

Lay Clerks

at Bristol Cathedral



BRISTOL
CATHEDRAL

Introduction

Dear singer,

Thank you for your interest in the Cathedral Choir and in becoming a Lay Clerk.

There has been a choir at Bristol Cathedral since its foundation in 1542, and probably since the days of the Augustinians (from 1140). Indeed, from records we know the names of the first six Lay Clerks¹.

Today the six Lay Clerks are joined by four Choral Scholars (ATBB) – who are typically drawn from the University of Bristol, and sing for the duration of their degree – and two sets of boy and girl choristers.

Services are sung six times a week during term time by either a combination of personnel from the Cathedral Choir or the our secondary age choir, the Cathedral Consort.

This pack outlines the key things you might expect to know about the role, and the Cathedral.

Once again, thank you for your interest.

Tim Popple
Music & Liturgy Officer

¹ John Moore, Thomas Sexten, Nicholas Crepulgate, John Morgan, John Bedell, John Archade

About the role

Lay Clerks sing Friday to Tuesday, and Choral Scholars sing Sunday and Monday every week during Choir Term. 'Choir Term' is the period during the year when the Choir needs to be available.

The Choir is required to sing at statutory services, or services which replace statutory services, and to attend normal rehearsals and to sing at other services and events as arranged by the Minor Canon and approved by Chapter.

Attendance during a week will be in accordance with the published schedule.

Timetable

The normal weekly timetable is as follows:

- **Monday, Tuesday, and Friday**
 - 4.45pm-6.00pm – Rehearsal & Evensong
- **Sunday**
 - 9.15am-11.15am – Rehearsal & Eucharist
 - 2.45pm-4.30pm – Rehearsal & Evensong

Additional Commitments

In addition to the regular timetable, there are additional commitments that are expected. These include, but are not limited to:

- Up to 10 Saturday commitments per year
- Two Christmas Concerts (fee paying)
- The Festivals of Nine Lessons and Carols (23 & 24 Dec)
- Midnight Mass (24 Dec)
- Christmas Day (morning)
- Ash Wednesday (when it falls in term time)
- Complines in Holy Week (Mon-Wed)
- Maundy Thursday evening
- Good Friday afternoon
- Holy Saturday evening Vigil
- Easter Day
- Ordinations (late June)

Touring

The Cathedral Choir aims to tour to a foreign country every two years. Previous tours have taken the choir to Hannover, Belgium, the Netherlands, Italy, Germany, Poland, and Bordeaux. The tours rely heavily on fundraising. In addition to contributions per member of the back row, as a group the back row are expected to raise £1,200 per tour. To reach (and possibly exceed) this target, the back row undertake a variety of gigs and concerts throughout the year. There are also other opportunities for fee-paying gigs in addition to fundraising ones.

The Lay Clerks

The existing Lay Clerks have variously been in post from as recently as 2020 and as long ago as the turn of the millennium, ranging in age from mid 30s to mid 50s. They are a friendly, sociable group and look forward to welcoming new colleagues. There are numerous social occasions, including termly Sunday lunches, an Advent black tie social, and regular post-Evensong social opportunities.

About the Cathedral

Bristol Cathedral stands in the civic heart of a large city that has frequently been voted the best place to live in the UK. We enjoy a rich and diverse cultural life in a city with outstanding theatres and concert halls, sporting venues, restaurants, and shops. We are the home to the biggest Caribbean carnival outside London, a hot-air balloon fiesta, and a year-round programme of festivals. Within a short drive or bus ride you can enjoy beautiful countryside and a varied coastline.

Bristol is home to a diverse community of nearly half a million people, including well-established African-Caribbean, Pakistani, Indian and Somali communities, which makes it an interesting and fun place to live and work. Road, rail and air infrastructure link Bristol to the rest of the UK and the world.

The Diocese of Bristol covers Bristol, South Gloucestershire, North Wiltshire and Swindon. The area is one of contrasts: cities, towns and villages, coastland and farmland. Within the Diocese, there are 30,000 people worshipping regularly in more than 200 churches. Around 15,000 children and young people attend our 72 church schools. Many of those children will visit the Cathedral over the year to learn, have fun and worship through our educational trails, our popular Crafty Cathedral sessions and Diocesan services.

