Cathedral Virger

Application Pack

1926:2026

BLACKBURN CATHEDRAL

blackburncathedral.com/vacancies

Welcome from the Interim Dean

Thank you for your interest in the position of Cathedral Virger at Blackburn Cathedral. As the Cathedral Church of the Diocese of Blackburn, our Cathedral seeks to be a place of prayer, worship, welcome, and service at the heart of Lancashire. Through our daily ministry, civic engagement, educational work, and outreach, we strive to share the hope of the Gospel and serve all who come through our doors.

The role of Virger is central to the life of the Cathedral. It is a varied and rewarding position that combines practical responsibility with a vital contribution to our worship and mission.

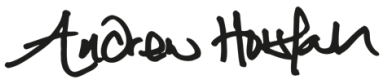
The successful candidate will help to ensure that services and events are prepared with care and attention, that our buildings are presented to the highest standards, and that clergy, volunteers, guests, and worshippers are supported with warmth, professionalism, and good humour.

We are seeking someone who is reliable, organised, and adaptable, with a genuine willingness to serve others and work collaboratively as part of our Cathedral team. Whether supporting the rhythm of daily worship, major diocesan celebrations, civic occasions, concerts and events, or the welcome of visitors from across the region and beyond, the Virger plays an important role in enabling the Cathedral to flourish.

I encourage you to learn more about our Cathedral community by visiting our **website**. I hope this will give you a sense of the ministry, heritage, and opportunities that make Blackburn Cathedral such a distinctive and rewarding place in which to serve.

Thank you once again for your interest in this appointment. I wish you every blessing as you consider your application.

We look forward hearing from you.



The Revd. Canon Andrew Horsfall
Interim Dean of Blackburn

A Brief History of Blackburn Cathedral

Blackburn Cathedral is one of England's newest cathedrals, yet it is one of the country's oldest places of Christian worship

It is a living community of prayer and worship, a centre of excellence in church music, education and community engagement and plays a key role as the Mother Church of the Diocese of Blackburn serving the Christian and wider community across the whole of Lancashire. It is also the most prominent of Blackburn's heritage assets and tourist attractions, and a key cultural venue for Blackburn and the wider county of Lancashire.

Blackburn Cathedral is set in a multi-faith urban context which has recently undergone significant renewal and development. Blackburn is an increasingly diverse town, with positive and creative partnerships. The Cathedral sees itself as a significant partner in the life of the town and is seeking to develop partnerships further, positioning itself as a Cathedral for the whole borough and indeed the County.

The Cathedral is a truly remarkable building. Reference to a church on the site is made in the Domesday Book, compiled in 1086, though other sources – the Saxon Chronicle among them – would seem to support the long-held belief that a church dedicated to St Mary can be dated to the year 596. The Cathedral Church we know today is a development of the 1820-26 design built by John Palmer, when Blackburn emerged as the fulcrum of the industrial revolution. The early nineteenth century church was extensively rebuilt after a fire in 1831, and the bulk of it survives in the present structure as the western tower, nave and side aisles.

A century later, William Temple, then Bishop of Manchester, chose Blackburn as the focus for a new diocese. The church of St Mary was chosen to be the new cathedral and an extension scheme by William Adam Forsyth sought to take the building a stage further. Work started in 1928, and halted in 1941 during World War II, began again with a reduced budget in 1951 but never finished Forsyth's plans, which included a central tower of dominating Gothic proportions.

In 1962, Laurence King was appointed architect. His design for a concrete central corona reduced the building's Gothic emphasis and was made ready for its eventual consecration in 1977.

21st Century Developments

Cathedrals are ever changing places, responding to the needs of people they seek to serve. In 2001, it was decided to try to realise William Temple's aspirations set out in 1933 in a way which would meet the needs of the 21st century, by restoring the heartbeat to Blackburn town centre. For 14 years the Chapter have worked in partnership with the Borough Council and others to regenerate the Cathedral Precinct and the surrounding area now known as the Cathedral Quarter.

These plans came to fruition in the £33m regeneration scheme, completed in 2016 including a new hotel and office block as well as a new eastern precinct for the Cathedral. It also houses a library, refectory, teaching and meeting rooms and offices. There are also ten residences for clergy and lay staff, a Cloister Garth and 50 space underground car park.

