



gs College Chapel in Cambridge will have one significant difference: it

Image by Leon Hargreaves, courtesy of King's College Cambridge.

It's 3pm on Christmas Eve. As the light fades, a chorister steps forward in the world-famous King's College Chapel in Cambridge and sings the opening verse of *Once In Royal David's City*.

The service, which has been held at King's for more than a century, has been broadcast since 1928. For millions of people listening to the *Festival of Nine Lessons and Carols* around the world, this marks the beginning of Christmas.

This year's service will have one significant difference: it will be powered by solar panels.

Some 438 were installed on the roof of the historic building earlier this year after the roof was restored. They now provide all the chapel's electrical needs, with the excess being used in other college buildings.

Head of Capital Projects at the college, Shane Alexander, said: "The service will be powered by the PVs. It doesn't even have to be sunny for that to happen. It's rather satisfying for me. I have to pinch myself to see how we are changing this historic building for the right reasons."

The move has dramatically reduced the chapel's carbon footprint and will save the college a significant sum financially. The installation cost around £350,000. But in January 2023 alone, the college's utility bill was £184,000, £83,000 of which was spent on electricity. With sunlight powering the chapel – and putting around 5% into the college – those costs are set to fall.

Shane and his team are now considering ground source heat pumps to heat the chapel, meaning a future *Festival of Nine Lessons and Carols* could be held in an entirely carbon neutral building.

So, this Christmas Eve, as the dying winter light enlivens the stained-glass windows at King's College Chapel, it will also be powering the electricity for the *Festival of Nine Lessons and Carols*.

What's heard on the radio around the world, and seen on television, may look and sound the same, but behind the scenes there will have been a fundamental shift towards net zero carbon in one of the world's most famous buildings.

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