

Occasional Offices (Baptisms, Weddings, and Funerals) Policy

Incumbents' discretion

Whilst the below sets out our position on many aspects of occasional offices, the Incumbent may deviate from this policy for good pastoral or missional reasons, so long as any deviation is both legal and seemly. The PCC may require an explanation for any such deviation, and may offer guidance on what it feels appropriate or inappropriate. In particular a standing flexibility exists towards all non-statutory rules pertaining to dates and times for all serving members of the armed forces.

Fees and Charges

Statutory Fees will be charged according the Table of Parochial Fees relevant to time of the service.

Local charges are not statutory fees, in that they are set locally and are for services which may be refused.

However, we will not conduct a wedding or funeral without a Verger, and for contractual reasons a

'Professional Organist' fee is always payable at Ripley for weddings and funerals that include music, even when our organist is not used.

Our local charges are set as follows:

Baptisms	Professional Organist*	Vocational Organist*
Bishop Thornton	£51.00	£41.00
Burnt Yates	£51.00	£41.00
Markington	£51.00	£41.00
Ripley	£51.00	£41.00
South Stainley	£51.00	£41.00

Weddings	Heating	Verger	Professional Organist*	Vocational Organist*	Choir	Bells
Bishop Thornton	£86.00	£53.50	£122.50	£92.00	N/A	N/A
Burnt Yates	£86.00	£53.50	£122.50	£92.00	N/A	N/A
Markington	£86.00	£53.50	£122.50	£92.00	N/A	N/A
Ripley	£107.00	£64.50	£184.00	£117.50	£194.00	£49.50
South Stainley	£86.00	£53.50	£122.50	£92.00	N/A	N/A

Funerals	Heating	Verger	Professional Organist*	Vocational Organist*	Choir	Bells
Bishop Thornton	£86.00	£53.50	£102.00	£76.50	N/A	N/A
Burnt Yates	£86.00	£53.50	£102.00	£76.50	N/A	N/A
Markington	£86.00	£53.50	£102.00	£76.50	N/A	N/A
Ripley	£107.00	£64.50	£102.00	£76.50	N/A	£49.50
South Stainley	£86.00	£53.50	£102.00	£76.50	N/A	N/A

*Set in line with RSCM recommendations.

Collections

It is our custom to take a retiring collection at the end of baptisms, weddings, and funerals. This may be replaced by a collection from the congregation during the service at the request of the family involved.

- At baptisms the entirety of the collection is taken for the life and ministry of the church in which the service takes place. (This is because there are no fees or charges associated with baptisms, but there are costs.)
- At weddings the collection may be split 50:50 between the church in which the service takes place and a charity or charities nominated by the couple being married.
- At funerals the collection may be taken entirely for a charity or charities nominated by the family. At funerals the collection may be taken and processed by the church, or by the funeral director – in which case it must be taken in, and removed from the church in, a sealed box.

When collections are taken and processed by the church, a letter of thanks detailing the amount raised shall be sent to family by the Treasurer.

Decoration of Churches for Occasional Offices

Whilst we welcome baptisms, weddings, and funerals when we can, it is understood that they take place within the life and worship of the wider church community. Therefore seasonal decorations and installations in place within our churches may be present for baptisms, weddings, and funerals and these manifestations of the wider life of the church take precedence over individual services. On occasions this may limit access to parts of our buildings, and where this is the case we will endeavour to find workable alternatives.

Decorations, floral and otherwise, must not be placed in churches for occasional offices in any ways that harm or disrupt the fabric of the buildings, for example, it is never permissible to drive nails into walls or pews to hang flowers from.

Decorations, floral or otherwise, that are provided at the expense of a family for an office remain the property of that family, unless donated to the church. They are free to remove them from the church at their discretion. Any decorations left in the church beyond midnight of the day of the Office may be removed to storage within the church, and disposed of after 28 days if not collected.

