



Exeter  
Cathedral

Careers



# Alto Lay Vicar *Application pack*



**Title:**

Alto Lay Vicar

**Department:**

Liturgy & Music

**Reporting to:**

Director of Music

**Salary:**

£9,335.79 per annum

**Contract type:**

Permanent, part-time

**Location:**

Exeter Cathedral



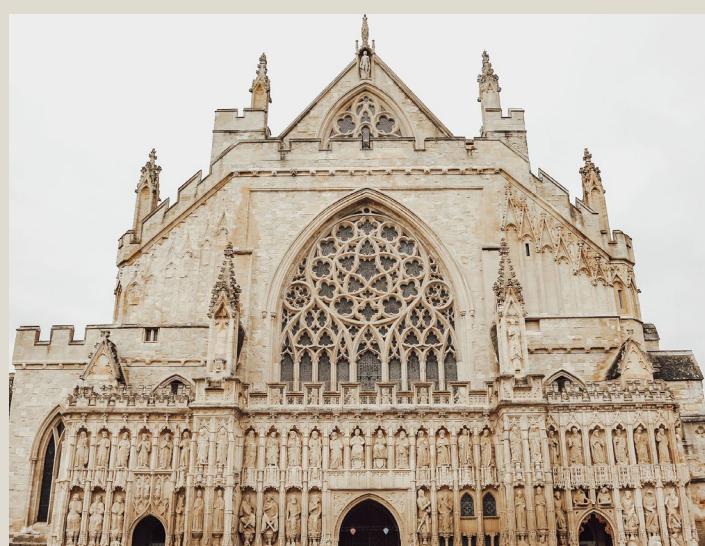
## Purpose of the role

As an Alto Lay Vicar you will sing Alto in the Exeter Cathedral Choir. Applications are welcome from both suitably qualified countertenors (male) and contraltos (female). The preferred start date is 1 September 2026, though a later start date would be considered.

## Background

### Exeter

The city of Exeter lies in the south west of England, and is the administrative capital of the county of Devon. With a population of around 118,000 Exeter is consistently rated as one of the best places to live in the UK. It is a safe, student-friendly city with a vibrant and fun culture and relaxed atmosphere. The Cathedral is geographically and spiritually at the heart of the city, a fact reflected in the high profile it enjoys in the local media and community. Exeter has rail services to London (Paddington and



Waterloo), Birmingham, Manchester and Bristol, and a busy commuter airport, giving good connections nationwide.

## **Exeter Cathedral**

Exeter Cathedral is one of the nine 'Old Foundation' cathedrals of England and its architecture dates primarily from the Norman period, although the building has been extensively restored, including the extensive reconstruction of the chapel of St James, which was completely destroyed by the Luftwaffe in a bombing raid in 1942. Notable features of the interior include the misericords, the minstrels' gallery, the astronomical clock and the organ. The Diocese of Exeter was formed in 1050 and covers the county of Devon. Both clergy and congregation are fully supportive of the Cathedral's music programme.

## **The Exeter Cathedral Choir**

Music has been an important part of the Cathedral's life for hundreds of years. There has been a choir since the 13th century and today it maintains a regular schedule of seven choral services a week (during term time).

The Choir sings a very broad repertoire embracing everything from Gregorian Chant to recently composed sacred music, mainly from the Anglican (or pre-reformation) tradition, but including the best music of other churches. Recently the Cathedral commissioned a new setting of the canticles from contemporary American composer, Nico Muhly.

Described by Classic FM as "one of the country's finest choirs", the Choir also has a busy programme of other engagements, which often includes tours (most recently to Austria and Slovakia), concerts, recordings and radio broadcasts. Recent performances include Bach's *St John Passion* (with Charivari Agréable), and Tabakova's *Centuries of Meditations* (with the City of London Sinfonia). The choir's sell-out performances of Handel's *Messiah* and Bach *B Minor Mass* were ecstatically received.

