



encouraging people to come to church this Christmas

The congregation of a parish church is to lead a national Church of England social media campaign encouraging people to come to church this Christmas, as more than 20,000 festive services are already registered across the country.

A group of people who attend St Paul's Church in St Albans, Hertfordshire, will feature in a series of 40-second 'You're invited to church' films, speaking about the joy of coming to church at Christmas and being part of a church community.

The advertisements, to be featured on Instagram, Twitter, Facebook and LinkedIn, will run up to Christmas Day and will encourage people to consult [AChurchNearYou.com](http://AChurchNearYou.com), the church finding website. to find a service in their community.

The series of short films also promotes the Church of England's Christmas carol release, a new version of The First Nowell, written by composer and former King's singer, Bob Chilcott.

The website so far has details of 22,000 Church of England services across the country for Advent and Christmas including carol services and services for Christmas Eve and Christmas Day.

Babatunde Idowu, whose family is featured in one of the films, says: "Church is a place of refuge, church is a place where you feed your heart and hear about God.

"It is a place where you go and connect with other like-minded people - people to support you even when you are down, it is just beautiful and when you sing the carols, it is always joyful."



Sandra Thompson, a congregation member living with cancer, (pictured above) in another short film, says: "It is a wonderful community here of people who will love you, support you and be with you. You have that hope that God provides that he is always with you. I love singing – so carols definitely.

"There is something about the joy and exuberance of singing about God coming into this world that I absolutely love."

Janice Entee, who features in a short film with her son Theodore, (pictured, below) says: "It is so easy to lose sight of why we are celebrating Christmas. To come together and sing and have carols, just centres us a bit, it transports us into the reason why we are here, the reason for the season, the reason for the celebration."

Sameer Kumar and Meeta Sonsati are featured with their baby Annicka. Sameer says: "It is all about getting people together. The best thing is people from all walks of life, people respect each other. It's just an amazing feeling, love and peace."

Meeta says: "I absolutely love the carol service, it's my favourite service of the year, it's really joyful and just kicks in the spirit of Christmas for me."

The Bishop of Stockport, Sam Corley, said: "These moving testimonies demonstrate powerfully how the Christian faith revealed in Jesus Christ is a message of love and hope that transforms lives and communities. And we want people to know that these gifts are on offer to them too.

"So we are inviting everyone to join us in church this Christmas and to explore their place in this amazing story we find ourselves in - that God is among us, and life will never be the same again."



Watch Janice and Theodore's short film below.

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**Source URL:** <https://www.churchofengland.org/media/press-releases/parish-church-head-christmas-social-media-campaign>