We observe a tradition across our churches of removing flowers during Advent and Lent, but floral decorations may be put in place for occasional offices, and if they are donated to the churches will be gratefully retained until unsightly.

Photography During Occasional Offices

Members of congregations are discouraged from taking photos during services, and encouraged to instead be fully present in the experience and the moment.

Professional photographers may be hired by couples and families for Occasional Offices. They must work to minimise disruption to proceedings, photograph only those parts of a service directly related to the Office, and refrain from flash photography. Beyond these courtesies, if the couple or family is happy with the behaviour of the photographer, so are we.

Data Collection and Protection

For details on what data are collected for Occasional Offices, and how they are stored and protected, see our Privacy Policy.

Baptisms

Baptism is an ancient sacrament, in which the outward and physical symbol of water is used to reflect an important moment in someone's inward spiritual life. That moment has been described and understood in different ways throughout history - as a moment of figuratively passing from the 'death' of existence without God to the fulness of life that comes from living with Him; as a moment of 'illumination', in which one moves from a state of darkness and ignorance to light and understanding (think of the related word, 'enlightenment'); or as a moment of cleansing from sin and evil into the cleanliness of the purity of God. You will hear echoes of all these ideas in the texts used during a baptism service (sometimes called a Christening). However it is understood, baptism has always been used to mark and demonstrate two things:

- the commitment of an individual to a personal spiritual life, following in the ways, teachings, and example of Jesus. This is a serious commitment, not to be taken lightly, and an agreement entered into with God himself. If it is lived out, it is the way to living life to the full - and embracing your truest identity as a beloved child of God. In baptism God is invited to the life of the baptised, and his Spirit is poured out upon them.
- and an entering into the corporate spiritual life of the worship and community of his church. Also a serious commitment! Whilst it is possible to live as a Christian without attending church, it is a much harder thing to try and do. In baptism, the commitment is both ways - from the baptised to take their part in the life of the church, and from the church to do whatever they can to support the person being baptised throughout their life.

The law regarding baptism is found in Canons B21-26 of the Church of England.

When will we conduct baptisms?

Under Canon B21, baptisms should take place 'on Sundays at public worship when the most number of people come together'. This is to allow the largest number of witnesses to the event, and to remind members of churches of their own baptismal vows. It is, therefore, important that, when possible, baptisms take place within the main Sunday morning services. This will normally be on those weeks when a Communion service is scheduled as a Priest's presence is needed.

We do, however, also recognise the difficulties that can be encountered when trying to get an extended family together to share in such a celebration, and so we will consider providing an additional Sunday afternoon service. To fit in with the wider service patterns, this will be at 3pm, and only on dates that are convenient within our calendar.

A Ripley 10am Wednesday Communion service may also be considered for a baptism in extreme cases, at the discretion of the Incumbent.

Baptisms, therefore, will take place within one of our five churches. However, where there is grave cause and necessity (e.g. weakness or danger of death), private baptism may be conducted elsewhere e.g. home or hospital.

How many may be baptised in one service?

Both because it is a significant moment, and because of the size constraints of our buildings, and the length added to services, we will not conduct baptisms of more than one family in one service, except at the independent and mutual request of multiple families.

Whom will we baptise?

- We will baptise both children and adults.
- There is an expectation for candidates and/or their parents/guardians to undergo preparation in advance of baptism.
- There is no requirement to live within one of our parishes, but when a candidate does not we are

required to seek the consent of their local parish priest.

- Baptism is not repeatable, so we cannot baptise those who have already been baptised in the name of the Trinity in any church.
- In the event of one parent/guardian objecting to the baptism being administered, the priest is obliged to offer preparation to both parents. If a consensus cannot be reached, direction will be sought from the bishop.

What form will the service take?

The service of baptism must follow an authorised rite from either the Book of Common Prayer, or Common Worship.

