



The Speaker

Chaplain to the
Speaker of the
House of Commons



Westminster
Abbey

Canon of
Westminster and
Canon Rector

Application Pack



Closing date: 8th July 2024 (noon)



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Introduction

Thank you for your interest in the position of Canon of Westminster, Canon Rector and Chaplain to the Speaker of the House of Commons. The position becomes vacant through the resignation of Canon Tricia Hillas following her appointment as Bishop of Sodor and Man.

This is a job that combines two distinct roles in one coherent and fascinating task. The Chaplain to the Speaker is appointed by the Speaker, whereas the office of Canon of Westminster is a Crown appointment. The interview panel will therefore include representatives of the Crown, Parliament and the Abbey. By statute the four Canons of the Abbey occupy distinct Offices alongside their broader responsibilities for the mission and ministry of the Abbey. Appointments to these Offices are reviewed annually, but the assumption is that the holder of this post will be Canon Rector, taking particular responsibility for the parliamentary ministry carried out in St Margaret's Church, which is both a Chapel of the Abbey and the 'parish church' of Parliament. In the appointment process, candidates will be given opportunity to explore what these different roles demand.

The roles are exercised within two institutions at the heart of the nation with rich historical links and a strong commitment to working in partnership. In formal terms, the person appointed will be paid and accommodated by Westminster Abbey and seconded to the House of Commons for approximately half of their working time. In practice this unique combination of roles is exercised through an holistic ministry carried out flexibly within both institutions. This document seeks to provide an insight into the two organisations, the roles and the key attributes candidates will need to demonstrate.

The closing date for applications is 8th July, and the interview process will take place on 22nd and 23rd July, following which a formal Crown appointment will be made.

Canon Hillas' resignation takes effect in mid-October, and it is hoped that her successor can take up the post as soon as possible thereafter. The successful candidate will occupy a house in Little Cloister, Westminster Abbey, giving ready access both to the Abbey and to the Parliamentary estate.

June 2024



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 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.

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.

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.

The Dean and Chapter of Westminster defines our 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.

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. We attract over a million visitors from around the world every year, and our summers and peak period are incredibly busy. However, we receive no regular income from the State, the Church of England or the Crown, and rely almost entirely on income from visitors.

About the House of Commons

The House of Commons and the iconic Palace of Westminster are key elements of the UK Parliament. The House of Commons is the publicly elected chamber of Parliament. Members of the Commons debate the big political issues of the day and proposals for new laws. Alongside the work of the Chamber are the select committees, made up of small groups of MPs who check and report on areas ranging from the work of government departments to economic affairs, as well as running inquiries on specific topics.

Around 3,000 staff work behind the scenes at the House of Commons, supporting the democratic process in many different ways ranging from procedural experts to caterers, cleaners, doorkeepers and HR and finance professionals. They are politically impartial and take great pride in the vision and values which guide their work. These 3,000 House Administration staff are a small part of the wider Parliamentary community, which is made up of approximately 19,000 pass holders, including Members of Parliament and their staff, Peers and their staff, journalists, and contractors such as those working on construction and maintenance projects or the Metropolitan Police who protect the perimeter of the estate. The Parliamentary community comes together on a daily basis to ensure the functioning of Parliament whilst working under common values of respect and professionalism.

As a Grade I listed building recognised around the world, a UNESCO World Heritage Site and a symbol of democracy in the UK, the Palace of Westminster hosts thousands of visitors each year. The oldest surviving part of the Palace is Westminster Hall, which was erected in 1097 during the reign of William II. As custodians of this iconic building, we have a duty to educate and inspire the current generation and to protect and restore the Palace for future generations. The Parliamentary Estate itself is much larger and encompasses other buildings along the Embankment and near St. James's, where some MPs have offices and staff are based.

The Speaker is one of the most important figures in the UK Parliamentary system. The role of Speaker is an ancient one; the English House of Commons first possessed a presiding officer from the 13th century, although it was not until the 14th that the term "Speaker" first emerged. Since then, 158 individuals have served as Speaker of the House of Commons.

