



the heart of their Christmas preparations.

While opening an Advent Calendar is an important part of the buildup to Christmas for many people, it can be hard to find one that depicts the real Christmas story.

Now, The Church of England has released its first ever printed Advent Calendar, inviting people to put the birth of Jesus at the heart of their Christmas preparations.

And the Follow The Star Advent Calendar goes beyond the conventional countdown, offering a creative and interactive experience focused on the Nativity. It is available online and in bookshops.

Children and adults are challenged to find the right sticker for each of the 24 days of Advent and then add it to an overall scene. They are then invited to go further with short story episode for each day, and free themed activities including a 'scratch' nativity play script.

The calendar forms part of the Church of England's 'Follow The Star' campaign for 2023, which also features a brand new Christmas Carol by composer Bob Chilcott which will be sung by choirs across the country, with the invitation 'Join the Song!' together with daily reflections from Christmas to Epiphany.

Launching the calendar, **The Bishop of Stockport, Sam Corley said:** "Advent Calendars are such a great way of building up excitement in the countdown to Christmas. But it isn't always easy to find a calendar that gets beyond robins and snowmen – or gifts such as chocolate, tea, whisky or even socks – to explore the real meaning of Christmas, let alone Advent as a time of preparation for the coming of Jesus Christ.

"By choosing the Church of England's Advent Calendar this year, we hope people and families will connect with the great joy and mystery of Advent in a fun and interactive way. They can also discover anew their place in the greatest story ever told, and how the earth-shattering arrival of God to earth in the birth of Jesus Christ is Good News for us, and for all the world."

The Advent Calendar is priced at £3.99 for a single calendar, or 10 for £35. It is [available now from Church House Publishing](#), and many outlets including Amazon and Waterstones.

It has been created for The Church of England by Clare Williams, Head of Schools & Family Learning at Norwich Cathedral, and Charlotte Cooke, a children's illustrator who has enjoyed seeing her books read on TV.

Featuring a fold-out, stand up crib scene, stickers for every day of Advent and a rhyming Nativity story sheet, it tells the story of how – and why – Jesus came to be born in Bethlehem.

[Free accompanying daily activities](#) and a Nativity play script inspired by the calendar are also available from the Church of England website.