



more people find their nearest Christmas services and events this year,

The church-finder website, [AChurchNearYou.com](https://www.achurchnearyou.com), which already receives around 10 million page views a year, has been upgraded with a range of new features.

Meanwhile a [new app](#) will provide prayers and reflections on the go, and enhancements have been made to the Church of England's Alexa skill.

All the developments come as part of the [#FollowTheStar](#) Christmas campaign.

Upgrades to AChurchNearYou.com allow smartphone users to see the exact location of their nearest Church of England church in real-time, with up-to-date details of services and other facilities and an interactive map. Users simply enter a postcode or press "find" to use their current location. The site also features a personalised #FollowTheStar home page dedicated to Advent and Christmas services and events.

Last year more than 56,000 Christmas services and events were registered on AChurchNearYou.com, and this year thousands more are expected to be listed.

The Church has also launched its first Christmas app. The free #FollowTheStar app provides prayers and reflections from Christmas Eve to Epiphany (6 January).

It offers a daily journey tailored for people exploring their Christian faith and wishing to go further, with reflections and Bible readings available in written or audio. It also links to AChurchNearYou.com allowing users easily to find local services or events.

And churchgoers will have additional help finding services this year, as hundreds of churches are expected to mount large outdoor illuminated stars, as part of the #FollowTheStar campaign.

Meanwhile, the Church's award-winning [Alexa skill](#) is being updated to allow users to explore the daily #FollowTheStar reflections. Since its launch in the summer of 2018, tens of thousands of users have interacted with the skill which offers daily prayers and also includes information on local services and events from AChurchNearYou.com.

Lambeth Palace, the home of the Archbishop of Canterbury, was recently [lit up](#) with animated stars, while last week Chichester Cathedral launched an interactive laser star installation. Meanwhile smaller stars are appearing on towers, walls and in churchyards across the country reminding people of the journeys made by the shepherds and magi, following the star, to visit the baby Jesus.

Recent figures show that the numbers attending Christmas services rose by 3.4 per cent to 2.68 million last year. Combined with figures for special services in churches during Advent, including carol services, there were nearly eight million attendances over the festive season.

Dr Helen-Ann Hartley, Bishop of Ripon, said: "As we approach this special moment in the Christian year, it's exciting to see the launch of a range

of digital resources that help people to more easily find and connect with their local church. The recent statistics for mission indicate how Christmas services are growing in popularity and it's very positive to see the Church using digital to drive further attendance.

"AChurchNearYou.com is a key resource that can help local churches grow attendance at services and events. Nearly half a million people will visit the site this year, so I urge all Church of England churches to add their Christmas services and events as soon as they can and to #FollowTheStar this December.

"There's a huge opportunity to use digital media to help people grow in their faith and love of God. By making the reflections available from Christmas Eve until Epiphany in a variety of accessible formats, from app to audio, print and email, our hope and prayer is to meet people where they are and to help take them further on their Christian journey."

If you would like to attend one of our 16,000 churches this Christmas to #FollowTheStar, visit www.AChurchNearYou.com/Christmas to find your nearest church, and the right service for you.

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