The role of Speaker has evolved over the years. In modern times, the Speaker has 3 core responsibilities:

- Presiding Officer – the Speaker presides over Commons debates in the Chamber and enforces its rules. In this role, the Speaker determines which Members may speak and which amendments are selected for consideration.
- Administrative – the Speaker has a range of administrative responsibilities, which include chairing the statutory body, the House of Commons Commission.
- Representative – the Speaker is the spokesperson of the House in its communications with the Crown (the Speaker is a Privy Counsellor), the House of Lords, and external authorities outside Parliament.

The Speaker must remain politically impartial at all times and consequently resigns any party membership on becoming Speaker and does not take part in debates or votes (except to break ties). The holder of this office is an MP who has been elected to be Speaker by other Members of Parliament.

The Roles

Speaker's Chaplain

The Speaker's Chaplain is a unique and historic role dating back to at least 1660. This appointment will be the 81st Chaplain to the Speaker of the House of Commons. Edward Voyce was the first person to be explicitly named as Chaplain; after this, however, it became practice for the Speaker to appoint their Chaplain.

Today the role is a senior member of the Speaker's team, visible at relevant events the Speaker holds and engaged in a wide range of duties. In providing civic and ceremonial support for the Speaker, they form part of the public Speaker's Procession to the Chamber each day and conduct daily prayers in the House of Commons Chamber when the House is sitting. The Chaplain supports the Speaker in major ceremonial events such as the State Opening of Parliament, and in recent times the funeral of the Sovereign and the Coronation. The Chaplain also works closely with the Speaker's external affairs function to craft, produce, deliver and support key ceremonial occasions initiated by the Speaker, including Holocaust Memorial Day, Commonwealth Day, Armed Forces Day, the Constituency Garden of Remembrance, Hannukah, Diwali, a range of Christmas events, national and one-off commemorations, wreath-layings, plaque unveilings and moments of silence as agreed by the Speaker.

The Speaker's Chaplain also provides pastoral and spiritual care for all MPs and their staff as well as House of Commons employees; they are also available, when sought and requested, to support any other parliamentary pass holder. They are expected more broadly to consider how the care of all Christians and those of other faiths and none can best be provided within the Palace. This includes enabling engagement, for those who wish, with major Christian festivals such as Advent, Christmas, Lent and Easter, creating resources for reflection and contemplation during those periods and directing enquirers to other faith leaders and support networks where appropriate. This includes connections with other ecumenical colleagues and groups, including the Roman Catholic duty Chaplain and the Christians in Parliament APPG. The Chaplain works closely alongside House support services such as HR and Wellbeing to provide practical help and assistance in terms of signposting to other advice and support services on the estate and beyond. In essence, the work ranges over as wide an area as that of any Parish Priest and requires the highest possible standards.

The Speaker's Chaplain has particular responsibility for worship in the Chapel of St Mary Undercroft, working under the ecclesiastical jurisdiction of the Dean of Westminster as Ordinary and in collaboration with Black Rod, who is responsible for the administration of the Chapel on behalf of the Lord Great Chamberlain. There is a weekly Eucharist when the House is sitting and occasional offices in the Chapel in addition to well-established traditions for its use by other denominations. The Chaplain also officiates at weddings and baptisms in the Chapel. This includes pastoral preparation and service planning; facilitating any Special Licence applications; overseeing safeguarding and other checks on any visiting clergy; coordinating the elements of the services for the production of Wedding Orders of Service; liaising with the Minor Canons' Office, Black Rod's Office and Security, Catering and Visitor Engagement staff via the Verger; leading wedding rehearsals; and officiating and preaching at these services.

This is a unique and historic role within the House of Commons. As an official of the Administration, the Chaplain will be expected to role-model the values of the organisation – being inclusive, courageous, trusted and collaborative while remaining politically impartial.

Canon of Westminster

As described above, the Canons of Westminster exercise responsibility as members of the Dean and Chapter for defining and delivering the missional and strategic objectives of the Abbey. The Dean and Chapter is also accountable for the governance of 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.

