

Liturgical Music Commission, Archdiocese of Indianapolis
Funeral Music Stipends: Survey and Recommendations
2007

SUMMARY

- 70 parishes responded to the survey.
- 46 pay a stipend to the accompanist ranging from \$20 to \$125.
- 23 pay a stipend to a cantor ranging from \$20 to \$100.
- 27 parishes have a “funeral choir.”
- In the majority of cases (47), the stipend originates with a mortuary, but only in about half of these cases is there a standard amount.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Based on the results of this survey, the commission highly recommends:

- that funeral accompanists be paid from \$50 to \$100, depending on their level of skill and experience and other circumstances (e.g. time taken off work, child-care, etc.).
- that skilled cantors for funerals be paid on a similar scale.
- that when such stipends originate with a funeral home, the amount should be specified in advance through a written policy and procedure

DETAILED RESULTS

1. What is the size of your parish, in terms of number of registered households?

50 or less = **2** 51-200 = **14** 201-500 = **19** 501-1,000 = **11** over 1,000 = **22**

2. Our parish music director / music coordinator is:

7 paid, full-time with funeral stipends *included in salary*

18 paid, full-time plus funeral stipends *extra*

28 paid, part-time

17 volunteer*

*In one parish, a person volunteers as the Music Coordinator but is paid to be the Pastoral Associate also.

3. Approximately how many funerals or memorial Masses take place in your parish each year?

5 or less=**11** 6-15=**23** 16-30=**16** 31-50=**14** more than 50=**2**

4. If there is an accompanist (organist/pianist/guitarist) at the funeral, are they paid a stipend?

NO= 10		YES= <i>as below</i> :						
\$125	\$100 (3)	\$75 (6)	\$50-\$75	\$60	\$55	\$50 (12)	\$40-\$50	\$40 (4)
\$35-\$50 (3)		\$35 (4)	\$30-\$35	\$30 (6)		\$25-\$40	\$25	\$20

Substitutes are paid \$50.

The family and funeral director together decide what the amount will be.

Sometimes the family gives the accompanist \$50.

Some Funeral Homes pay nothing; others pay \$35-\$100 depending on what the family instructs them to do.

The stipend is inconsistent; I am trying to set it at a regular rate of \$50.

Priest=\$50; Organist=\$40; Server=\$10 (*Cantor included in #5.*)

The amount is negotiable.

\$50 **if** the accompanist is not our Director of Music.

The Music Director is paid \$35; otherwise, a substitute is paid \$50.

5. If there is a cantor/soloist at the funeral, are they paid a stipend?

YES=23		NO=26						
\$100 (2)	\$75 (3)	\$50-\$75 (2)	\$55	\$50 (6)	\$40	\$35 (4)	\$30 (11)	
\$25-\$40	\$25	\$20						

The family and funeral director together decide what the amount will be.

Sometimes money is offered to the cantor, but she gives it back to the church.

The accompanist is also the cantor/soloist.

The parish will pay a cantor \$25 if the grade school choir is not available.

The cantor is not usually paid, unless paid by the family directly.

The Accompanist must also be the Cantor.

The amount is negotiable.

Sometimes a certain Cantor is requested, in which case a recommended \$50 is requested. Otherwise, the Funeral Choir leads.

6. Does your parish have a funeral choir or a “resurrection choir” which leads music at funerals?

YES=27	NO=41
If so, is their director/leader paid a stipend? YES=0	NO=24

Our Organist (who is paid \$75 for funerals) is also the Funeral Choir Director.

We have choir members who volunteer to sing at funerals.

The Choir itself is paid a \$25 stipend.

The organist/director receives a flat stipend on a salary basis from the parish. The Funeral Home takes care of any organist stipend.

When the parish Music Director does not provide music leadership for a funeral, the \$40 stipend is divided among the accompanist, cantor and/or funeral choir director.

The stipend is paid to the choir (\$25).

7. When a funeral stipend is paid, what is its source?

- 47 the funeral home
- 10 the family of the deceased
- 8 the church
- 3 all of the above, depending on the situation or on which Funeral Home
- 4 none paid

Families sometimes give more, in addition to what the Funeral Home gave.

Occasionally I am paid by the family rather than by the Funeral Home.

The initial stipend comes from the funeral home. The church has paid the difference to equal \$50. When the funeral home pays nothing, the church has given \$25-\$30.

