



Westminster
Abbey

Appointment of a Canon of Westminster

Application Pack

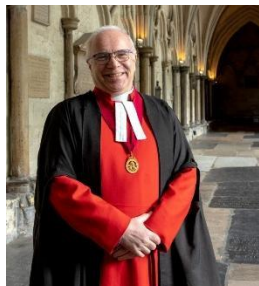


Closing date: 20th October 2025

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September 2025

Appointment of a Canon of Westminster

Thank you for your interest in the position of Canon of Westminster. This is a Crown Appointment, and the vacancy has arisen through the appointment of Bishop Anthony Ball, as Director of the Anglican Centre in Rome.

Westminster Abbey has a long history and a rich and complex identity. It is famous as a royal church and place of coronation attracting hundreds of thousands of visitors and pilgrims each year. It is a house of memory; it is a shrine and a place of daily prayer. It is also a rich and complex community made up of residents, colleagues and volunteers. Living a common and collegiate life is a fundamental part of our vocation. That life shapes our identity and our ability to serve God and God's people. All of us recognise a responsibility to sustain the community and the threads which contribute to its thriving, but we now seek a colleague for whom that duty and care will be central.

Life in the Abbey is fascinating, privileged, demanding and very busy. We have a daily offering of praise and prayer, a commitment to services that mark and celebrate our national life, and a significant ministry to all our visitors. The Abbey is in excellent health, and we have ambitious plans to fulfil – from a growing digital presence to a deepening engagement with the Public Square. To do all this as we should, we must name our common life as a fundamental part of our mission. It is the community that worships and welcomes. Of course, we seek a colleague with pastoral gifts and emotional intelligence. We seek a colleague who will be committed to the common life of prayer and praise, and who will be nourished alongside us in this task. Above all though, we hope to find someone who can nurture and exemplify the life we live together.

The allocation of Canonical Offices is determined from time to time by Chapter, and the intention in this case is to appoint the successful candidate as Canon Steward. It is likely that they will also take up the office of Archdeacon. In these capacities, they will have a particular responsibility for shaping our welcome and hospitality for worshippers, visitors and pilgrims (in partnership with a number of the Abbey's teams of staff and volunteers), and for the oversight of the Abbey's pastoral ministry and Safeguarding.

As a Canon of Westminster, the successful candidate will have a significant voice in the governance of the Abbey as a member of both Chapter and the Board. It is highly likely that the new Canon

Steward will be asked to chair or serve on other committees. They will have regular opportunities to lead our worship and preach, particularly when serving as Canon in Residence for three separate months each year but also as part of the weekly round of worship on Sundays and Holy Days.

In the appointment process, candidates will be given the opportunity to explore what these different roles demand and learn more about our collegiate identity. In making this appointment we are keen to enrich the diversity of background, experience and thought within the Abbey's leadership. The interview panel will include representatives of the Crown and of the Abbey. The closing date for applications is 20th October 2025, and we expect informal discussions and panel interviews to take place on 6th and 7th November at the Abbey, with the successful candidate taking up residence in early 2026.

If you believe yourself to be called to serve at the Abbey, we shall be delighted to hear from you. Please do not hesitate to telephone or email me with any questions you may have.

A handwritten signature in black ink, reading "Sean Hoyle". The signature is written in a cursive style with a long horizontal line underneath.

About Westminster Abbey

Above all else, the Abbey is a living church, a place of prayer and praise and holy ground at the heart of the nation. It is also a treasured part of Britain's heritage and a significant destination for tourism. The Abbey has occupied a central place in the celebration of great events for the nation and remains one of the most beautiful architectural masterpieces in Britain.

Westminster Abbey is where the coronation of Kings and Queens has taken place since 1066, and where many of the Kings and Queens of England and of the United Kingdom are buried. Principal among them is St Edward the Confessor, King of England from 1042 to 1066, whose shrine is at the heart of the Abbey Church. Beside and around them are buried or commemorated many of the great women and men from almost every century of British history: statesmen and politicians, lawyers, warriors, clerics, writers, musicians and artists. This is a unique and precious heritage, but it is also a complex one which requires thoughtful illumination in the context of its implications for diverse communities and contemporary challenges.

