



**BLACKBURN**  
CATHEDRAL

**Head Virger**



**October 2023**

## Welcome from The Dean, the Very Reverend Peter Howell-Jones

Thank you for your interest in the position of Head Virger here at Blackburn Cathedral. As we prepare for our Centenary in 2026 the cathedral is entering an exciting phase of its mission. We are seeking an experienced individual with the drive, competences, and skills to lead a dedicated team of virgers and contribute to the delivery of the Cathedral's Strategic Plan.

Our website [www.blackburncathedral.com](http://www.blackburncathedral.com) will provide you with a glimpse of who we are as a community.

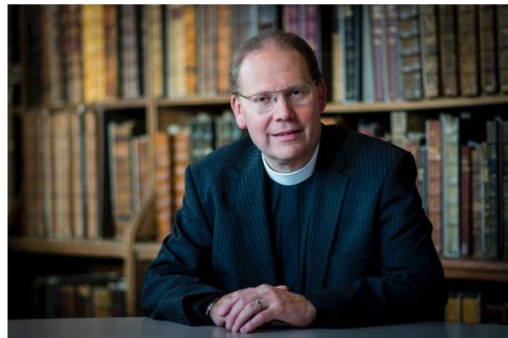
If you would like to speak further, please contact Pauline Rowe, Executive Assistant to the Dean on 01254 277431 to arrange a phone conversation.

Once again, thank you for your interest.

With every blessing,



**The Very Reverend Peter Howell-Jones**  
Dean of Blackburn



## Background Information

Blackburn Cathedral is one of England's newest cathedrals, yet it is one of the country's oldest places of Christian worship. Blackburn Cathedral 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. The creation of a new Cathedral Close with a mix of spaces has provided a greater sense of place and focus within the town, including the adjoining Cathedral Square which provides a gathering place and a location for numerous public events throughout the year.

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 during the next few years, positioning itself as a Cathedral for the whole borough and indeed the County.

Blackburn 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.

### **Vision, Purpose and Values**

Our Vision, Purpose, values and critical projects can be found on our website:  
[https://blackburncathedral.com/single/wp-content/uploads/2019/10/BC\\_strategy.pdf](https://blackburncathedral.com/single/wp-content/uploads/2019/10/BC_strategy.pdf)

### **Job Description**

Job Title: Head Virger  
Line Manager: The Chief Operating Officer\*

### **Role Responsibility**

The duties of a Head Virger are wide ranging. They include preparation for and participation in the daily round of regular services and special services; acting as site supervisor and point of contact for the many concerts, special events and exhibitions that take place throughout the year; contributing to the management of a safe and welcoming environment for all; and looking after the security of the site including daily unlocking and locking-up routines.

The Virger Team consists of The Head Virger, two full-time Virgers and volunteer Virgers when required and available.

The post-holder will be expected to work closely with all members of the cathedral team.

\* Line management is the responsibility of the cathedral's Chief Operating Officer but the Canon Precentor has oversight of all liturgical matters.



## **Key Responsibilities**

### **Welcome**

- Ensure all visitors and volunteers are treated in a friendly, tactful and helpful manner.
- Ensure, daily, that all signage, internal and external notice boards and leaflet displays are kept tidy and up to date.
- Provide a calm, friendly and informative presence in the Cathedral.
- Ensure that decorum is maintained within the Cathedral at all times.
- Support the work of all volunteers with a positive demeanour.
- Support the Welcoming team.
- Induct volunteers, as appropriate, into their role and the Cathedral's policies and procedures.
- Follow the Cathedral's safeguarding policy and procedures and support the Cathedral's commitment to ensuring that it is a place of welcome and safety for all.

### **The care of the Cathedral and its buildings - housekeeping**

- Ensure good order in the Cathedral, Clergy Court, Church House and surroundings.
- Communicate all messages and report all defects to the Chief Operating Officer (COO) so that the appropriate advice or action can be taken and good lines of communication are maintained.
- Identify and undertake basic maintenance tasks in the Cathedral and its estate buildings.
- Pay careful attention to the internal and external condition of the Cathedral Church and other buildings and report problems to the COO.
- Provide access to contractors and guidance, in conjunction with the COO.
- Liaise with the Architect as required.
- Oversee maintenance contracts e.g. heating system, alarms and maintain a schedule of visits by contractors and renewal dates.