When baptism is administered as a stand alone service, it is not usual to have music. If a particular request is made, an organist may be provided, at a charge laid out in the charges table.

Godparents and 'Supporting Friends'

Every child to be baptised should have at least three godparents, at least two must be the same sex as the child. If that is not possible, one godfather and one godmother will suffice. Parents may be godparents of their own children, provided the child has at least one other.

Godparents must have been baptised, as their commitments as godparents can only be fulfilled with integrity in this way.

If there are people who would otherwise be nominated as Godparents, but are not baptised they may stand as 'Supporting Friends'. This is an 'unofficial' role, though increasingly common. Supporting Friends will be asked to make promises in the service, recorded as 'Supporting Friends' in the baptism register, and given a certificate marking their role.

What do we give someone when they are baptised?

It is our usual practice when we administer baptism to give them a 'momento' certificate (not to be confused with a certified copy of an entry in a baptism register); a baptismal candle, and a Bible, or suitable substitute (e.g. children's storybook Bible).

We also give certificates to Godparents and Supporting Friends.

We also give a copy of one of the gospels to the parent(s)/guardian(s).

Alternative to Baptism

If parents are looking to celebrate a new baby's life, but do not feel ready to make a full commitment to the Christian faith, we may offer a Service of Thanksgiving instead.

Collections

As there are no fee or charges for a baptism, we take a retiring collection entirely for the life and ministry of the church in which the baptism takes place.

Weddings

“Marriage is a gift of God in creation through which husband and wife may know the grace of God. It is given that as man and woman grow together in love and trust, they shall be united with one another in heart, body and mind, as Christ is united with his bride, the Church.

The gift of marriage brings husband and wife together in the delight and tenderness of sexual union and joyful commitment to the end of their lives. It is given as the foundation of family life in which children are [born and] nurtured and in which each member of the family, in good times and in bad, may find strength, companionship and comfort, and grow to maturity in love.

Marriage is a way of life made holy by God, and blessed by the presence of our Lord Jesus Christ with those celebrating a wedding at Cana in Galilee. Marriage is a sign of unity and loyalty which all should uphold and honour. It enriches society and strengthens community. No one should enter into it lightly or selfishly but reverently and responsibly in the sight of almighty God.” *The Marriage Service, Common Worship*

The law regarding Holy Matrimony is found in The Marriage Act 1949 as amended, and Canons B30-36.

When will we conduct weddings?

Canon B35 limits the time for weddings to be between 8am and 6pm, locally we further restrict this to between 12noon and 5pm. With reference to the church diary, any date can be placed for a wedding, subject to the following:

- No more than one wedding per day in any one venue, and no more than two weddings per day across all venues.
- No more than two weddings in any seven day period.
- No weddings to be booked at Ripley during the annual 'Pig Festival'.
- No weddings in the week immediately before or after Easter.
- No weddings between 18th December and 8th January.

Whom will we marry?

We will conduct marriages for all those for whom it is legal, and have a Qualifying Connection with one of our parishes. It is understood that under Directions from the Bishop, a Qualifying Connection with any of our parishes is sufficient for a marriage to be solemnised in any of our parishes.

In most cases, the decision of whether or not to solemnise a marriage after a divorce lies with the minister who is asked to conduct it, with the expectation that they will have due regard for the House of Bishops advise on the subject, issued in November 2002. The exception, which we will not allow, is any instance in which solemnising the marriage would be ‘tantamount to consecrating an old infidelity’ i.e. a case in which the current relationship, from the information provided, is considered to be a direct cause of the breakdown of the former marriage.

When and where are banns to be published?

For couples for whom the appropriate preliminary is to publish banns, we will usually do so on the first three Sundays of the month two before the date set for the wedding.

If either of the couple to be married is a foreign national, even if banns may be an appropriate preliminary by virtue of UK residency, we still advise them to proceed instead under Common License, as complications can occur with other countries’ recognition of marriages solemnised without this precaution.