Neither a cathedral nor a parish church, Westminster Abbey (or the Collegiate Church of St Peter in Westminster, to give it its correct title) is a Royal Peculiar under the jurisdiction of a Dean and Chapter, and with direct accountability to the Sovereign. This relationship with the Sovereign dates back to the origins of the Abbey over a millennium ago, but its current form stems from the Charter granted to the Abbey by Elizabeth I on 21st May 1560.

The Dean is the Abbey's head of house and Ordinary. The four Canons of Westminster and the Dean comprise the Dean & Chapter, the governing body of the Collegiate Church of St Peter in Westminster, commonly known as Westminster Abbey. The Dean and Canons are also members of the Strategic Board of the Abbey. They are supported by the Receiver General and Chapter Clerk, who is head of the lay administration of the Abbey.

The Dean & Chapter forms the core of the Collegiate body, which includes the High Steward and High Bailiff of Westminster (currently the Duke of Buccleuch and Sir Ken Olisa) and their deputies, the Minor Canons, certain senior lay members of the Abbey staff, key advisors, senior staff of Westminster School and the Harris Federation, the Lay Vicars, the choristers and the forty-eight King's Scholars of Westminster School.

We are a welcoming community, though also complex and multi-faceted, with around 600 highly committed clergy, employees and volunteers. We have deep respect for the heritage of which we are the custodians, whilst we evolve continuously to meet the opportunities of the future. In recent times, this has included the creation of new departments to focus on transforming our digital presence and delivering a significantly expanded programme of public and community engagement. In addition, our newly created Employee Engagement Forum and Social Engagement programme are helping us to support and develop our staff and volunteers.

We receive no regular income from the State, the Church of England or the Crown, and we therefore rely almost entirely on income from visitors. Following the State Funeral of Queen Elizabeth II and the Coronation of King Charles III and Queen Camilla, which were broadcast to national and international audiences in their millions, interest in the Abbey is very strong. Alongside growing attendance at our daily services, we attract well over a million visitors from around the world every year and work hard to provide an inspiring experience for all who come to the Abbey. In 2018, we completed the award-winning Queen's Diamond Jubilee Galleries, in which many of the Abbey's treasures are displayed. In early 2027 we will be opening the King Charles III Sacristy, a new "green" building constructed of traditional materials on the foundations of the 13th century Great Sacristy, which will transform the experience of our visitors and worshippers and enable us to welcome them appropriately.

The Dean and Chapter of Westminster defines the Abbey's Mission in these terms:

- To offer daily divine Worship to Almighty God and resource the Church in this vocation;
- To serve the Sovereign;
- To proclaim the Gospel to the nation and Commonwealth, celebrating the distinctive witness of the Christian faith and engaging with the public square;
- To provide a safe, welcoming and inspiring environment for all who come to the Abbey;
- To care for the precious resources entrusted to us: our people, partnerships, buildings, heritage and money.

Alongside its primary focus on daily worship, Chapter and the Board have defined their priorities for the coming five years as:

- Building a rich and accessible digital presence for a substantial international community
- Sustaining the excellence of the Abbey's liturgy, music and preaching and providing a resource for the wider church in developing the next generation of priests and musicians in the Anglican tradition
- Developing and endowing the Abbey's Music Foundation, offering excellent opportunities for the most talented boys, girls and adult musicians
- Serving The King and nurturing fruitful relationships with the Royal Households centred on their priorities and passions
- Expressing our faith through liturgy, teaching, engagement with local national and international communities
- Offering a safe space for faith-based dialogue and honest exploration of public history
- Continuing to strengthen our support for parliamentarians and public servants in undertaking their roles with confidence and integrity
- Providing all who come to the Abbey with an inspiring experience of the beauty and wonder of our liturgy, music history, art and architecture whilst presenting something of the transformative riches of the Christian Faith
- Transforming the quality of our welcome through the completion of the King Charles III Sacristy
- Taking the necessary steps towards our longer-term commitment to achieve net zero and wider sustainability in all aspects of our activities
- Undertaking the highest priority restoration projects, particularly focused on the Cloisters
- Developing high levels of staff engagement and improving the diversity of our staff and volunteers to reflect our central role in the life of the nation and Commonwealth
- Embedding the highest standards of governance, accountability and effective decision-making
- Building our financial reserves to ensure resilience to major external shocks and provide long-term funds for exceptional restoration requirements.

Our Values are currently being reviewed by the Dean and Chapter with the active involvement of the Employee Engagement Forum and teams across the Abbey.

