



This year's Church of England Christmas film follows one person through life's journey – with a powerful invitation to everyone to come together to celebrate the birth of Jesus.

After two years in which the festive season was marked for many by loneliness and uncertainty because of Covid-19, churches across England are fully open and inviting people to [join services and other events](#) throughout Advent and Christmas.

The moving film follows the story of a woman who is supported by her local church through many Christmases over the course of her life – from first appearing in a nativity play as a child to growing up, marrying, seeing her own children grow up, facing bereavement and beyond.

It ends in a simple message: “Wherever you are on life’s journey, you’re invited to church this Christmas.”

The advert, which will feature across the Church of England’s channels on Instagram, TikTok, Facebook and Twitter, is part of the Church of England’s Christmas campaign: “Follow the Star – the Great Invitation”.

The campaign is geared towards people who might not normally – or ever – attend church.

It includes a plain-English explainer on [what to expect at church this Christmas](#) with answers to common questions which people may be too embarrassed to ask such as “How will I know what to do?”, “What should I wear?” and “What if I do not know all the words?”.

The advert also highlights how, alongside the joy and celebration, Christmas can be a very painful time for many people, especially those experiencing bereavement. This year’s campaign includes a special “Blue Christmas” service led by The Archbishop of York on Sunday 18 December, focusing on these themes.

There will also be prayers, reflections and an event on Christmas Day at 4pm aimed at anyone who is feeling alone as an opportunity to [gather online](#).

A range of resources are also available to help churches invite local communities into their services and events this year - from Christmas cards to social media graphics and carols to download and play.

Amaris Cole, the Church of England’s Head of Digital, said: “Our Advent and Christmas campaign this year has a clear message – you are welcome to celebrate with us and are invited to one of our services.

“There is no doubt that the last two Christmases have been incredibly difficult, with gatherings and services limited by Covid-19.

“So we’ve worked on resources to help churches issue the Great Invitation to their communities this December and welcome people back in – or to attend for the very first time.

“The Church of England’s social channels will be sharing messages of invitation, helpful posts that explain services and traditions to those considering church for the first time, and a range of famous faces sharing their favourite Christmas memories of church.

"Wherever you are, we hope to celebrate with you this year. Find your local services and events at [AChurchNearYou.com](https://www.churchnearyou.com)."

The Bishop of Ripon, Helen-Ann Hartley, said: "The message of this year's Christmas campaign, couldn't be simpler: we're there for you - in every community in England, and in our congregations across Europe and beyond.

"People have found the last few years very difficult and my prayer is that by coming together in worship this Christmas, we can find renewed hope and inspiration.

"Churches and chaplaincies across the country are getting ready to welcome you. From nativities for all the family, to moments of reflection for those finding it difficult. Take a look at A Church Near You to hear again the hope that the birth of Jesus Christ offers to everyone."

The Revd Steve Short, Rector of St Michael and St Mary's, Melbourne, Derbyshire, which was among the locations where the advert was filmed, said: "It was a great experience and such a privilege to host colleagues from the Church of England and support their making of this film. They had such passion, drive and joy for what they were doing, and it's such an exciting initiative.

"Follow the Star is fantastic anyway, but tying that in with The Great Invitation is really impactful: it brings together Christmas and back-to-church Sunday. Research shows that people just want to be invited to things, just as we are invited to follow Christ.

"The resources provided are very helpful, and the vision will reach many. It's been a real privilege to be involved in this. Thank you for giving our churches a platform."

The advert was filmed at:

- St Michael and St Mary's, Melbourne, Derbyshire
- St George's, Leeds
- St Giles Cripplegate, City of London

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