

The Church of England has squared up to commercial giants John Lewis, Sainsbury's and Marks & Spencer with its bid for Christmas ad of the year.

The Church's new two minute film "Joy to The World" features Gogglebox vicar and Songs of Praise presenter Kate Bottley and has been released on the Church's official website and social media channels.

The film highlights the hectic life of a vicar at Christmas, combining priest, social worker, parent and dog owner up to the traditional midnight service on Christmas Eve and the magical first moment of Christmas Day.

The advert is the last in a series of short films produced by the Church in the lead up to Christmas and has featured Revd Rose Hudson-Wilkin (Chaplain to the Speaker of the House of Commons), comedian Paul Kerensa and Hull based author Revd Matt Woodcock.

"We think the ad captures the real joy of Christmas in a way that supermarkets point to but haven't quite managed" said the Revd Arun Arora, Director of Communications for the Church of England.

"Although the film was made for a fraction of what the big retailers spend, I think it manages to tell the story of the lead up to Christmas with Kate's charm, humour and faith all shining through.

"Kate's film captures all the busyness and rushing of Christmas, from the pint down the pub to wrangling with the tree, from the cooking of the spuds through to that magical moment after the midnight service when Kate finds her moment of Christmas Joy staring at the stars and taking in the full wonder of God's creation."

Kate Bottley said: "When all is said and done, the turkey eaten and the presents unwrapped, the film points to the fact that the discovery of real, lasting Christmas joy involves a visit to your local Church. You only have to look at the images and pictures from across the country being posted under the #JoyToTheWorld hashtag on social to see for yourself."

The new ad is part of the Church's promotion campaign for its website AChristmasNearYou.org, which lists over 34,000 Christmas services taking place at local churches across the country during the Christmas season. From carol services to crib services, nativities to midnight mass and Christmas morning celebrations the website enables people to find a range of services near them by postcode.

- Rev Kate Bottley's film can be seen here: <http://bit.ly/2hLJchg>
- All four of the Christmas films can be seen here: <http://bit.ly/2hAlyUs>