## Liturgical

- Liaise with the Canon Precentor regarding all service requirements.
- Oversee the successful delivery of liturgical and sacristy duties for services.
- Undertake Head Virger duties at services and Civic occasions held in the Cathedral.
- Virge ceremonial processions and services, dressed in cassock and gown, as Cathedral practice requires.
- Prepare the Cathedral for services, events and for daily activity and return to good order afterwards. Duties can include:
  - Preparing for Holy Communion
  - Caring for and laying out of vestments
  - Caring for and maintaining Altar linen, Altars and Sanctuary areas
  - Operating the live streaming equipment when required
- Monitor sacristy supplies and Altar requisites and ensure that we are appropriately stocked.
- Be responsible for checking the PA system, setting up microphones and the setting of levels during services.
- Be responsible for the control of lighting, both at services and other times, maintaining such standards and records as required.
- Be responsible for the AV and PA systems at services and events, their maintenance and servicing, and training of others in its use.
- Lead Morning and Evening Prayer when required.
- For visiting choirs: Work with the Music Department particularly regarding access to the Song School and service choreography.

## Operational

- Efficiently and effectively prepare and manage a monthly rota of virgers including evenings and holiday cover
- Ensure that the rota information is communicated so that staff know which virger is on duty
- Attend staff meetings and other Cathedral meetings as required.
- Maintain the Service registers.
- Ensure that Cathedral attendance figures are properly entered in the Service Register
- Maintain the items on the Inventory in collaboration with the Archivist.
- Record and deal with any lost property.
- Contribute to and help to deliver the Cathedral's Strategic Plan as required.
- Oversee the regulation of Car Parking on the cathedral estate
- Ensure that the flag is flown on specified days.
- Ensure that Cathedral services and events have a member of the virging team in attendance.
- Always ensure that votive candle stands are fully stocked.
- To liaise with IT services as required.
- To liaise with the Town Council regarding grounds maintenance, security.
- Liaise with utility companies as required under the oversight of the COO.
- Ensure that the Cathedral silver is cleaned and properly maintained.
- Be available for evening services, concerts and events outside normal working hours in accordance with the rota provision.
- Assist with the setup, removal and re-instatement of furniture and staging *for* concerts and events and to welcome and assist organisers as required.

## **Security**

- Be the lead for all Cathedral security matters.
- Be responsible for ensuring the Cathedral is opened and closed correctly each day.
- Ensure the Cathedral is secure, clean and in good order, and to promote the highest standards of tidiness and care of the sacristy, plate, ornaments, vestments and chairs.
- Oversee the care and operation of the security (CCTV) and fire alarm systems.
- Be responsible for fire alarm and evacuation tests.
- Uphold all Security and H&S policies and procedures.
- Empty the donation and votive candle boxes in accordance with the Cathedral's procedures.
- Create and manage a register of keys and issue keys for the Cathedral buildings according to established procedures.
- Keep a vigilant custodial eye on the Cathedral and its buildings.
- Regularly check the Cathedral and effectively give a 'presence' around the whole site.
- Ensure that there is a working emergency plan.
- Ensure the 'out of hours' emergency phone is operational for security breaches.

## **Health and Safety**

- Be the designated Health and Safety lead for the Cathedral.
- See that the conditions of work and areas accessible to staff and public are kept in safe order and condition and report any hazards to the COO.
- Know the positions of all firefighting apparatus.
- All virgers attend professional training courses to become proficient as First Aiders and Fire Marshalls. Other training in health and safety procedures may also be given.
- As a trained First Aider, attend the scene, take appropriate action and complete the accident book.



- In case of an emergency implement agreed evacuation procedures.
- While on duty to be contactable at all times.
- Report any hazards and be pro-active in resolving H&S issues, logging any incidents or accidents in the appropriate record books.

### **People management, team work and personal development**

- Manage, lead and develop team members, both salaried and volunteer, creating a positive 'can-do' working environment which fosters individual commitment, enthusiasm, helpfulness, confidence and high standards of performance and communication.
- To promote the values of the cathedral in all relationships.
- Build a strong working relationship with all departments across the organisation.
- Ensure regular Virger team meetings take place.
- Undertake Virger line management and staff appraisals.
- Recruit new volunteer Virgers and ensure their training, direction and good conduct.
- Be accountable for your own development through the appraisal process seeking out new opportunities to learn new skills.
- Keep accurate records of hours worked in the team of Virgers.

