

Commonwealth Theologian in Residence

Application Pack



Closing date: 27 August 2026

Contents

- About Westminster Abbey 3
- Introduction and Profile 4
- Grant Requirements 5
- Terms 6
- Equality Statement, Safeguarding and How to Apply 7



About Westminster Abbey

Above all else, the Abbey is a 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 leading venue 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.

A living Church, 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, artists, musicians.

Neither a cathedral nor a parish church, Westminster Abbey 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 on 21st May 1560. The Abbey is formally known as the Collegiate Church of St Peter in Westminster, and Minor Canons are appointed by the Dean as members of the College.

We are a welcoming community, but also complex and multi-faceted, with over 600 highly committed employees and volunteers. We have deep respect for the heritage of which we are the custodians, but 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.

Westminster Abbey's mission is:

- 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.

Values

We have three guiding principles:

- We are a **community**.
- We are sustained by **hope**.
- We strive to be **faithful** in all that we do.

Following the State Funeral of Her late Majesty Queen Elizabeth II and the Coronation of Their Majesties The King and Queen, which were broadcast to national and international audiences in their millions, interest in the Abbey is very strong. We attract approximately 1.4 million visitors from around the world every year. As we receive no regular income from the State, the Church of England or the Crown, we rely almost entirely on income from visitors.

Introduction and Profile

Thank you for your interest in the Commonwealth Theologian in Residence Scholarship, an opportunity for an exceptional scholar from a Commonwealth country to spend one term living within the Westminster Abbey precincts, with opportunities for study, preaching, and seminars. The inaugural holder of this post two years ago was The Revd Dr Ishaya Anthony, Canon Theologian of the Diocese of Kwoi, Nigeria, and postdoctoral Research Fellow at the Department of Religious Studies, University of Johannesburg. This year, we were delighted to welcome The Revd Dr Allan Palanna, Professor of Christian Ethics in the Department of Theology and Ethics at the United Theological College, Bengaluru, India.

Westminster Abbey offers this opportunity as a further development of its long-standing commitment to the Commonwealth and to theological scholarship in the life of the Church. The successful candidate will pursue research or a writing project of their choice. The time may be used as part of a sabbatical. It is hoped that the successful candidate might play some part in the annual Commonwealth Day Service, held each year on the second Monday in March, and offer a seminar on their work during the term.

To qualify, you will need to have completed doctoral study, and/or have a track record of exceptional research or teaching. We seek theological dialogue partners with strong communication and interpersonal skills, committed to open conversation and serious reflection. The opportunity is open to scholars working in any theological discipline who have a passion for the life of the Church. There will be opportunities to build connections and partnerships with the ecclesial and theological institutions associated with Westminster Abbey. The successful candidate will also become a Research Associate at the Cambridge Centre for Christianity Worldwide, offering exceptional library access and opportunities to join seminars and conversations.

The successful applicant should be prepared to participate in the daily worshipping life of the Abbey in ways which are appropriate, especially at the daily offices and on Sundays. This may include occasional opportunities to preach.

The closing date for applications is 27 August 2026, and the online selection process will take place on 22 September 2026.

The Revd Canon Dr Jamie Hawkey
Canon Theologian

July 2026



Grant requirements

Essential

Personal Character:

- A resident or national of a Commonwealth country.
- If not an Anglican, then a communicant member of another Trinitarian church which is a member or affiliate of the World Council of Churches.

Education:

- Experience of significant postgraduate study or research.

Skills/Aptitudes:

- Proven expertise in their chosen academic discipline.
- Excellent skills in written and oral communication.
- Enthusiasm about the role of theology in the life of the Church.

Knowledge/Experience:

- Experience of ecumenical and/or interfaith working

Desirable

Knowledge/Experience:

- A teaching staff member of an academic faculty or theological college.
- A track record of exceptional research and/or teaching.

Personal Character:

- An ordained or lay minister in a Church of the Anglican Communion, a Church in communion therewith, or otherwise of another Trinitarian Church.

Terms

Allowance

There will be an allowance of £4,800 for one term (three months).

This will be paid in three equal instalments.

Payment will be made via bank transfer to a UK bank account.

Duration

This opportunity is for the duration of the Lent Term (early January 2027 until Easter Week).

Accommodation

Accommodation will be provided rent-free.

The Dean & Chapter will meet all charges in respect of Council Tax and utilities (excluding private telephone charges).

Reasonable Travel costs

The Abbey will reimburse all reasonable travel costs, upon receiving satisfactory receipts.

These can include one set of economy return flights, airport transfers, taxis, and other reasonable modes of transportation.

Discounts

You will receive a 20% discount on purchases from the Westminster Abbey shop and a 30% discount on purchases from the Benugo outlets, which serve refreshments.

You will be able to obtain wristbands, which allow free visits for family and friends to visit the Abbey.

Note

Westminster Abbey does not hold a sponsorship licence for sponsorship of overseas workers.

Equality Statement, Safeguarding and How to Apply

Equality Statement

We aim at all times to select the person who is most suitable. 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. This is particularly the case for this scholarship. However, selection will be solely on the basis of the candidate's abilities and individual merit as measured against the criteria for this scholarship.

We will ensure that our selection procedures avoid discrimination in any way, including on grounds of; age, disability, gender reassignment, marriage or civil partnership, pregnancy and maternity, race, religion or belief, gender and sexual orientation.

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

Please return the Equal Opportunities Monitoring Form with your application. This will help us monitor our selection 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 scholars 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

In the supporting statement, please write a letter, describing the project you propose to pursue during your three months in Westminster, setting out how you meet the person specification, and why you are interested in this opportunity.

You are also advised to read the information in this document carefully and think about how your experience, skills and abilities help you to meet the requirements listed in the Person Specification.

Clear information on how you meet all aspects of the Person Specification, with relevant examples, will help us with shortlisting.

Applications should arrive no later than 26 August 2026. Interviews are scheduled to take place online, on the 22 September 2026.