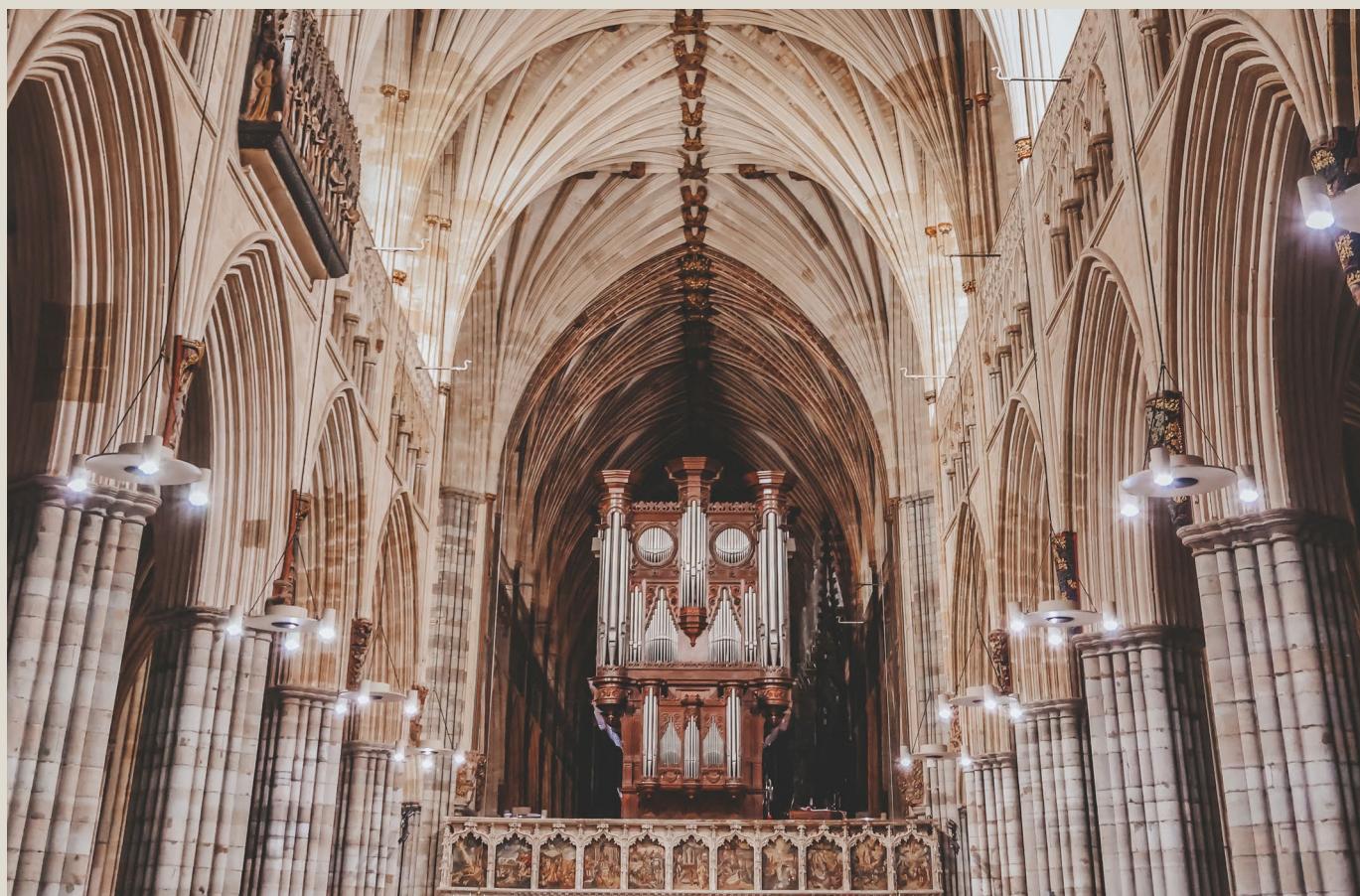
The Choir's full complement numbers 20 boy choristers, 20 girl choristers, six Lay Vicars, and six Choral Scholars. The Cathedral's Music department consists of the Precentor, The Revd Canon James Mustard, the Director of Music, Timothy Noon, the Assistant Director of Music, Michael Stephens-Jones, and the Organ Scholar (Michael D'Avanzo in 2025-26).