Role Purpose

The Virger Team is at the heart of Cathedral life - making sure the main Cathedral building is presented in the best way at all times and other buildings are prepared for use to a high standard.

The broad range of services and events held at Blackburn Cathedral require accurate planning, teamwork and communication. Stamina and energy are therefore essential, sometimes at unsociable hours; this is very much a 'hands on' role.

Virgers participate fully in the worshipping life of the Cathedral, they take responsibility for the day-to-day preparation of the Cathedral's regular and special services, as well as playing an important part within them.

This role is essential to the smooth running of the many different activities held at Blackburn Cathedral. A Virger's presence, demeanour and presentation style reflects the welcome and hospitality the Cathedral Chapter wish to offer to everyone who visits, whether they come to worship, for an event, or to explore the building.

Main Duties and Responsibilities

Virgers are essential to the mission and ministry of the Cathedral and are often the first point of call for visitors and worshippers. The main purpose of the role is to ensure the daily operation and organisation of both the Cathedral and other buildings.

This includes preparing and participating in services, basic facilities management, such as the setting up of the Cathedral and meeting rooms, organising the provision of refreshments, operation of the sound and lighting systems, as well as cleaning of the buildings.

They offer a warm welcome to worshipers and visitors and are on hand to manage the first response in a crisis. The Virger must be willing to work to a flexible rota, managed by the Head Virger, including evenings, weekends, and bank holidays, which may include Christmas and Easter.

Care of the Cathedral Building and its Precincts

- When on duty, to have responsibility for morning opening and unlocking, and / or for evening closing and locking-up, of the Cathedral and precincts.
- To share, the responsibility for internal and external maintenance and running of the Cathedral and associated buildings with the other members of the Virger Team.
- To undertake specialist duties including care and operation of the sound system and equipment; the audio visual system; cleaning equipment; heating system; the security, CCTV and alarm systems.
- To help keep the Cathedral clean and tidy by undertaking cleaning and basic decorating of the Cathedral, associated buildings and precincts.
- To maintain liaison with the Police, Blackburn with Darwen Council, and Blackburn BID regarding public services, security and maintenance of Cathedral Grounds.
- To work with the Chief Operating Officer and Head Virger, to attend to matters to do with residential property on site.
- To undertake non-specialist maintenance, including changing high-level light bulbs and clearing gutters, as required and in accordance with safe working procedures.
- To be available to be called to attend out of normal working hours in the event of an emergency or problem onsite (eg. power cut, fire / break-in etc.).

Liturgical Duties

- Provide liturgical and sacramental support to the Canon Precentor, Dean and other clergy, helping them to fulfil their priestly functions.
- Prepare liturgical equipment, vestments, vessels and furnishings for routine and special services, and undertake the ceremonial duties traditionally required of a cathedral virger.
- To be on duty on Festival Days and other important occasions as required.
- When on duty, to Virge and assist at Morning and Evening Prayer / Evensong; weekday Eucharists and other occasions as required.
- To help ensure the maintenance of sacristy supplies and altar requisites, eg. candles etc.
- In an emergency (in the absence of any clergy), to conduct Morning or Evening Offices (please note that full training will be given).
- To attend rehearsals and assist with the liturgical training of Ordinands, visiting clergy and Diocesan clergy in Cathedral worship.
- In collaboration with the Canon Precentor, to be responsible for supporting the repair and maintenance of vestments, robes and liturgical furnishings.
- To administer the Chalice at services of Holy Communion (Eucharist) as required.
- Alongside other members of the Virger Team, to ensure accurate completion of Baptism, Confirmation and Marriage Records and any associated documentation. To also maintain and complete the annual returns on attendance, baptisms, marriages, funerals, etc.

Ministry of Welcome

- To provide a warm welcome to visitors, making sure that all visitors are received in a friendly, tactful and helpful manner.
- To maintain harmonious working relationships with other departments who work in the Cathedral including the Music and Education departments, the Cathedral Café, Administration and Finance, Events and volunteers.
- To support the work of the volunteer teams.
- To show compassion and understanding to everyone who visits the Cathedral, particularly vulnerable visitors, while maintaining appropriate boundaries and site security.
- To ensure Cathedral notice boards and leaflet displays are kept tidy and up to date.

