear understanding that ministry is seen as gift and is not something for which remuneration should be expected.
3. Most licensed Self-Supporting Ministers and LLMs do not consider themselves as volunteers. They have a ministry agreement with their local parish and view their ministry in the same way as stipendiary clergy.
4. Vergers, and organists however would be undertaking a particular job for which they receive remuneration or an honorarium in the same way as cleaners or administrators.
5. With regard to funerals, the bishop's regulation for Readers states: When Readers conduct a funeral, they may not retain the fee. It is normal for Readers to collect the fee payable in respect of the service and to pass this to the incumbent or PCC treasurer. They may receive reimbursement from the undertaker or incumbent for loss of earnings and expenses incurred through conducting the service and providing the related pastoral care for the bereaved family. In a vacancy the incumbent's fee should be paid to the Diocesan Board of Finance or in accordance with its directions. The incumbent and Board should agree to the Reader retaining a sum for expenses and loss of earnings from the fee.
6. Therefore, the only payment to be received by SSMs and Readers should be for expenses incurred in the ministry and loss of earnings. The giving of a proportion of the fee to a licensed SSM or LLM would alter greatly, not only the income of the diocese, but also the nature of self-supporting ministry and lay ministry.

7. The Regulations go on to state: In particular circumstances where Readers are heavily involved in funerals but are not in a position to be reimbursed for loss of earnings, the Warden, after consultation with the appropriate diocesan body, may agree to the payment of an honorarium by the PCC. This would be separate from an LLM/Reader retaining any part of the Ministers Fee.

Finance

8. The revised share scheme will mean that a proportion of the fee assigned to the DBF will be returned to the benefice. All ministers will then see some of the fruit of their labour in undertaking weddings and funerals coming back locally. In dioceses who already do this, LLMs and SSMs see this as an additional part of their giving (time, talents and money) and therefore their ministry making a difference financially to their local church.

If an LLM or SSM is undertaking a significant number of occasional offices then this money could be used to offer an honorarium.

Anomaly

9. There is a current anomaly in that clergy with PTO (and PTO does not differentiate between former stipendiary or self supporting ministers) have the option of receiving 2/3rd of a fee for a wedding or funeral. Currently LLMs with PTO are not offered this option when taking a funeral.

10. There are currently 82 LLMs with PTO across the diocese, of which a smaller proportion are active in taking funerals.

Proposal

11. That this diocese agrees that LLMs with PTO should be entitled to receive 2/3rd of the fee for a funeral in line with other ministers.

It is important to note that any money received by an individual for fees should be declared on a tax return and treated as additional income.

+Karen Warden of LLMs

3. Next steps:

In view of the above proposal and the fact the 50% of fees will be returned to parishes under the new Share arrangement. The Bishop's Council propose that the following changes are made to the Guidelines to take effect from January 2025

1. LLMs with Permission to Officiate are included alongside retired clergy in being entitled to receive two-thirds of a fee for funerals
2. Instead of the full DBF fee, retired clergy and LLMs with Permission to Officiate should be entitled to receive two-thirds of the DBF fee at any time including vacancies. This will enable parishes to benefit from a return on some fee income during a vacancy when cover is provided by retired clergy or LLMs with PTO.
3. That clergy who are retired and living in the benefice and who hold the Bishop's Permission to Officiate would be entitled to receive a casual duty fee and two-thirds of a wedding or funeral fee if providing additional services during a vacancy.

4. [There also needs to be an amendment in relation to fees for Marriage Ceremonies and Blessings with any reference to a marriage certificate being deleted as one is no longer issued.]

It is anticipated that these changes to the Guidelines would be cost neutral to the DBF given the changes to the Share scheme involving fee income.