



**DURHAM  
CATHEDRAL**  
THE SHRINE OF ST CUTHBERT

# DURHAM CATHEDRAL VOLUNTEERING ROLE PROFILE

<b>TITLE OF ROLE</b>	<b>Bedesman</b>
<b>PURPOSE</b>	<p>To support the important and long Benedictine tradition of welcoming everyone to the Cathedral.</p> <p>As a key part of the front of house team you will be supporting the smooth operation and security of the building, its services and activities. Being visible and available to engage, inform and assist visitors. You will be expected to play a proactive and dynamic role in ensuring that Durham Cathedral builds and maintains a reputation as one of the most welcoming and best loved attractions in the region and beyond.</p> <p>We welcome volunteers from any background, of all faiths and none, and those who in turn show respect and sensitivity towards all nationalities, religions, beliefs, cultures, backgrounds, and the ethos of the Cathedral as a working church. Inspired by our saints, Cuthbert and Bede, the mission of Durham Cathedral is to offer everyone the opportunity to encounter God and know God's love in Jesus Christ.</p>
<b>WHAT YOU WILL BE DOING</b>	<p>In this role you can expect to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Tidy books and candle-stands.</li><li>• Participate in services.</li><li>• Assist the Vergers as required.</li><li>• Ensure a consistent welcome, actively engaging with visitors when appropriate to inform and delight.</li><li>• Be an ambassador for the Cathedral.</li><li>• Deal with visitor requests for assistance and information.</li><li>• Help to promote awareness of the visitor offer in terms of activities and events.</li><li>• Discreetly and tactfully advise visitors who are in breach of Cathedral policies.</li><li>• Help staff to maintain an overview of the safety and wellbeing of visitors and the building, including following procedures in, for example, health and safety, safeguarding and security.</li><li>• Assist with the safe and efficient flow of visitors.</li></ul> <p>Durham Cathedral is committed to safeguarding. We expect all staff and volunteers to share this commitment. If at any time you see or hear anything that could suggest a safeguarding risk, or you have any other reason to be concerned, you</p>

	<p>must report it immediately to the Cathedral Safeguarding Officer. Safeguarding is everyone's responsibility.</p> <p>We will issue you with an authorised Cathedral ID badge and lanyard, which you must wear and keep visible when on duty. We shall also give you a Safeguarding contact card to keep in your ID badge lanyard holder at all times.</p>
<p><b>LOCATION AND TIMES</b></p>	<p>In this role you will usually be based in the Cathedral and its associated buildings.</p> <p>We encourage volunteers in this role ideally to offer two shifts per week for a minimum of twelve months. The Cathedral is open Monday to Sunday, and there are flexible shifts to suit your availability. We are grateful for any gift of time.</p>
<p><b>WHAT WE ARE LOOKING FOR</b></p>	<p>For this role, we are looking for the following:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Empathy with the mission and values of the Cathedral; the ability to grasp and be involved in our mission.</li> <li>• A pleasant, polite, calm and welcoming manner, especially with members of the public.</li> <li>• Knowledge of Church of England liturgy.</li> <li>• Respect and sensitivity towards all religions, beliefs, cultures and backgrounds.</li> <li>• Articulate with excellent communication skills.</li> <li>• Discreet and observant of visitor behaviour.</li> <li>• The ability to deal with crowds.</li> <li>• Able to work in a team.</li> <li>• Reliable, conscientious and a good time keeper.</li> <li>• Flexible and adaptable.</li> <li>• Able to deal with difficult situations efficiently and with tact and diplomacy.</li> <li>• Mobility and stamina as volunteers will be required to move around the Cathedral spaces and remain in specific positions within those spaces for certain amounts of time.</li> <li>• Willingness to learn about the Cathedral past, present and future, extending your knowledge for visitors' queries and to proactively support a visitor's experience.</li> <li>• Ability to find the answer and / or know when to re-direct a query.</li> </ul>
<p><b>FIRST STEPS</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Recruitment is through an application form with references, informal interview, induction, shadowing and introductory period.</li> <li>• You must undertake all required safeguarding training before your start date and at all times work within the policy and procedures of the relevant safeguarding policies.</li> <li>• At the point of applying to volunteer, we shall ask you to confirm your commitment to the behaviours and expectations outlined in our Volunteer Agreement.</li> </ul>
<p><b>DISCLOSURE &amp; BARRING SERVICE (DBS) REQUIREMENTS</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• This role <b>does not</b> require a DBS check</li> </ul>