Event Support

- To help with setting up and removal of contents and furniture as necessary for concerts, events, exhibitions and services, and for their reinstatement afterwards.
- To act as site supervisor during events and as point of contact for event organisers. Many of these events take place in the evenings and involve resetting the Cathedral after the event has finished, ready for the next day's morning services.
- To be aware of activities in the Cathedral diary and respond effectively to late changes to the programme.

Security

- To remain vigilant over the Cathedral and its grounds regarding security, making regular checks on the buildings and helping to maintain a visible staff presence across the site.
- To ensure the safe custody of keys and the recording of keys and security fobs issued.
- To ensure valuables and money are handled in accordance with agreed procedures, including regularly emptying alms boxes and collecting candle offerings, handling collection money and storing it securely.
- To ensure fire and security systems are set as required.
- To ensure incidents inside the Cathedral or its grounds are dealt with and recorded appropriately.
- To meet and brief emergency services when they are called to the site.

Health and Safety

- To personally comply with health and safety requirements and to ensure that all Cathedral staff, volunteers, visitors and contractors do likewise.
- To ensure that all areas of the Cathedral and its precincts are maintained in a safe manner and that any hazards or defects are reported to the Head Virger / Chief Operating Officer.
- To support the Head Virger and the Virger Team in carrying out Health and Safety compliance checks, implementing health and safety policies and procedures and maintaining health and safety records.
- To have knowledge of the positions of all firefighting equipment and their safe and appropriate use in an emergency.
- To have knowledge of emergency procedures including building evacuation, invacuation and contact routines.
- To undertake first aid training and be willing and able to apply first aid as required.
- To undertake risk assessments for activities taking place in the Cathedral as required.
- To ensure incident reports and accident records are properly maintained.

Personal Circumstances

- Must be able to work early mornings, evenings and weekends, as required.
- It is necessary for all members of the Virger Team to undertake physically demanding work (for which training will be given), including the moving of furniture, erecting of low-level staging, and high- level work, which may require the use of ladders and other special equipment.

General

- To monitor cleaning supplies and stock levels to ensure items are ordered in good time
- To deputise for the Head Virger in their absence at diary meetings, planning meetings and rehearsals for services or events.
- To attend the monthly Virger Team meeting and monthly meetings with the Head Virger.
- To perform other duties as directed by the Head Virger, Dean or Chief Operating Officer.
- To work flexibly within the small team running the Cathedral, occasionally covering for colleagues and responding promptly and courteously to enquiries by telephone, email or in person.

Safeguarding

Undertake regular safeguarding responsibilities involving children, including the chaperoning and supervision of choristers and altar servers surrounding services and during educational visits.

Blackburn Cathedral is fully committed to safeguarding and promoting the welfare of children, young people, and adults. We believe every person is made in the image of God and has inherent dignity, value and worth, and safeguarding is integral to our mission and ministry and is everyone's responsibility.

We adopt the safeguarding policy statement of the Diocese of Blackburn and follow the House of Bishops' Guidance and Codes of Practice, which includes safely recruiting, supporting, and resourcing everyone who holds a position of trust in our community. The successful candidate will be expected to share this commitment, to complete the mandatory safeguarding training set out in the Church of England's Safeguarding Learning and Development Framework, and to help keep the Cathedral a place where people are welcomed, respected, listened to and kept safe.

Person Specification

The requirements for this role as detailed below are:

Essential

- Strong literacy, numeracy and IT skills.
- Be a practising Christian, able to receive Communion according to the rules of the Church of England.
- Display honesty, integrity and strong values.
- A willingness to work in a faith-based organisation and be sympathetic to, and supportive of, Christian values, alongside a wholehearted commitment to the success of the Cathedral.
- Flexible and adaptable under pressure, self-organised and able to manage own workload.
- The willingness to work flexible hours on occasion, with periods of considerable intensity, when required.
- Good people skills with the ability to engage with and influence a variety of different people.
- Discretion and sensitivity to others, with a calm authority with the ability to take charge in challenging situations.
- Ability to proactively develop relationships in a sensitive and appropriate manner.
- Be physically fit as the role can be demanding and involves standing for long periods; manual handling, and the movement of furniture and other heavy objects.
- Ability to work at height without fear.
- Aptitude to understand and use technology and in particular the Cathedral alarm system and sound system.
- Excellent attention to detail - for example to ensure that vestments and linens are in good order, that the Cathedral is appropriately chaired and that the silver is cleaned regularly.
- Strong communication skills - both verbal and written.
- Ability to work closely and flexibly within a small team whilst showing initiative when working alone.