The Roles

Canon of Westminster

The Canons of Westminster exercise responsibility as members of the Dean and Chapter and of the Board for defining and delivering the missional and strategic objectives of the Abbey. The Dean and Chapter is also accountable for putting in place effective governance arrangements for the Abbey under the provisions of its Statutes. The four Canons play a central role in the liturgical and community life of the Abbey and participate fully in the daily round of shared worship and prayer, which is coordinated by the Minor Canons under the oversight of the Dean.

Each of the four Canons undertakes three months of residence spread through the year, when they read the lessons at Morning Prayer and the first lesson at Evensong or Evening Prayer (and the second lesson if the Dean is not present), and either preach or appoint the preacher for Sunday Evensong, except on the few occasions in the year (e.g. Easter and Pentecost) when the Dean has responsibility for preaching. The Canon in Residence also takes responsibility for memorial wreath-layings, welcoming of distinguished visitors and other Abbey events as necessary. They are expected to be available at the Abbey during months of Residence, and Canons normally arrange among themselves to provide cover for days off and necessary absence.

Through the year, the Canons, with the Dean and other Abbey clergy, take their turn presiding at the daily Eucharist and presiding or preaching at sung Eucharists. They also participate in the rich programme of Special Services taking place in the Abbey (including St Margaret's).

All members of the Abbey's clergy share the privilege and responsibility of offering pastoral care to those living and working at the Abbey and exercising appropriate pastoral ministry to those coming to the Abbey as worshippers, pilgrims and visitors. This is coordinated by the Archdeacon, a supplementary office to which a Canon is appointed by the Dean and Chapter from time to time.

Each Canon occupies one of the four Principal Canonical Offices: the Treasurer, Theologian, Rector and Steward. In addition, a Canon serves as Sub-Dean, and others undertake Supplementary Offices as Archdeacon or Almoner. The Canons are supported in their work by the Canons' Executive Assistant and Personal Assistant.

Canon Steward

Under the Statutes, the Canon Steward is responsible for Chapter's engagement with the welcome and hospitality provided to the many pilgrims, tourists and other visitors who come to the Abbey. They also have responsibility for overseeing the care and development of the gardens within the Precincts. In exercising these responsibilities, they work closely with the Receiver General and relevant teams operating under his leadership, including those managing Visitor Experience and Events, and are involved in the induction of new starters.

In accordance with the Abbey's mission and priorities, a particular focus of this role is ensuring that the experience of all who come to the Abbey is rooted in the Gospel and inspired by the Abbey's rich heritage of Christian Faith. Over the coming years the Canon Steward will have the opportunity to play a leading role in shaping our welcome. As the King Charles III Sacristy is completed, and as we introduce a new multimedia guide, the Canon Steward will help review and refresh the way in which we engage with our visitors and congregations in this unique and holy place.

Archdeacon

The Archdeaconry is a supplementary Canonical Office with responsibility for overseeing and coordinating the pastoral ministry of the Abbey. This specifically includes the pastoral care of:

- Worshippers and pilgrims;
- Visitors;
- Members of staff, volunteers and their families;
- Members of College (as described above) and their families;
- Other residents within the precincts.

The Archdeacon is also responsible for the recruitment and management of the Duty Chaplains, who play a key role in offering pastoral care through week-long periods of duty on the Abbey floor, and for sustaining the Abbey's connections with parishes for which it is the sole or joint patron. Significantly, the Archdeacon will have oversight of Safeguarding activities on behalf of Chapter.

Community Life

In defining areas of focus for a new Canon at this point in our history, the Dean and Chapter has identified a need for someone with the inclination, gifts and dedication to strengthen the common life of the Abbey community, ensuring that everyone in this complex institution is able to flourish and play their part in its distinctive mission and ambitious plans for the future. Through their ministry in the roles described above, they will help to bring the newly defined values to life, working with leaders and teams across the Abbey to foster a sense of shared purpose, collegiality and natural collaboration. Of course, it will be important to harness the rich resources of faith and community life with an eye to fostering effective ministry. Just as important, however, is the fact that we look for a colleague who will bring kindness and generosity of spirit to the role. We want to work with someone who will enjoy the Abbey and enjoy our company.