We aspire for everyone who lives or works in Bristol and the wider Diocese to say that Bristol Cathedral is “their cathedral”, to know that they are welcome and that we are here with them, both as a resource and a place of peace in a busy life.

The Cathedral is founded on a 12th century Augustinian Abbey dissolved in 1539 and its buildings raised to cathedral status by Henry VIII. Major additions in the 17th and 19th centuries created the building we treasure today. Some of this history brings with it challenges, as like other historical institutions in Bristol we live with the legacy of the slave trade and have benefited from the generosity of traders and philanthropists in the city over hundreds of years. Addressing the legacy of slavery and the sin of racism are a major focus of our work in social justice. Aligning our actions with our values, we seek to engage with a range of social justice issues, in particular homelessness, modern slavery and aspirations for Carbon Zero. The Dean leads on work relating to racism, inclusion and memorialisation.

Our congregation is varied. Many members have known the Cathedral for a long time, having arrived as choristers or choir parents. Others are newer arrivals, often drawn by the quality of the music, liturgy and preaching. Perhaps 20% of the congregation on a Sunday are visitors. Our worship seeks to offer the best of the Church of England, drawing on the Prayer Book tradition at Evensong, and the riches of Common Worship at other times. We respect tradition and seek to build on the past while we proclaim the gospel afresh for every generation. While we are not a uniformly elderly congregation, many of our loyal volunteers are ageing and this is a challenge. Similarly, while we can attract young families for events, our

toddler carol services are a particular highlight, we have yet to settle our regular provision for children.

Our staff has grown significantly over the past three years and we are blessed with a supportive, ambitious, collaborative team of varied ages and life experiences.

The Cathedral has a rich programme of events, concerts, exhibitions and conferences in addition to the seasonal patterns of worship.

The Cathedral is framed by College Green, a large open space leased to the Council, which provides a recreational space for those who live and work in the City. We also enjoy a small and peaceful garden, where many people, including the Cathedral staff, seek sanctuary during a busy day.

In 2023 the Cathedral took on the management of the medieval Lord Mayor's Chapel on the other side of College Green. The Chapel has a small but loyal congregation and is used for some civic events through the year. We are excited by its potential as a worship and events space.

You may find it helpful to look at the following websites:

bristol-cathedral.co.uk | bristol.anglican.org | visitbristol.co.uk
bristolonecity.com/about-the-one-city-plan

What's next?

The deadline for applications can be found on the Application Form.

We will be in touch to let you know if we are inviting you to interview.

You will need to prepare two contrasting pieces of music – usually one baroque, one modern, and provide music for piano accompaniment for your audition.

You will be auditioned by

Mark Lee – Master of the Choristers & Organist

And have an information conversation with

The Revd Mel Takáč – Minor Canon for Worship & Liturgy

Who's who at the Cathedral?

The people you'll meet:



The Revd Mel Takáč

Minor Canon for Worship & Liturgy

Mel is primarily responsible for worship and liturgy in the Cathedral. She also has oversight of the pastoral care of the Cathedral Choir and the musicians.



Mark Lee

Master of the Choristers & Organist

Mark is responsible for the training, direction, and management of the Cathedral's music. He will be the main point of contact for Probationers and Choristers.

mark.lee@bristol-cathedral.co.uk



Paul Walton

Assistant Organist

Paul accompanies and assists in the training of the Cathedral Choir. Paul also directs the Cathedral Consort, the Cathedral's youth choir which takes children aged 11-19.



Tim Popple

Music & Liturgy Officer

Tim is responsible for the administration of the music and liturgy within the Cathedral. He creates the Choir Diary, and will be your main point of contact for all administrative enquiries.

tim.popple@bristol-cathedral.co.uk



William Forrest

Music Assistant

William assists Mark and Paul by accompanying some of the services, taking rehearsals when required, and undertaking general administrative support for the music department. He also runs the choir at the Lord Mayor's Chapel.



Sarah Jenkinson

*Safeguarding & Pastoral Officer
(inc. Chorister Tutor)*

Sarah has a pastoral role with the choristers, liaising with families, safeguarding, first aid, supporting the choristers and probationers, and other more practical duties.

sarah.jenkinson@bristol-cathedral.co.uk



900 years of musical heritage



BRISTOL CATHEDRAL

