

St. Peter's Bournemouth
Choral Foundation



Lay clerkships

Job description and candidate profile

Introduction

The St. Peter's Choral Foundation is an ambitious project which aims to establish a high standard of choral music in St. Peter's, not just for the benefit of the church and all who worship and visit there, but also to benefit the wider cultural and educational life of BCP.

As part of the project, nine vacancies for paid lay clerks were created in May 2025. If you are a trained singer who would like to join a small team of like-minded musicians to explore the full range of sacred music to a high standard, please read on.

About St. Peter's Church

St. Peter's is Bournemouth's founding parish church located in the heart of the town centre. The imposing Grade I-listed building was consecrated in 1845, to a fine Gothic Revival design by George Edmund Street, as the parish church of Bournemouth. It has a landmark 202-ft high spire, and the interior is richly decorated with works by Bodley, Comper, Blomfield, and Burne-Jones. Simon Jenkins described it as 'one of the richest Gothic Revival interiors in England'. It is classed as a 'major parish church' by the Church of England.

The church has had a strong musical tradition since its foundation. In the early days, a choir school and boarding house was run for choristers recruited from London, which closed in the 1920s as the growth of Bournemouth made it unnecessary. The choir of men and boys continued on a voluntary basis, with girls and women being included from 2009.

Since 2025, the choir is formed of nine professional lay clerks who sing for most services, both alone and with the girl choristers. There is also a voluntary parish that sings on one Sunday per month. The current Director of Music is Duncan Courts, and the Organist is Ian Harrison.



Lay clerkships

The lay clerkships are for three sopranos, two altos/counter-tenors, two tenors, and two basses. They can be held individually or as job-shares.

The lay clerks normally sing either alone as an SATB choir, or as lower voices (ATB) with the girl choristers.

Successful candidates will be experienced, trained singers, able to contribute to the ensemble and as soloists in a wide range of musical styles.

While good sight-reading is an important requirement, lay clerks will be expected to have prepared the repertoire in advance of each service.

At present (January 2026) there are vacancies for a **soprano** and a **first bass/baritone**.

We also welcome interest from equally-capable singers who are available to cover absences on an occasional basis as required.

Choral services

Services are sung every Sunday during choir term at the 10am Sung Eucharist. The usual pattern is for the lay clerks to sing on the 1st, 2nd, and 4th Sundays of the month.

The following additional services are also sung by the lay clerks each year:

- Ash Wednesday (7pm)
- Maundy Thursday (7pm)
- Good Friday (2pm)
- Easter Eve (Saturday evening)
- Ascension Day (Thursday – 7pm)
- Christmas Eve (24th December)
 - 4pm Crib Service
 - 11pm Midnight Mass
- Christmas Day (25th December – 10am)

And some of the regular Sunday services will include special musical provision, including:

- Epiphany Lessons and Carols (4pm on a Sunday in January)
- Palm Sunday (10am)
- Easter Sunday (10am)
- Remembrance Sunday (10am in November)
- Advent Darkness to Light (4pm on the First Sunday of Advent)
- Christmas Lessons and Carols (4pm on the Fourth Sunday of Advent)



Role and responsibilities

The sung services listed above will be divided between the lay clerks, the choristers, and the parish choir. Required dates, times, and repertoire will be communicated to the lay clerks well in advance.

As a guide, the lay clerks will typically sing at the 10am Sung Eucharist on three Sundays per month, usually on the first, second, and fourth Sundays of each month. This pattern will occasionally vary to fit around the church calendar.

The times will be:

9.15 - 9.50am Rehearsal

10.00am Sung Eucharist (usually finished by 11.00am)

Some of the weekday feast/holy day/special services listed above will also be sung by the lay clerks, either as SATB or as ATB with the choristers. These will be highlighted well in advance, and the times will be:

6.00 – 6.45pm Rehearsal

7.00pm Sung Eucharist (usually finished by 8.00pm)

We also plan for the lay clerks to give concerts and to be available to sing at weddings and funerals as a self-contained ensemble, and this aspect of the role is being developed in consultation with the lay clerks.

A fee of £50 will be paid per Sunday service, which includes the rehearsal directly before the service and any time needed to prepare the repertoire in advance. Fees for concerts, occasional services, and other events will be agreed with lay clerks on a case-by-case basis. Lay clerks will also receive a car parking pass for St. Peter's.

The role is considered to be self-employed. Payment will be made on receipt of an invoice.

Lay clerks will be expected to be available for a minimum of 75% of published commitments. Absence should be agreed with the Director of Music as far in advance as possible.

For students whose permanent address is elsewhere, accommodation may be available to enable you to sing outside of term-time.

Candidate profile

Essential:

- Experience of singing in a professional-standard choral ensemble
- Excellent sight-reading skills
- A well-trained voice, with excellent tuning and blend, good range, and flexibility
- Willingness to work as part of a small friendly team
- Able to respond quickly and positively to direction
- Experience of solo and verse singing
- Committed adherence to current best safeguarding practice, including the Parish Safeguarding Policy and training as required
- An understanding of the professional nature of the role, and a willingness to undertake adequate personal preparation
- Sympathy with the ethos and purposes of a Church of England parish church
- A good sense of humour and patience

Desirable:

- Experience of working in a church environment
- Willingness to engage with the wider church community
- Good working knowledge of the Anglican choral repertoire
- Interest in a wide variety of music
- A desire for continuing personal and professional development

Auditions

All applications will be acknowledged by email. Shortlisted candidates will be invited to audition and interview at St. Peter's Church.

Audition requirements will consist of:

- 1) Prepared singing: a piece of the candidate's choice, which should be sacred music.
- 2) Sight-singing: two pieces of repertoire, normally 16th century polyphony and a modern idiom.
- 3) Ear tests.

How to apply

If you have any questions or wish to discuss the roles further, please call the Director of Music, Duncan Courts, on 07967 357888 or email music@stpetersbourne.org.uk

Applications should consist of your musical CV and a short covering letter, including the names and contact details of two referees (one musical and one character reference).

Applications should be sent by email to: music@stpetersbourne.org.uk

