



h for 2023. Stay tuned for more updates.

Last December, thousands of churches extended 'The Great Invitation' from the Church of England to *Follow the Star* to their local church in person once again. Helped, of course, by a return to a more normal Christmas, 2022's *Follow the Star* saw significant growth in engagement across a wide range of indicators.

This year's theme – **Follow the Star: Join the Song** – highlights how singing can help draw us closer to God and each other through the journey from Advent to Epiphany.

"The shepherds were astonished to find the night sky filled with angels singing God's praise. And before long they were singing, too ... Centuries later, singing is still central to how many of us celebrate Christmas.

"We invite you this Christmas to follow the star, journey to the manger, join the song and come into the presence of Jesus Christ."

Archbishops Justin Welby and Stephen Cottrell

Everyone is invited to Join the Song with our new carol

We're inviting choirs across cathedrals, churches, schools and communities to 'join the song' alongside one of the country's leading choral composers in a new interpretation of the beloved carol 'The First Nowell' with a brand new melody.

The new carol has been written by acclaimed composer [Bob Chilcott](#) and is the centrepiece of this year's focus on **Follow The Star: Join The Song**.

Free resources to help choirs of all ages and stages learn and perform the carol - including a downloadable score, lyric sheet, learning videos and backing tracks - are available free from the [A Church Near You's Resource Hub](#) (registration required).

[And you can listen now to a preview of The First Nowell.](#)

Webinars

- **Explore Join the Song resources to support your church:** This webinar offers information and ideas on how you can use the national branding, reflections and resources to help you to invite people to your church – both online and onsite. [This webinar is now available on-demand.](#)
- **Using Join the Song with under-18s:** Find out how you can engage under-18s through singing our new setting of The First Nowell. Learn about the resources available for under 18s and get practical ideas for using them in schools, church or at home. [Watch this webinar now on-demand.](#)
- **Christmas 2023's digital resources unwrapped:** This interactive session by the Digital Labs team explored the resources available for this year's Christmas campaign. [This webinar available to watch now.](#)

Resources

We have been working with colleagues from dioceses and parishes to develop a range of resources to help churches, choirs and singing groups, communities and schools to 'join the song' this Advent and Christmas:

- You can pre-order the Reflections Booklet, Prayer Bookmark, Family Prayer Card and Advent Calendar from [Church House Publishing](#)
- [Download the Join the Song campaign logo pack](#) in a number of formats for print and digital
- [Download the Brand and design guidelines](#) including colour palettes and approved fonts
- Access music, social media graphics, PowerPoint assets, posters and other free tools and resources from [A Church Near You \(registration required\)](#)
- Explore the [digital promo planner](#), blogs and bitesize videos from Digital Labs to support churches in using the digital resources available
- Sign up to receive the [Join the Song collective worship resources for use in schools](#), in church settings and at home
- [Download a 'Scratch' Crib Service template](#) – this service tells the Christmas story using the rhyming Nativity Clare Williams has written for the Advent calendar. It is designed to be used at a service or assembly to involve those present – especially children – in telling the story of the first Christmas.
- [Download all the Advent Calendar daily activities](#) – this file provides the full text of the daily Advent Calendar content in one document, ideal for planning and using with children and families at church or at school.
- [Online advent calendar](#) and online Advent reflections for all ages via the Follow The Star app ([iOS](#) / [Android](#)).

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