<p><b>TRAINING</b></p>	<p>The following will be provided:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Induction.</li> <li>• Shadowing existing Bedesmen.</li> <li>• Training in Liturgical duties, customer service, health and safety, and other areas as necessary.</li> </ul> <p>We ask you to undertake the following essential online courses; you <b>must complete them before you start your volunteer role</b>. Details of how to access the training will be sent to you after receipt of your application, and support is available if you would like support with access or you feel affected by any of the course content.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>National Church of England Basic &amp; Foundation Safeguarding training</b></li> <li>• <b>ACT Action Counters Terrorism training</b></li> <li>• <b>The Association of English Cathedrals national volunteers training</b></li> </ul>
<p><b>SUPPORT &amp; SUPERVISION</b></p>	<p>You will be supported and supervised in your usual activities by:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Verging Team including Rebekah Best, Head Verger (<a href="mailto:Vergers.Vestry@durhamcathedral.co.uk">Vergers.Vestry@durhamcathedral.co.uk</a> / 0191 374 4587)</li> </ul> <p>Volunteers and staff work proactively together to create a dynamic front of house team.</p> <p>Other Cathedral Staff Contacts:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Belinda Fullelove, Volunteering Manager, Cathedral HR &amp; OD, <a href="mailto:volunteers@durhamcathedral.co.uk">volunteers@durhamcathedral.co.uk</a></li> </ul>
<p><b>WHAT WE OFFER YOU IN RETURN</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Playing an important role in helping to facilitate the Cathedral’s welcome and make visitors’ experience as positive as possible.</li> <li>• To be part of living history, continuing the medieval tradition of the role of Bedesmen in Durham Cathedral.</li> <li>• Meeting a wide range of people from all over the world.</li> <li>• Being part of a passionate and dedicated team.</li> <li>• Experience in a visitor focused role.</li> <li>• Being part of some of the key events in the Cathedral’s liturgical calendar and involvement in the life and legacy of Durham’s most iconic building.</li> <li>• References available on request</li> <li>• Opportunity to join the Cathedral’s Community Roll (<a href="https://www.durhamcathedral.co.uk/get-involved/community-roll">https://www.durhamcathedral.co.uk/get-involved/community-roll</a>)</li> <li>• Cloister Card offering 10% discount in the Cathedral Shop and</li> <li>• Undercroft Restaurant (conditions apply)</li> <li>• Refreshments</li> <li>• Various optional volunteer training as available</li> </ul>

## ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

### **History and background to the Bedesman role**

Bedesman is an old English term for ‘men of prayer’, men who prayed for the souls of others (it’s in Shakespeare, Richard II) and is from the same root as ‘beads’, i.e. the little prayer balls of the rosary. This is probably the origin of prayer beads because each bead i.e. a piece of shell, coral, pebble with a hole in it represented a person for whom the Bedesman had been asked to pray.

Bedesmen have a very long history in the Cathedral, going back at least to the original 16th century post-Reformation Statutes, which provided for the appointment of ‘eight poor men’ to assist with lighting and putting out candles, offering prayers (probably for patrons and benefactors), praying for departed souls and ringing bells ‘as far as their strength shall allow’ in return for a small annual pension. The role is thought to have begun in the time of Bishop Walter Skirlaw (1388-1406) and there is a stone bench dedicated for use by our Bedesmen built by Bishop Skirlaw in the north Quire aisle is alongside what was his tomb in his own private chapel and bears his coat-of-arms. The notes in the back of the 1902 Surtees Society “Rites of Durham”, says that ‘The bench table in this bay of the aisle was reconstructed in 1402-3’ presumably when the chantry chapel was being built.

In the present day, Bedesmen no longer have to be men, or poor! Today, our Bedesmen role is entirely voluntary and our Bedesmen assist the Vergers, tidy books and candle stands and support services. Although the role is now open to all, anyone in the role is known as a ‘Bedesman’ regardless of gender.

### **Transport and Accessibility**

Please use the information on our [website](#) to plan your travel to the Cathedral by public transport or by parking in and around the city. We are not usually able to offer parking in the Cathedral grounds unless agreed in advance.

Unfortunately, some areas of the Cathedral are not fully accessible without the use of steps, and as a historic building, some floors are uneven. Please do let us know if mobility may be challenging for you in this environment.

Area Lead: Head Verger

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