



More than 5,000 people are set to sing a new Christmas carol released by the Church of England.

A new version of the well-known carol *The First Nowell*, written by the composer Bob Chilcott, will be sung in churches and cathedrals across the country.

Performances are planned at Cathedrals including Chichester, Lincoln and Winchester. In addition a live performance will be broadcast on BBC One and iPlayer on Christmas Eve from Portsmouth Cathedral, featuring musicians from the Royal Marines.

A recording of the new carol, performed by St Martin's Voices, is being shared across digital platforms including Spotify, iTunes, Amazon Music and YouTube.

The single was released earlier this month as part of a campaign encouraging people to come to church, sing carols, and celebrate the real meaning of Christmas.

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

AChurchNearYou.com has shown 19,000 Christmas services registered so far by churches across the country, including more than 5,000 so far set to sing the carol.

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: "I am heartened to see so many churches and cathedrals signing up to sing the carol across the country. I know many thousands more will do so before Christmas Day. Singing carols is one of the great traditions at Christmas that so many people love. It helps us to find our place in the Christmas story and the message of hope that is the Christian faith."

Proceeds from the single will be donated to the [St Martin-in-the-Fields Charity](https://www.stmartin-in-the-fields.org.uk), a UK-wide homelessness charity.

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

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

More information

- Listen to *The First Nowell* (YouTube).
- The sheet music is free to download from the [Church Resources Hub \(free login required\)](#).
- More information about [Follow The Star: Join The Song](#).

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