



gn to encourage more people to hear the real Christmas story through

The single, a new carol version of In the Bleak Midwinter by one of the country's top young composers, Rebecca Dale, will form the soundtrack to this year's Church of England Christmas campaign.

The single is released on all streaming platforms from Wednesday 1st December onwards. It can now be [streamed or downloaded online](#)

'#AtTheHeartOfChristmas' is the Church of England's theme for Advent and Christmas 2021.

Local churches all over the country will be welcoming their communities – onsite and online – to celebrate and share the good news of Christ's birth with special services and events, supported by a wide range of national resources.

The new carol's composer Rebecca Dale is one of the country's most exciting young composers who has been hailed as “a household name in years to come”.

Her 2015 debut self-release for choir and orchestra, *I'll Sing*, reached No.1 in the iTunes Classical Single Charts and was Classic FM's Choral Classic of the Week. She made history as the first female composer to sign to Universal Music's Decca Classics label, with her debut album, *Requiem For My Mother*, going to No.1 in the specialist Classical charts. She has written works for numerous classic artists and ensembles and has contributed music for various well known TV programmes and Films. Born in 1985, she was composing from a very young age and has fond memories of singing in church choirs while at school.

She said: “It's so exciting to have been invited to write this new Carol for the Church of England's Christmas theme #AtTheHeartOfChristmas.

“Although In the Bleak Midwinter is a poem which was written nearly 150 years ago, it has a timeless mystery and is wonderfully evocative of a journey from the wintry landscape to the stable and the heart of the nativity story.

“I have long wanted to set this text, and so when the Church of England asked me to be involved in this project, this was my very first thought. I hope people will enjoy the setting and that it helps connect them with the amazing story which is at the heart of Christmas.”

The Carol has been recorded by St Martin's Voices, under the direction of Andrew Earis, in the church of St Martin-in-the-Fields, London.



The Church of England has worked with the popular UK classical music station Classic FM to develop the piece. Alexander Armstrong, host of Classic FM's flagship weekday morning programme, will give the new carol its radio premiere on his show later in December.

Armstrong, one of the nation's best-loved presenters and broadcasters, is also an Ambassador for the Cathedral Music Trust, and one of twelve contributors who offer special Christmas reflections as part of the campaign.

"The light, colour and warmth of Christmas stand out starkly against the dark midwinter palette and make our enjoyment so much more focused, especially when it comes to Christmas music," he writes in his reflection.

"There is no other season whose music we devour so hungrily, nor any that carries so many happy associations for us from down the years. That is why it is so thrilling when we hear the first strain of Christmas music each year."

The Archbishop of Canterbury, Justin Welby, said: "Singing carols is a beloved Christmas tradition for so many – so we're delighted to be sharing this new carol as the national Church of England's first ever Christmas single.

"At Christmas, God becomes human. His heart beats. As a frail child in a cold manger, he takes his first breaths on this earth. We often dress this time of year up, adding all the trimmings.

"These things are wonderful, but they are not the heart of Christmas. The only thing that makes Christmas perfect is Jesus, who sees, loves and welcomes all. The message of this carol is that the only thing we need to give him and each other is our hearts – our very own selves.

"Wherever and whoever you are, you too are welcome and invited this Christmas, to worship the child, the God, whose heart beats for you."

All royalties from the digital streams and downloads of the track will be donated to charity, helping people experiencing homelessness in the UK.

'At The Heart Of Christmas' – theme for 2021

At the heart of Christmas is a deliberately simple and open theme – one that we hope can be used by local churches to invite their communities to share in celebrating the good news of Christmas in a whole variety of ways, whatever the prevailing circumstances.

The Church of England Christmas Advert, due for release in early December, will look at what is 'at the heart of Christmas' for different people, with tales of hardships overcome, generosity, faith, Christmas memories and hopes for the future from around the country. It will be shared across Facebook, Instagram and Twitter.

In 2020, the Church of England's Christmas theme, Comfort and Joy, was seen more than 35 million times.

The theme encourages viewers to visit achurchnearyou.com – a site which received 77 million page views last year – and find out about services

and events near them.

Find out more

- [The Church of England Christmas Theme - #AtTheHeartOfChristmas](#)
- [Listen to *In the Bleak Midwinter* - our Christmas single](#)

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