

## Fees at Funerals and Weddings: guidance from the Diocese of Carlisle: July 2015

Fees for various aspects of Weddings and Funerals are set annually by General Synod and Parliament: they therefore have the force of law. They can be downloaded from the Diocesan website, or the Church of England website:

[www.churchofengland.org/weddings-baptisms-funerals/fees.aspx](http://www.churchofengland.org/weddings-baptisms-funerals/fees.aspx)

These fee levels were substantially increased in 2012. The size of the fees has had a significant PR impact, and churches need to behave both legally and ethically in dealing with fees.

There are therefore three basic principles:

**First**, churches must be absolutely transparent about the fees they charge – there can be no hidden extras and all extras must be agreed before the service.

**Second**, it must be possible to have a wedding or funeral at the basic fee set by General Synod – there can be no compulsory extras.

**Third**, the opportunities for proclaiming the love of God through a wedding or funeral must not be jeopardised by the desire to raise money; churches must not think that those who come to us for weddings and funerals are not really part of the church, so that it is reasonable to ask them for extra.

Permissible extras must all be optional and are basically limited to

- a) Heating – but you could only charge this if the heating were needed and you put it on
- b) Organist – in setting this fee you should be considering the ability of your organist, and the guidance offered by the Royal School of Church Music or the Incorporated Society of Musicians:  
[www.rscm.com/info\\_resources/payingChurchMusicians.php](http://www.rscm.com/info_resources/payingChurchMusicians.php)  
[www.ism.org/advice/article/employed-organist-fees](http://www.ism.org/advice/article/employed-organist-fees)  
[www.ism.org/advice/article/organist-fees](http://www.ism.org/advice/article/organist-fees)
- c) Verger – but you could only charge a reasonable amount actually paid to a verger
- d) Choir – you should be considering the ability and size of your choir
- e) Recording Fees – payable to your Organist/Choir as professional musicians
- f) Flowers (if provided by the church) – but, applying the three principles above, you would only be able to charge for the cost of the flowers plus a reasonable amount actually paid to the flower arrangers
- g) Bell Ringers – usually set per rope, and the Diocesan Ringing Guild would help suggest a reasonable rate

Churches and clergy may very properly think that, given the substantial amounts of money charged in fees (even if we know these are only a small fraction of the overall cost of the wedding or funeral), no extra should be charged for heating, since the church building will benefit from the additional heat. Obviously fees for flowers, organist, choir, and ringers are genuinely additional costs if the levels are reasonable for the services provided. Amounts for extra fees should be agreed each year by the PCC and clearly published (eg on a noticeboard).

The Bishops and Archdeacons are concerned that some churches are not keeping to the letter and spirit of the law, and these three basic principles; and in doing so are potentially both defrauding families coming to us for weddings and funerals, and bringing the church into disrepute. The fraud could lead to Police involvement, and the disrepute could lead to a CDM (Clergy Discipline Measure) complaint. The Archdeacons will examine churches' fees policies at their triennial visitations.