



d-new carol by Bob Chilcott

Uggi Kaldan

This Christmas, the Church of England is inviting choirs across churches, schools, and communities to 'join the song' alongside one of the country's leading choral composers in a new interpretation of the beloved carol 'The First Nowell' with a brand new melody.

The new carol has been written by acclaimed composer Bob Chilcott, and is the centrepiece of this year's Church of England Christmas focus: Follow The Star: Join The Song.

The theme for 2023 highlights how singing can help draw people closer to God and one another through the journey from Advent to Epiphany, with a wealth of free resources available for churches, schools and any context.

Choirs keen to be involved will have access to a suite of learning tracks, sheet music and other resources to help them prepare and learn the new carol alongside other resources to help churches engage in this year's theme. These can all be downloaded for free from the [Church Resource Hub](#). A free webinar is also being planned to help people to get the most from the resources and understand how to take part.

Bob Chilcott is a composer, conductor, and singer, whose career in choral music began as a chorister and choral scholar in the choir of King's College, Cambridge, after which he sang for 12 years as a member of the world-famous King's Singers ensemble. He became a full-time composer in 1997, and has produced a large catalogue of music for all types of choirs. His most often performed pieces include Can you hear me?, A Little Jazz Mass, Requiem, and the St John Passion and his music has been widely recorded by leading British choirs and groups including The King's Singers, King's College, Cambridge, The Sixteen, Tenebrae and The BBC Singers.

Speaking about the new carol, **Bob Chilcott said:** "It's been an absolute thrill for me to be able to write new music for the well-known carol, 'The First Nowell,' and to be a part of the 'Follow the Star' campaign at Christmas 2023. I have aimed to make this melody easy to pick up and I hope all will enjoy singing it, at a time of year when the joy of singing is so central to worship and to the celebration of Christmas."

**The Archbishops of Canterbury and York** write: "Singing is central to how many of us celebrate Christmas. Around the country – and the world – young and old will gather in churches, schools and concert halls, on high streets, hospital wards and village greens, to hear and sing carols.

"As we gather in worship this Christmas and join the song of the angels, may we all be drawn deeper into the wonder and the truth of Christmas: in the birth of Jesus, God becomes human, heaven embraces earth."

**Amaris Cole, the Church of England's Head of Digital said:** "We are delighted Bob has written this uplifting new carol for this year's Christmas theme. Now it's over to choirs from churches, chapels, cathedrals, schools and communities to bring it to life, and to be part of something very special!"

The carol is published by Oxford University Press and features as part of OUP's new edition of the favourite series, Carols for Choirs 6. Free sheet music and learning tracks may be downloaded via the Church of England's [Church Resource Hub](#). (new users will need to set up a free account, which is a very quick process).

## More information

Learn more about the theme, the new carol and further resources here: [Follow the Star: Join the Song - Resources for churches](#)

## Join our webinars

One of the key elements of the Join the Song campaign is to invite choirs and singing groups of all ages to learn and sing the carol.

We are running three webinars to help you get the most out of this year's campaign:

- Explore Join the Song resources to support your church: This webinar will offer information and ideas on how you can use the national branding, reflections and resources to help you to invite people to your church – both online and onsite. [Learn more and register for this webinar on Tuesday, 19 September.](#)
- Using Join the Song with under-18s: Find out how you can engage under-18s through singing our new setting of The First Nowell. Learn about the resources available for under 18s and get practical ideas for using them in schools, church or at home. [Sign up to join our webinar on Wednesday, 27 September.](#)
- Christmas 2023's digital resources unwrapped: Join the Digital Labs team for this interactive session to look at the resources available for this year's Christmas campaign. [Sign up to join the webinar on Wednesday, 11 October.](#)

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