Desirable

- Previous experience as a Virger.
- English and Maths GCSE grades 5-9 (or equivalent).
- A working knowledge of the Church of England and the Christian faith.
- A knowledge and understanding of services and worship protocols.
- A knowledge of technical systems - eg. lighting; sound; heating; fire alarm systems etc.

Terms of Employment

Job Title: Virger
Reporting To: Head Virger

Place of Work
Blackburn Cathedral, Cathedral Close, Blackburn, Lancashire, BB1 5AA

Hours of Work
The hours of employment are 40 hours per week, on a flexible rota including Sundays, weekends, evenings, late night working and overnight on call duty on a rota basis. On occasion, reasonable overtime working will be required which will be credited by time off in lieu.

Salary
£22,398.60 gross per annum for a 40-hour working week, plus accommodation as described below. The statutory accommodation offset is taken into account when calculating pay for National Minimum Wage purposes.

Accommodation
At present, this post includes accommodation to enable the proper performance of your duties at the Cathedral and, on this basis, is not treated as a taxable benefit. You will be responsible for paying council tax and utility costs, with utilities billed to you directly by the Cathedral. This arrangement is subject to regular review and may change following consultation with the Dean and Chapter.

Expenses
Reasonable working expenses will be met in line with Chapter policy, and reimbursement will be in accordance with our expenditure policies where all expenditure is required to be pre-approved.

Benefits
- 28 days' holiday per year plus eight bank holidays. You may be required to work on bank holidays. If so, you will receive an equivalent day off in lieu, agreed with your line manager.
- Entitlement to join the Cathedral pension scheme with Chapter contribution
- Employee Assistance Programme EAP
- Secure town centre car parking
- Staff discount in the Cathedral Café
- Small, friendly team with close working relationships and a supportive and inclusive culture
- Comfortable working environment with refreshments
- Opportunity to work in an historic and inspiring setting
- Become a key player at a unique time in the life of the organisation

Probation
The position is subject to a three-month probationary period, during which the appointment may be terminated by either party with two weeks' notice. After the successful completion of the probationary period, the notice period is three months' notice on either side.

Application Process

To apply for this post, applicants should submit the following:

- A completed **application form**.
- A covering letter addressing the appointment criteria and person specification detailed herein, explain your suitability for this role, and how your skills and experience makes you think you would enjoy this challenge.
- A completed **Church of England Confidential Declaration Form**.
- An **Equal Opportunities Monitoring Form** (completing this form is voluntary and non-completion/submission will not affect your application).

Submission Deadline

Applications should be marked for the attention of Pauline Rowe (Operations Manager) and sent via to: **pauline.rowe@blackburncathedral.co.uk** by midday on **Monday 9th November 2026**.

Shortlisting and Interviews

Shortlisting will take place on **Tuesday 10th November 2026**. Shortlisted candidates will be invited to attend an in-person interview which will take place on **Thursday 26th November 2026**. Those not shortlisted will be notified following the interviews.

Further Information

For an informal discussion about the role or to arrange a visit, please contact Alex Barnes, Head Virger, via email: **alex.barnes@blackburncathedral.co.uk**

Equality Statement

The Dean and Chapter recognise that discrimination and victimisation is unacceptable and that it is in the interests of the organisation and its employees to utilise the skills of the total workforce. It is the aim of the organisation to ensure that no employee or job applicant receives less favourable facilities or treatment (either directly or indirectly) in recruitment or employment on grounds of age, disability, gender, marriage/civil partnership, pregnancy/maternity, race, religion or belief, sex, or sexual orientation.

Safeguarding

Blackburn Cathedral is committed to the safeguarding and welfare of children, young people and vulnerable adults. We expect all staff and volunteers to align with this and our recruitment processes reflect this commitment.

Pre-Employment Checks

Please note that all offers of employment are subject to pre-employment checks which will include receipt of satisfactory references and an enhanced DBS application (including a Children's Barred List Check).