The stipend from the funeral home is for the Celebrant only.

We specifically arrange the amounts ahead of time, with each funeral home we work with.

Sometimes not enough is given by the funeral home.

8. Does your parish receive a standard stipend from the funeral home handling the funeral?

YES=*as below*: NO=26 DON'T KNOW=6

\$250 \$200 (4) \$150 (6) \$125 \$100-\$200 \$100 (5) \$75 (5) \$50-\$100 \$50 (2)

No, but the Priest receives a stipend himself.

Usually the family pays the church \$100, but if they don't then the Funeral Home pays it.

The parish and the priest each receive \$50.

Amounts vary with each Funeral Home.

I tried to get this changed, but was told that sometimes the funeral home didn't get paid enough by the family, or that the family is very poor so the church didn't demand it.

\$50 for the church and \$50 for the priest.

9. Do the stipends paid to any musicians for the funeral come out of the stipend paid to the parish by the funeral home? YES=24 NO=35 DON'T KNOW=2

As needed, in my absence.

Our parish receives a \$100 funeral stipend from the funeral home. It is divided among the servers (\$5 each), the musicians (\$40) and the priest (\$50). For the most part the parish music director is responsible for the music leadership, by providing accompaniment and cantoring, and receives the \$40 stipend. Our Funeral Choir is called for every funeral and is there to support the singing of the family and friends of the deceased. On the occasions when the music director does not provide the music leadership, the \$40 stipend is divided among the accompanist, cantor and/or choir director that has served in this capacity.

10. Additional comments:

The funeral choir is really more of a support group; they do not rehearse, just join in singing with the cantor.

The funeral choir has no director, they simply sing as the congregation and say prayers.

Usually we pay the organist out of the stipend the parish receives from the Funeral Home.

I would be interested in knowing the range of appropriate stipends for funerals and for weddings.

The Accompanist works in our office; if funeral is during the week, no extra pay. If it is on a Saturday or other day off, they are paid \$50. Visitor/substitute accompanists are paid \$50.

Normally the Choir Director is the cantor. She is paid \$75 per funeral.

Three Servers are also paid \$10 each. The Liturgy Coordinator is paid \$25 per funeral. These stipends (beyond the \$100 stipend) are paid from the stole fee accounts.

I am the Music Coordinator here and I play, serve as cantor, and direct from the bench . . . and I do get paid a stipend for this.

Our school music teacher will sometimes play and cantor.

Our school choir sings at most of our funerals.

For many years, the organist received nothing. After personal visit to each funeral home explaining that a service was being provided by the musician also, we (volunteer organists) then received stipends and have been ever since.

I direct and play at all funerals, along with our Resurrection Choir. There is no stipend for me or anyone else who sings or plays.

I would be very interested in knowing how other parishes handle this issue. Could you let us know how our policy compares with what other parishes are doing? Thanks so much.

This is a great survey because it will hopefully result in a recommendation by the Office of Worship that churches establish a system to communicate with funeral homes about stipends for churches and musicians. My church does not have many funerals per year, but if I cannot be there to play it (I'm in a part-time position and do other work during the week) then I have to pay for that person out of my very minimal music budget. I spoke with people about this and they diverted funds from another source to cover the cost, but I think the issue begins when the funeral home contacts the church. I hope that once you collect the survey results that you consider not only sharing them with the music community but also with parish boards, PLCs and priests in general. Thanks!

Funerals are very difficult for a small rural parish. Invariably, the family wants an organist and our parish depends upon organists who have full-time day jobs. A stipend of \$35-\$50 is simply not enough to pay for the gasoline to drive from downtown Cincinnati to southeast Indiana and back. Then there is also the problem with getting off work, often on extremely short notice. The subs we get are usually not as familiar with Catholic funerals, and are not as familiar with the repertoire. In the Diocese of Covington, KY (where I live and also have part-time organist/cantor duties) the standard pay for a funeral is now \$75 for the organist/cantor. We don't seem to have a problem finding organists for funerals anymore.

Our office staff told me that \$150 is usually what is paid by the funeral home, but that can vary depending on the funeral home. At the end of the year, the parish has always spent more on funerals than we receive from the funeral homes. The stipend covers musicians, servers, and costs associated with funeral meals.