



The Church of England's Christmas Advert for 2019 was viewed more than 170,000 times in the two days following its launch, with viewers tuning in via Twitter, Facebook, Instagram and YouTube.

In the first 48 hours, the advert received over 110,000 views on Facebook, and a further 60,000 on Twitter, entirely through organic sharing by churches and individuals.

For the first time, the CofE has also created interactive stickers for churches and individuals to use as part of their social media posts and stories, which have already been seen nearly 160,000 times.

Meanwhile, almost 20,000 have been added to [AChurchNearYou.com](https://www.churchnearyou.com), the CofE's 'church finder' which helps people to find their nearest events, and discover the Christmas story.

The advert, part of the CofE's [#FollowTheStar campaign](#) to encourage more people to come to church to discover the joy of Christmas, features scenes from St Peter's Church, Stockton-on-Tees, accompanied by the Soul Sanctuary Gospel Choir of London, who [perform the Church of England's Christmas single: \*We Three Kings\*](#).

This year's campaign features three technological firsts, with the launch of the Church's Google Home [smart speaker app](#), enabling people to access prayers and reflections and find their nearest church using Google and Android devices. The app has been developed following the success of the CofE's Alexa skill, which has attracted more than 130,000 questions in just 18 months.

Also new is the first ever use of Augmented Reality (AR) by the Church of England. Anyone downloading the #FollowTheStar app on [Android](#) or [iOS](#) will be able to unlock additional content from Christmas Day by pointing their phone at the [#FollowTheStar booklet](#), given to people attending church over Advent and Christmas.

And for the first time, churches will be able to create their own #FollowTheStar adverts using a newly-developed [video generator](#), exclusive to editors of AChurchNearYou.com. The videos can be shared on churches' own social media channels, websites and A Church Near You pages, with personalised messages and event details.

AChurchNearYou.com allows people to find local services and events in churches. Since its relaunch in 2017, the website has significantly grown and in the last 12 months has received almost 40 million page views, more than double the previous year.

The website allows visitors to search for services by a variety of criteria, including carols, mulled wine and mince pies. At last count, more than 1,500 events feature mulled wine, while some 2,300 will serve mince pies.

The Archbishop of Canterbury, Justin Welby, said: *"Christmas is rightly a time for celebration, bringing joy and comfort to the lives of others. The reason we do this is that we are each offered the most extraordinary gift at Christmas in the birth of Jesus."*

*"I hope that everyone who sees this campaign, whether or not they know anything about Jesus, will feel moved – like the Magi – to follow the star to church and to ask the questions: 'why am I here, what am I for, and why I am loved?'"*

*"It doesn't matter who you are – whether you're a regular church-goer, or you never go to church, there is something in #FollowTheStar and in Jesus for everyone."*

Churches and Cathedrals across the country will display will also stars as part of the campaign, with a [range of resources](#) (including stars) available from publishers CPO, making it easier than ever to take part.

## Notes to editors

- Metrics (170,000 views) are taken from posts by the [Church of England](#) and [Archbishop of Canterbury](#) Facebook pages, together with a post by the [Church of England Twitter](#) page.
- The App 'Follow The Star' is available for [iOS](#), [Android](#), [Alexa](#) and [Google Home](#)
- The Google Home app and 'Follow The Star' app were developed in partnership with Aimer Media, a leading UK app developer

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