# Key accountabilities

The Lay Vicar will attend all full Cathedral Choir rehearsals and services (see timetable below), and will normally be expected to sing at each service. Although the annual pattern of Choir Terms is fairly consistent (taking into account where Easter may fall), Lay Vicars are informed of the actual dates well in advance. The Lay Vicar will also be expected to take part in Choir broadcasts, concerts, recordings, tours, and other events falling outside the regular timetable.

## Dress code and general behaviour

Lay Vicars should be in sympathy with the Christian ethos. They must be aware at all times of the importance of discretion in conduct and behaviour, and will be required to have enhanced DBS clearance, and to undertake safeguarding training as necessary. Lay vicars should be smartly presented at all times, especially when working with the Choristers or the general public. Black shoes are to be worn at all services and concerts, and it is expected that a white shirt and tie will be worn on Sundays.

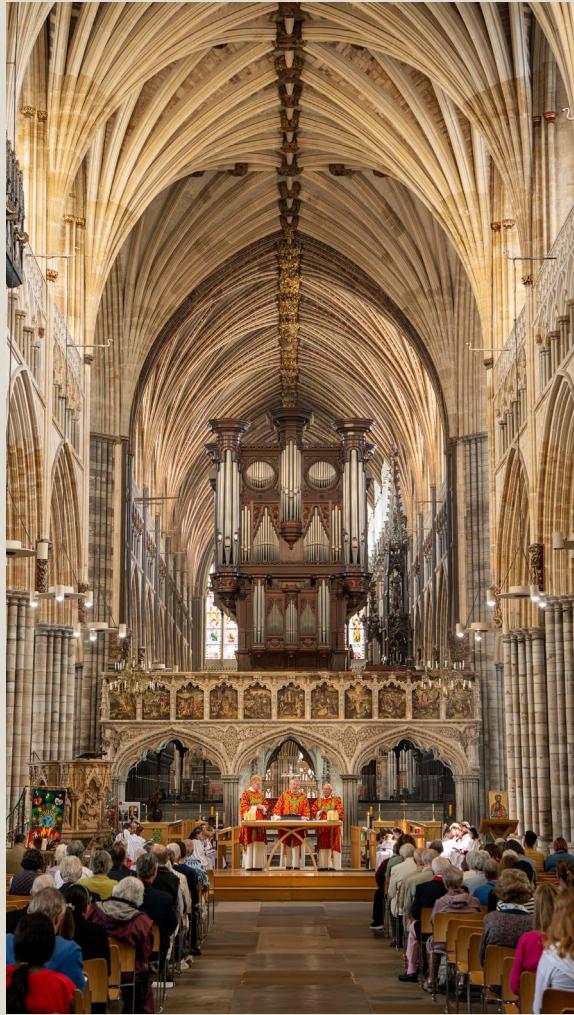




## Candidate profile

### **Essential:**

- Experience of singing in a professional (or professional standard) choral ensemble
- Excellent sight-reading skills
- A well-trained voice, with a good range and flexibility
- Willingness to work as a team member, as part of a small and close-knit group, and the ability to respond quickly and positively to direction
- Some experience of solo singing
- Adherence to current best safeguarding practice, including the Cathedral's Safeguarding policy, and training as required
- An understanding of the professional nature of the job, and the drive to undertake adequate personal preparation
- Sympathetic to the ethos and purpose of an Anglican cathedral
- Good sense of humour



### Preferred

- Experience of working in a Church or Cathedral environment
- Willingness to engage with the wider Cathedral community
- Good working knowledge of the Anglican Choral repertoire
- Interest in a wide variety of music
- The desire for continual personal and professional development

## Safeguarding

Exeter Cathedral is committed to following best safeguarding procedures and practices to protect children and vulnerable adults. It is therefore an essential contractual requirement that all employees complete safeguarding at the appropriate level identified for their role and attend refresher training when requested by the Cathedral.