Person Specification

Essential

Priest's Orders:

- An ordained priest of the Church of England or a Church in communion therewith, of at least ten years' good standing

Education:

- To degree level or equivalent

Skills/Aptitudes:

- Excellent priestly and pastoral skills
- Excellent skills as a preacher and teacher of the faith
- Excellent skills in written and oral communication with a wide range of stakeholders
- Enthusiasm about the role of the Church and more generally faith in national life
- A natural ability to build community and nurture common life
- Aptitude for collaboration and team working with other clergy and lay staff
- Energy and calmness under pressure
- Excellent planning, organisation and administration skills, including the ability to prioritise work to deadlines and manage complex and concurrent activities
- Good ICT skills

Knowledge/Experience:

- Experience as a parish priest, or in pastoral ministry in a different context
- Experience of working with multiple professional teams in a complex organisation
- Proven record of providing excellent pastoral care to a diverse range of individuals
- Strong understanding of safeguarding principles
- Experience of ecumenical and/or community working
- Experience of developing and maintaining networks amongst senior stakeholders and community leaders

Desirable

Education:

- A higher theological or pastoral qualification

Knowledge/Experience:

- Experience of playing a leading role in high-profile services of national significance
- Experience of working in a large church
- Experience in overseeing Safeguarding activities in a complex environment
- Knowledge of the heritage, tourism and/or hospitality sectors

This Appointment Profile will be kept under review and may be amended from time to time. Any proposed changes will be discussed with the officeholder.

Terms and Conditions

Stipend

The stipend for this appointment is approved by The King as Visitor on the advice of the Chapter Clerk. Stipends are reviewed in October each year.

Tenure

The legislation introducing common tenure exempts Westminster Abbey as a Royal Peculiar. The officeholder shall vacate the office on the day on which they attain the age of seventy years unless the Visitor authorises continuance in office for a further period.

Accommodation

The Canon will be required to live within the Abbey precincts (except when on leave or days off), for the better performance of their duties. A house is provided rent free for this purpose. The Dean & Chapter will meet all charges in respect of Council Tax and utilities.

Annual Leave

The leave entitlement is up to eight weeks with pay in any year at times to be agreed with fellow Canons. A Canon may not take leave during the Christmas and Easter festivals unless otherwise agreed by the Dean.

Pension Scheme and Life Assurance

The Dean & Chapter will contribute to the Church of England Pensions Board at the applicable rate.

Discount

All clergy and employees receive a 20% discount on purchases from the Westminster Abbey shop and a 30% discount on purchases from the catering outlets.

Medical Insurance

The Dean & Chapter will, if desired, pay 50% of premiums to join a nominated medical insurance scheme after one year in post.

Working Hours

The working hours will be those which are necessary for the proper performance of the Canon's duties. One day off in each calendar week is allowed; the actual day to be taken may need to vary from time to time.

Sabbatical

The Canon is entitled after each five years as a Canon to a three-month paid sabbatical, at a time agreed by the Dean.



Equality Statement, Safeguarding and How to Apply

Equality Statement

We aim at all times to appoint the person who is most suited to the job. To strengthen the diversity of our leadership we are always particularly keen to hear from candidates who are from a diverse background and bring diversity of thought and experience. However, recruitment will be solely on the basis of the applicant's abilities and individual merit as measured against the criteria for the job.

We will ensure that our shortlisting, interviewing and selection procedures avoid discrimination in any way, including on grounds of age, disability, gender, marital status or civil partnership, race, nationality or ethnic origins, religion or belief and sexual orientation.

An Occupational Requirement applies to this post in relation to the Equality Act 2010.

Please complete the Equal Opportunities Monitoring Form with your application. This will help us monitor our recruitment practice. The form will not be seen by the people making the selection decision.

Safeguarding

We are committed to the safeguarding of children, young people and adults at risk. To prevent them from harm, we undertake appropriate checks on staff and volunteers and require them to complete relevant safeguarding training. Offers are subject to a relevant level of criminal record check (**enhanced**), receipt of satisfactory references, right to work in the UK, proof of professional qualifications and medical clearance, which may include a medical assessment.

How to Apply

To apply, please complete the application form on the careers portal.

You are advised to read the role information and person specification carefully and think about how your experience, skills and abilities help you to meet the requirements listed in the Person Specification. Use the 'Personal Statement' section of the form to tell us how you meet each of the requirements.

The closing date for applications is 20 October 2025.

Informal meetings and panel interviews are scheduled to take place on 6th and 7th November.

We regret that, due to the large number of applications we normally receive, we may only be able to provide feedback if you have attended an interview. We appreciate your interest in this role.