

Choirs up and down the country will sing the new carol, released today across streaming platforms

The Church of England has released a Christmas single, as part of a campaign encouraging people to come to church, sing carols, and celebrate the real meaning of Christmas.

The song is a new version of the time-honoured text, *The First Nowell*, written by renowned composer, and former King's Singer, Bob Chilcott.

But it is a Christmas single like no other as, rather than just one artist, it will be performed by choirs up and down the country, as part of carol services and concerts for Christmas and Advent.

With performances planned in venues from Bethnal Green to Beverley, and from amateur choirs up to some of the country's finest cathedral choirs, the song will celebrate the tradition of singing carols, and the part it plays in people's Christmas celebrations.

A recording of the new carol has been released today and will be shared across digital platforms including Spotify, iTunes, Amazon Music and YouTube. It is performed by St Martin's Voices, with organ and brass quintet.

More than 3,000 people have signed up to sing the carol so far, with performances planned at Cathedrals including Chichester, Lincoln and Winchester. In addition a live performance will be broadcast on BBC One and iPlayer at Midnight on Christmas Eve from Portsmouth Cathedral, featuring musicians from the Royal Marines.

Meanwhile in Much Wenlock, Shropshire, the choir of Holy Trinity will be 'singing the good news' for all to hear. From the community carols in the town square, which close the town's wildly popular Christmas Fayre, to their annual carol service which will see the parish church packed to the rafters, the choir will be performing *The First Nowell* throughout December.

Choirmaster Brendon Quinn estimates that on Christmas Eve and Christmas Day alone, they will sing the new carol to over 1000 people. The Shropshire church choir is thriving, with 35 singers, aged between eight and 88, with particular attention paid to the development of young singers, and bringing new families into church through music and singing.

At the heart of the campaign is the simple message inviting everyone to attend a service near them – with thousands of local services listed on [AChurchNearYou.com](https://www.achurchnearyou.com), the website, which allows users to locate services in their area, with tags to help users find carols, mince pies, children's services and more.

Sheet music of the carol is also freely available for choirs wishing to perform it, together with learning tracks and individual parts.

The Bishop of Stockport, Sam Corley, said: "Singing carols is one of those traditions that helps us all get in the mood for Christmas and to think again about how our story connects with the story of God's longing to be with us.

With familiar words set to a new tune, we hope people will enjoy joining in with the angels to sing a song of celebration as we encounter afresh the Good News of the birth of Jesus Christ.

“So whether you are a regular or haven’t been for some time you are invited to come along to your local church, wherever you live, this Christmas.”

“And with LadBaby out of the running this year, who’s to say that a traditional carol couldn’t be Christmas number one?”

Proceeds from the single will be donated to the St Martin-in-the-Fields Charity, a UK-wide homelessness charity.

It is the second time the Church has released such a Christmas single, with a previous carol composed by Rebecca Dale topping the Classical Charts during December 2021.

The Church of England’s *‘Follow The Star’* campaign was first run in 2018, and is all about encouraging more people to come to church and hear the Christmas story.

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.

The campaign makes available a range of resources including daily reflections booklets, prayer cards and – for the first time – a printed Advent calendar, featuring the nativity. Much of the content is also available free via the recently update ***Follow the Star app***

In 2021, content for the campaign was viewed an estimated 31 million times on social media, with more than 24,000 services listed on [AChurchNearYou.com](https://www.churchofengland.org/media/press-releases/church-englands-christmas-single-sees-thousands-poised-join-song), with the website receiving 6.3 million page views during the Advent and Christmas period.

More information

- Listen to ***The First Nowell*** (YouTube)
- The sheet music is free to download from the [Church Resources Hub](https://www.churchofengland.org/media/press-releases/church-englands-christmas-single-sees-thousands-poised-join-song) (free login required)
- More information about ***Follow The Star: Join The Song***

Source URL: <https://www.churchofengland.org/media/press-releases/church-englands-christmas-single-sees-thousands-poised-join-song>