## Working Pattern

Sun	Full practice	0915-0950
	Eucharist	1000-1120
	Full practice	1515-1550
	Evensong	1600-1700
Mon, Tue, Thu, Fri	Full practice	1655-1720
Some Sat	Evensong	1730-1820
Wed, some Sat	Day off	

Thursday Evensongs are followed by a short rehearsal of up to 30 minutes. Choir practices are usually held in the Song Schools during the week and in the Cathedral at weekends. Variations to this timetable

and additional events are shown on the printed termly schedule, which is circulated by the Director of Music.

## Time off/absences:

Normally, Wednesday will be a complete day off. In weeks where this is not possible, a different day will be arranged. The Cathedral Choir sings on not more than two Saturdays per calendar month. The Lay Vicar, like the other musicians, should normally also have a free Sunday plus six weekdays (except in the event of a Choir tour) at half-terms, after Christmas and after Easter, as well as at least six complete weeks off in the summer. This may involve occasional days off in lieu. Absences must be agreed in advance with the Director of Music, and the Lay Vicar may be responsible for engaging a deputy (from an agreed list). For up to three absences per term, the deputy's fee will be covered by the Cathedral. For any further absences, the current deputy rate per service of £30 will be deducted from the absentee's salary and the deputy is paid through the Finance Office. However if a regular Lay Vicar is absent because of sickness, they should first inform the Director of Music, and deputy fees are paid from Dean & Chapter Funds.

The academic year begins in early September, and the Michaelmas term runs up to, and including, 25 December, Christmas Day after Evensong. There is then a holiday of around two weeks. There is a holiday of a similar length after Easter (beginning after Evensong on Easter Monday) and there is a long half-term of twelve days from the last week of October. There is a half-term of about a week in the Lent Term and a similar one in the Summer Term, with the academic year usually ending before the middle of July.

## Benefits

- Exeter Cathedral will match up to 5% of your contribution to your pension plan (provided it is HMRC approved)
- Childcare Voucher Scheme
- Holiday entitlement - 30 days including Public Holidays per annum pro rata
- 10% discount in our shop and café
- Complimentary tickets to our in-house concerts (limit applies)
- Additional fees are payable for non-statutory services, broadcasts and concerts



## How to apply

Please complete the application form, available on our website at:

[www.exeter-cathedral.org.uk/about-us/vacancies/](http://www.exeter-cathedral.org.uk/about-us/vacancies/)

and submit it along with a covering letter stating why you are the right candidate for this role. You may also include your CV.

For an informal conversation about this role please email:

[vacancies@exeter-cathedral.org.uk](mailto:vacancies@exeter-cathedral.org.uk)

Applications can be sent by email or post to:

Catherine Escott, Chief Operating Officer, 1 The Cloisters, Exeter, EX1 1HS

Email: [vacancies@exeter-cathedral.org.uk](mailto:vacancies@exeter-cathedral.org.uk)

Application Deadline: 12pm Friday 20 February 2026

Interviews: Thursday 26 February 2026

## Process Following application

All applications will be acknowledged by email.

Audition requirements consist of the following:

- a) Prepared singing – two contrasting pieces of the candidate's choice. At least one should be sacred.
- b) Sight-singing tests – usually two pieces of repertoire: 16th century polyphony and a modern idiom.
- c) Psalm – chanting at sight: Anglican Chant.
- d) Ear tests.

**Thank you for your interest in this role.**

**We look forward to hearing from you!**