

Funerals during the COVID-19 Outbreak

Forms of Service & Notes of Guidance

This note explains the current Diocese of Leicester guidance on funerals (based on Church of England guidance), which should be read in conjunction with the latest public health advice.

Forms of service

1. Given that churches are now closed, the only available options for Church of England funerals are the following:
 - a short service at the crematorium, with or without a very small congregation, which may only include spouse/partner, parents, and children of the deceased;
 - a short service at the graveside, under the same conditions.

Complete orders of service for both, including explanatory notes, are included in this circulation. There is no possibility of funerals at home, or in any location other than the graveside or a crematorium.

Pastoral care of mourners

2. Many people will be unable to be at funerals which, in other circumstances, they would have been able to attend. The appended document, 'A simple reflection at home on the day of a funeral you can't attend', can be made available to mourners in this situation. Other resources will be available for download from the Church of England website.
3. We recommend that if it is appropriate, and if family wish it, the funeral service could be recorded (but preferably not streamed unless permanent facilities exist, because of the quality of signal/picture/audio from personal devices).
4. Clergy should also be encouraged to share with mourners the form of service used at the graveside/crematorium, to point to resources online about bereavement, establish remote (telephone) pastoral contact where possible, and offer to provide space and time for a memorial service when conditions permit.

Relations with crematoria and funeral directors

5. We note that direct cremation will be an option which funeral directors may start to encourage. Direct cremation does not involve the presence of family members of the deceased.
6. **The diocese will be arranging a rota for duty priests at crematoria.** This is likely to be organised by area deans, and either they or the archdeacons will be in touch with incumbents about this soon. We will want wherever possible to coordinate with ecumenical colleagues and build on existing links with funeral directors.
7. We will also be encouraging area deans to be in touch with the funeral directors in their area to explain what we are able to offer at present, citing the conditions in this note.

Fees

8. **In the current exceptional circumstances and for so long as they continue, we have agreed to waive all funeral fees that would otherwise be payable to the DBF under the Parochial Fees Order. This is with immediate effect.** Although our income streams are already much reduced, we consider that the provision of funerals is a crucial aspect of the Church's ministry at this time.
9. The DBF will continue to pay 80% of the DBF fee to ministers not in receipt of a stipend. The parish treasurer should notify the DBF finance office of what payments are due (ideally monthly) and this will then be paid by the DBF (email Tracy.Brito@covlec.org).
10. Funeral Directors will need to know that this is for a very limited period only and it is likely that once restrictions on church services are lifted, we will reinstate normal fees.

Further advice

11. If more resources for clergy or for bereaved people are produced, they will be placed on the Church of England website, which will also always contain the latest advice: www.churchofengland.org/coronavirus
12. Questions about funerals should be addressed to your area dean or archdeacon.

+ Martyn Leicester