



3. 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 [AChurchNearYou Resource Hub](#) (new users will need to set up a free account, which is a very quick process).

[Listen to a preview of The First Nowell](#)

Join our webinars

We are running three webinars to help you get the most out of this year's campaign:

- **Explore Join the Song resources to support your church:** This webinar will offer 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. Learn more and [register for this webinar on Tuesday, 19 September](#).
- **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. [Sign up to join our webinar on Wednesday, 27 September](#).
- **Christmas 2023's digital resources unwrapped:** Join the Digital Labs team for this interactive session to look at the resources available for this year's Christmas campaign. [Sign up to join the webinar on Wednesday, 11 October](#).

What are the other key elements of the campaign?

Alongside the resources to support choirs and singing groups in performing the new version of 'The First Nowell', we've been working with colleagues from dioceses and parishes to develop a range of other resources:

- Supporting resources for schools including collective worship sessions for Advent (coming soon)
- Our first printed [Follow the Star Advent Calendar](#) for families – with stickers!
- Accompanying Family Activities, a Pop-Up Nativity Plan and online Advent reflections for all ages via the Follow The Star app
- Daily [Christmas reflections booklet](#) by Richard Carter - plus free app, email and audio versions to follow.
- And much more, including a wealth of free tools and resources on **A Church Near You**

Resources

More resources are being added over the next few weeks.

- You can pre-order the Reflections Booklet, Prayer Bookmark, Family Prayer Card and Advent Calendar from [Church House Publishing \(all published on 2 October\)](#)
- [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.

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