Under authority of the Bishop’s Directions, all banns are to be published at All Saints’ Church, Ripley.

What form will the service take?

The service must follow an authorised rite from either the Book of Common Prayer, or Common Worship. Beyond this provision, the form and niceties of the service are to be agreed between the couple and the officiating minister, with the minister’s opinion being definitive.

Confetti

Confetti may be thrown in the churchyards of Bishop Thornton, Burnt Yates, Markington, and South Stainley provided it is biodegradable in nature. Because of the volume of weddings at Ripley even biodegradable

confetti builds up through the Summer, so throwing it within the churchyard is not permitted. Instead people are encouraged to enjoy it as the Bride and Groom walk through the church gate onto the roadside.

Marriage Preparation

There is a duty for the minister taking a wedding to prepare the couple for marriage, this preparation to be conducted at their discretion.

Services of Blessing and Thanksgiving

Where a couple is already married they may request a service of blessing, or thanksgiving for their marriage. We are happy to work with them to provide such a service. For the purposes of settings dates and times, and for local charges such a service will be treated as a marriage service. A charge equivalent to the Statutory fee for a marriage service is also levied; on an occasion when the service is to take place somewhere other than in one of our churches the equivalent of the DBF portion of the statutory fee for a marriage service will be charged by the church within whose parish boundary the service is to take place.

In considering Blessings and Thanksgivings, the same discretion should be applied by ministers as outlined above for marriages after divorces.

The law currently prevents us from offering blessings for same-sex marriages.

Collections

The collection may be split 50:50 between the church in which the service takes place and a charity or charities nominated by the couple being married.

Funerals and Burials

A funeral is an important life event, to provide an opportunity for reflection on the life of the deceased, and to provide a safe space for grief and mourning. It is right that when appropriate it has elements of celebration, but it should also acknowledge that there has been a death, and that this is always traumatic. At the same time we are uniquely placed to offer the good news of the resurrection of the dead through Christ, and thus funerals are also an opportunity to share with others the treasures of the Christian faith.

The burial of the dead is regulated by Canon B38.

When will we conduct funerals?

We will work with a family to identify a date and time when both the church building, and a minister is available. There are no seasonal or date restrictions otherwise imposed. Though families must be mindful, as specified above, that the funeral service fits into the wider life of the church, and the building may have to accepted as found.

For whom will we conduct a funeral, and whom will we bury?

We will never refuse funerals and burials for any parishioner resident within the benefice at the time of death; for a person whose name is on one of our electoral rolls at the time of death, or a person who dies within the benefice.

When none of the above connections exist, we will not normally conduct a funeral, or allow a burial in one of our churchyards, in recognition that a funeral is an often an important local event and is best celebrated in the community with which there is a connection; and that our burial space is limited and should be preserved for those who have a legal right to burial. However, the JPCC grants the Incumbent permission and authority to agree and conduct a funeral and burial not normally allowed in a case where they are convinced there is a strong personal connection of another type between the deceased and the parish.

Where will we conduct a funeral

We consider any of the above connections to be to the benefice as a whole, and will allow the use of any of our churches and yards for someone connected to any other.

It is only considered lawful for a funeral/burial service to take place in a church or crematorium; therefore we cannot provide a funeral/burial service elsewhere e.g. an undertaker's chapel, or at home.

What form will the service take?

The service must follow an authorised rite from either the Book of Common Prayer, or Common Worship. Beyond this provision, the form and niceties of the service are to be agreed between the family and the officiating minister, with the minister's opinion being definitive.

Churchyard Burials

Please refer to our Churchyard Burials Policy.

Collections

The collection may be taken entirely for a charity or charities nominated by the family. At funerals the collection may be taken and processed by the church, or by the funeral director – in which case it must be taken in, and removed from the church in, a sealed box.

This Policy was reviewed and adopted by the PCC on: 13th May 2025

Signed: P. Harford