

Diocese of Wakefield

Funeral arrangements

Dear colleague,

Letter to retired clergy - funeral arrangements

Thank you for the continuing ministry that you offer as part of the life of our Diocese. Your help, input, support and prayers are enormously appreciated.

If you are not currently involved in funeral ministry then this letter may not be of direct relevance. We hope it will still be of interest in clarifying the situation regarding retired clergy taking funerals. This letter is being written with the full support of the Bishop.

A meeting was held recently with various undertakers. We had a useful discussion about concerns we share about funerals and as a result we are seeking to do all we can to improve both the arranging and follow-up of the funerals across the Diocese.

With this letter you will receive a copy of a letter being sent to all stipendiary and self-supporting clergy. You will see that this clarifies the normal and regular process for arranging a funeral.

Normally, where Anglican ministry is requested, the **undertaker should contact parish clergy**. It is the responsibility of parish clergy to accept the funeral and take details, whether they can take the service or not. **If they cannot take it themselves then the parish clergy, not the undertaker, is normally responsible for arranging a minister for the service.**

In the conversation with undertakers both parties were concerned that because of the way some funerals are arranged opportunities for ministry and proper follow-up are missed. For example, situations where details of the bereaved do not find their way to local parishes for pastoral follow-up or inclusion in memorial/All Souls Services. Also a very few retired clergy (not all of them Anglican) are taking a disproportionate number of funerals, which causes concern.

Under these new arrangements undertakers should be contacting parish clergy about all funerals and parish clergy should be sorting who takes the funeral. Undertakers should not normally go to retired clergy directly and your contact should normally be with the parish clergy. You may occasionally still find an undertaker contacting you. If this happens we would ask you to check that the undertaker has made an adequate and careful attempt to contact parish clergy unless special mutual support arrangements have been made.

In the attached letter to parish clergy and others you will see that we have underlined the importance of clergy being accessible and taking responsibility for funerals. We have also suggested setting up networks among clergy for mutual support with funerals and are suggesting that retired clergy and others could be part of those networks. Where there is such a network of mutual support in place then obviously undertakers may be contacting retired clergy direct.

We are asking that on every occasion you take a funeral you pass on a brief report to the relevant parish clergy, including anything you feel will help appropriate follow-up.

Rural Deans have been asked to continue to keep an eye on funeral ministry within their Deanery.

Would you please confirm with your Rural Dean that you are available to help with funerals when asked by parish clergy. This is particularly important during the forthcoming Diocesan Clergy Conference (1-4 September) when most parish clergy are away. If you are available to take funerals over this period please let your Rural Dean know.

Letters will be sent in August to all funeral directors to inform them about these arrangements and clarify what we hope is a good and pastoral way of working together.

Please contact us if anything in this letter is not clear. A copy of this letter is being sent to parish clergy, for information.

With all good wishes and once again our warmest thanks to you for your ministry and care in these areas.

Archdeacon of Halifax

Archdeacon of Pontefract