



Government permitting outdoor singing for places of worship in all tiers

Canterbury Cathedral

Guidance published by the Government on Sunday confirmed that indoor singing by both amateur and professional choirs will be permitted, and that congregations could sing carols outdoors, providing they are physically distanced.

The Church of England has also published an article giving tips to anyone planning to hold an outdoor carol service.

The maximum number of people present should take into account the area of the space and the requirement to maintain 2m social distancing at all times.

In 2019, 5.7 million people attended Advent and Christmas services in churches and cathedrals in England, while across the Church of England, more than 17,000 online services and events have been provided since March 2020.

Churches planning Christmas services are encouraged to complete a risk assessment to ensure that worshippers can be welcomed as safely as possible.

A special tag has been added to A Church Near You for each church to list services and events taking place outdoors. Last year the site featured more than 25,000 Advent and Christmas services and was accessed by nearly 7 million people. It has already received 50 million page views in 2020.

Bishop Sarah, who chairs the Church of England's Recovery Group, said: "Singing is a very special part of our worship, especially at Advent and Christmas, so I know that the announcement that we will be able to come together for public singing outdoors this Christmas will bring comfort and joy to many.

"Advent and Christmas this year will not be the same as previous years but having outdoor congregational singing and indoor carol services with choirs is a reasonable balance and recognises our duty to protect and care for each other.

"Following news that the official number of people who have died and are Covid positive has reached almost 700 a day, we are mindful of the terrible toll this virus is taking in this country so I pray that our worship this Christmas will reflect the light and hope at the heart of the nativity story."

The announcement was also welcomed by the Royal School of Church Music. RSCM Director, Hugh Morris, said: "The opportunity for everyone to be able to sing carols in some form is to be welcomed. For congregations to be able to raise their voices in song outdoors should really help to enable everyone to engage positively and actively with the message of Christmas.

"Allowing choirs to lead indoor services means that they equally have the chance to give joy to others – and the RSCM's motto of 'I will sing with

the spirit, and with the understanding also' is surely a guiding light for all those who will be singing in such choirs over the next month.

"It is of course so important to keep everyone safe in doing so, in order that we can all move forwards together into a brighter 2021."

More information

- [Tips on holding an outdoor carol service](#)
- [Read our Covid-19 advice for churches](#)
- [Government guidance on carols and nativity plays](#)

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