

#FollowTheStar was the Church of England's and Archbishops' Advent and Christmas campaign. It was fantastic to see so many churches use the resources to encourage attendance and share the good news of Jesus Christ at this important moment in the year.

Our survey feedback has revealed that more than 85% found the campaign helpful, very helpful or extremely helpful in growing closer to God. Our reach on social media throughout Advent and Christmas was 7.94 million – up by 1.14 million on [#GodWithUs](#) in 2017.

Working with local churches, dioceses, colleagues across Church House Westminster, Lambeth Palace and Bishopthorpe we were able to build a campaign that engaged people across England and the [Diocese in Europe](#). A huge thanks to everyone who got involved in shaping the strategy and being so enthusiastic throughout.

Our aims were to:

Equip churches and regular churchgoers to share with family and friends the joy of:

- Going to a local church Christmas service or event
- Join in the Twelve Days of Christmas reflections.

Enable those exploring faith to:

- See content that encouraged them into a local Christmas service or event
- Grow in faith by reading reflections and praying.

Encourage everyone to go further on their Christian journey.

What were the key results from the campaign?

- The first time an Advent and Christmas campaign from the Church spanned digital, print, traditional press and broadcast in terms of promotion and awareness
- More than 120,000 copies of [Church House Publishing's #FollowTheStar](#) booklet were sold – 50% more than the figure for [#GodWithUs](#) in 2017. The reflections written by Revd Dr Isabelle Hamley, chaplain to the Archbishop of Canterbury, were very positively received and widely used in print, our app and Alexa
- The partnership with BBC Sunday Worship and Daily Worship resulted in millions of people hearing the [#FollowTheStar](#) reflections

- [A Church Near You](#) received more page views than 2017 - up from 1.5 million to 1.66 million, with 79% of visitors telling us that they found it helpful, very helpful or extremely helpful to find a service or event
- The [O little town of Bethlehem Christmas carol](#) was a major success – used by Classic FM on social and radio and played on BBC Radio 2
- More than 50,000 items sold through the online store – bookmarks, booklets and flyers were particularly popular
- The Night of the Stars events in [Canterbury](#) and [Durham](#) were popular and helped encourage churches to put up stars and share pictures on social media.

How did we use the reflections materials?

The #FollowTheStar reflections written by Revd Dr Isabelle Hamley formed a key part of the campaign and were used in the printed booklets, social media, app, Alexa and email.

What was the best performing content?

We filmed lots of footage at [Christ Church Ware](#) and used this for our main advert and lots of shorter versions:

Our family prayer was also very well received:

It was the first time we offered a Christmas recipe and the film with Bake Off's Martha Collison had positive feedback:

How did users respond to the campaign?

We asked users at the end of #FollowTheStar to give their feedback and we were really encouraged by the response rate – here's a snapshot of some of the findings:

How helpful did you find the films in encouraging you to go to church?

A graph showing visual representations of the answer to a survey question about #FollowTheStar

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How helpful was the campaign in bringing you closer to God?

A graph showing visual representations of the answer to a survey question about #FollowTheStar

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We also received more than 70 pages of comments on the reflections and wider campaign, the majority of which were very positive. Here's a snapshot:

- "I found getting involved in the campaign was fantastic. We've had a good response from the local community and have see more new people to our church in January"
- "It helped me to keep focus on the real meaning of Christmas"
- "They were gentle, coaxing and in plain everyday language"
- "Campaign added a new and vibrant focus to the message of Christmas"
- "I thought this year's marketing was among the best I have seen. Thank you!"
- "The booklets were a lovely present to give to parishioners and friends as a special Christmas present"
- "I work a lot of night shifts and it's hard for me to get to church services and I was feeling quite isolated over Christmas... the campaign helped me to feel a part of my faith and supported me at a difficult time. A massive thank you because it really picked me up and kept me going."

Finally, we'd again like to thank everyone who got involved in #FollowTheStar. The insights from 2018 will be used as we start to shape the approach to Advent and Christmas 2019. In the meantime, you can find out more about our [Lent Pilgrim and Easter Pilgrim campaigns](#).

Church of England Communications team

Source URL: <https://www.churchofengland.org/news-and-media/stories-and-features/how-did-followthestar-help-people-grow-closer-god-through>