



The Archbishops of Canterbury and York have warmly invited parishes, choirs, and congregations to take part in the premiere of a special new Christmas carol in 2023.

This new carol, a fresh interpretation of the famous words 'The First Nowell', has been composed by the esteemed composer Bob Chilcott, for use by choirs across the Church of England, and is free to download.

The mass carol premiere forms part of the Church of England's focus for Advent and Christmas 2023 'Follow the Star: Join the Song.'

The carol also features in the highly anticipated Carols for Choirs 6 volume, published by the Oxford University Press, which is now available.

In recent years, The Church of England has successfully engaged millions of individuals with the Christmas message through reflections, special events, music and resources to help more people to have the birth of Jesus Christ at the core of their Christmas celebrations.

This year's theme 'Follow the Star: Join the Song' emphasises the spiritual connection that singing can foster between individuals and God, as we journey from Advent to Epiphany, and the part that carol singing plays in many people's Christmas traditions.

In addition to encouragement to learn and perform the new carol, parishes and choirs can share performances on social media using the hashtag #FollowTheStar.

In a letter, the Archbishops write:

"We would love to see the carol feature in Christmas programming up and down the country, and we really hope that you will be willing to participate.

"As we prepare to celebrate the coming of the light of Christ into this dark world, may we share in God's joy together, joining the song of praise to our heavenly Lord."

They add that there are three calls to action for choirs interested in taking part:

"Learn: We're making the downloadable score, learning videos and backing tracks available free via cofe.io/Christmas.

"Sing! Most importantly sing and enjoy the new carol! We are encouraging every church to incorporate the Carol as part of your Christmas or Advent services. It is a gift to choirs and congregations so it is for you to use however you would like.

"Share: Let us know that you are intending to perform The First Nowell, and if you are able, share a video of the performance using the hashtag #FollowTheStar."

Further details about this year's 'Follow the Star: Join the Song' campaign can be found at[churchofengland.org/Christmas](https://www.churchofengland.org/Christmas).

More information

- [Read the Archbishops Letter about the new carol](#)

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