### **General**

- Perform such other duties as are reasonably requested by the clergy and COO.
- Virgers on duty remain on site during working hours unless instructed otherwise
- Be aware of, and follow the Cathedral's policies and procedures in regard to the Safeguarding of all those who visit the Cathedral.

## Person Specification

Requirements	Essential (E) Desirable (D)	Measured by: A – Application D – Documents I – Interview R - References
<b>Qualifications</b>		
Literacy and numeracy skills	E	D
English and Maths GCSE (or equivalent) A-C grades	E	D
Be a practising Christian, able to receive Communion according to the rules of the Church of England	E	A
<b>Skills</b>		
Physically fit as the role is physically demanding at times and involves standing for long periods; manual handling activities and the movement of furniture and other heavy objects	E	A / I
Ability to work at height without fear	E	A / I
Aptitude to understand and use technology and in particular the Cathedral alarm system and sound system	E	A / I
Excellent attention to detail	E	A / I
A calm authority with the ability to take charge in challenging situations	E	A / I
Good people skills and personal impact, with the ability to engage with and influence a variety of different people.	E	A / I
Excellent communication skills – both verbal and written.	E	A / I
Ability to pro-actively develop relationships and opportunities in a sensitive and appropriate manner.	E	I
IT competent	E	A
Ability to work closely and flexibly within a small team	E	A
Ability to take initiatives and adapt	E	A
<b>Experience</b>		
Previous experience as a Virger	E	A / R

Requirements	Essential (E) Desirable (D)	Measured by: A – Application D – Documents I – Interview R - References
<b>Knowledge</b>		
A working knowledge of the Church of England and the Christian faith.	D	A / I
A knowledge and understanding of protocol with regard to services and worship	E	A / I
Experience of using technical apparatus, i.e. lighting; PA system; heating; fire alarm system; and similar	E	A / I
<b>Attitudes</b>		
Honesty, integrity and strong values. The appointee needs to be able to work comfortably in a faith-based organisation and be sympathetic to, and supportive of, Christian values.	E	I
A wholehearted commitment to the success of the Cathedral.	E	I
Proactive, flexible and adaptable under pressure.	E	I
The willingness to work flexible hours on occasion, with periods of considerable intensity, as required.	E	I
Self-organisation and the ability to balance own work load.	E	I
Discretion and sensitivity to others.	E	A / I



### **Terms and Conditions of Employment**

The employer is Blackburn Cathedral on a permanent contract and the post holder will be responsible to the COO.

As a key lay employee of the Cathedral the post holder is expected to work such hours and times as are necessary for the proper performance of the job. In view of the nature of the role and the work and mission of the Cathedral this will require some flexibility and will include some evening and weekend working, as well as attendance at some significant Cathedral services.

### **Salary**

£22,000 per annum, depending on skills and experience.

### **Place of work**

Blackburn Cathedral, Cathedral Offices, Cathedral Close, Blackburn, Lancashire, BB1 5AA.

### **Hours**

The hours of employment are normally 40 hours per week, on a flexible rota including Sundays, weekend, evening, 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.

### **Accommodation**

At present, this post comes with rent-free accommodation for the proper performance of your duty at Cathedral Close. This situation is subject to regular review and has the potential to change in the future.

### **Probation**

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

### **Benefits**

28 days holiday per year plus UK Bank Holidays.

Entitlement to join the Cathedral pension scheme with the Chapter contributing 5% of gross monthly salary.

Employee Assistance Programme (EAP).

### **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.

### **Office and Administrative Support**

A desk is provided within the Virgers' office.

### **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.

### **The Recruitment Process**

Applications

To apply for this post, please submit the following:

- A completed application form;
- A cover letter which addresses the appointment criteria described in the person specification, explaining how your skills and experience to match the requirements of the role.

Completed applications should be sent to: [Pauline.Rowe@blackburncathedral.co.uk](mailto:Pauline.Rowe@blackburncathedral.co.uk)

### **Closing date for applications**

12 noon on Friday 24<sup>th</sup> November 2023

### **Selection process**

Shortlisting will take place on Monday 27<sup>th</sup> November 2023 and candidates selected for interview will be advised by Thursday 30<sup>th</sup> November 2023.

The selection process for those shortlisted will be conducted on Wednesday 13<sup>th</sup> December 2023. Candidates will be interviewed by a panel.

Any offer of appointment will be dependent on the receipt of satisfactory references and an appropriate DBS clearance.

## Organisational Chart