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 and other Abbey events as necessary and is expected to be available at the Abbey during months of Residence. 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).

The Canons are supported in their Abbey work by the Canons' Executive Assistant and Personal Assistant.

Canon Rector

St Margaret's ceased to be a parish church and was placed under the jurisdiction of the Dean and in the care of the Dean & Chapter by the Westminster Abbey and St Margaret Westminster Act 1972. The Canon Rector, formally appointed annually by the Dean & Chapter, has responsibility for the Abbey's ministry to Parliamentarians, much of which is carried out in St Margaret's as the "parish church" of Parliament. In addition to occasional offices, there are a good number of memorial services, most of which fall within the responsibility of the Canon Rector, as they relate to former members of either House of Parliament. Many of these services are attended by the Speaker.

The Canon Rector is assisted in the preparation of these services by the Abbey's Minor Canons and supported in their delivery by other Abbey clergy, vergers and staff in other relevant departments. Under the overall leadership of the Abbey's Organist and Master of the Choristers, St Margaret's Church has a dedicated Director of Music, a Consort of singers and, since September 2023, girl choristers, of which the Speaker is a patron, who are undertaking an increasing range of services and concerts.

The Abbey's Institute was established over a decade ago and aims to nurture and revitalise moral and spiritual values in public life and service. Given the significant links between the Abbey's ministry to Parliament and the objectives of the Institute, it is anticipated that the Canon Rector will serve on the Steering Group of the Institute and contribute to its work.

Person Specification

Essential

Personal Character:

- An ordained priest of the Church of England, or of a Church in communion therewith in good standing

Education:

- To degree level or equivalent

Skills/Aptitudes:

- Excellent priestly and pastoral skills
- Excellent skills as a teacher and preacher
- 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
- Excellent planning, organisation and administration skills, including the ability to prioritise work to deadlines and manage complex and concurrent activities
- Good ICT skills
- Aptitude for team working
- Energy and calmness under pressure

Knowledge/Experience:

- At least ten years' experience in full-time ministry in the Church of England or in a Church in communion therewith
- Experience as a parish priest
- Knowledge of the work of a chaplain
- 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 working with public and/or community bodies
- Experience of scoping, developing and delivering high quality public engagement activities
- Experience of developing and maintaining networks amongst key community leaders
- Knowledge of the related roles and working of the Sovereign, HM Government and the Houses of Parliament

Circumstances:

- The office-holder is required not to be personally active in support of a political party nor to have held elective office in Local Government nor to have been a Member of Parliament nor to have been a member of the House of Lords except as a cross-bencher.

Desirable

Education:

- A higher theological or pastoral qualification

Skills/Aptitudes:

- Skills in liturgy development, including memorial services

Knowledge/Experience:

- Experience of leading high-profile services of national significance
- Experience of working in a large church
- Experience working as a chaplain
- Knowledge of the role of the Speaker and the work of the House of Commons

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

Terms and Conditions

Note: The postholder is paid and accommodated by the Abbey and seconded for ca 50% of their time to the House of Commons.

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. Currently, the stipend is £50,344.77 per annum, with additional allowances totalling £6,312.58.

Tenure

The legislation introducing common tenure exempts Westminster Abbey as a Royal Peculiar. The officeholder shall vacate the office on the day on which he or she attains the age of seventy years unless the Visitor authorises continuance in office for a period or 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 his/her duties. A house is provided rent free for this purpose. The Dean & Chapter will meet all charges in respect of Council Tax and utilities (excluding private telephone charges).

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. The Speaker's Chaplain cannot take significant periods of annual leave during House of Commons sitting periods unless agreed by exception with the Speaker.

Pension Scheme and Life Assurance

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

Staff Discount

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

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 return 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

Please complete our application form, as CVs will not be accepted.

You are also 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.

Clear information on how you meet all the requirements of the job, with relevant examples, will help us with shortlisting.

Please email your completed application to: applications@westminster-abbey.org.

Applications should arrive no later than 12 noon on 8th July 2024. Interviews and auditions are scheduled to take place on 22nd and 23rd July 2024 (with candidates attending on both days).

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.