



Press release: 20 November 2017

Bath Abbey to welcome over 50,000 visitors this December

Bath Abbey is expecting over 50,000 people through their doors this December between Advent Sunday and Christmas Day.

Just in terms of visitor figures, the Abbey welcomed 29,172 people last December, a 20% increase on December 2015. In addition to this, approximately a further 23,000 attended church services during this festive period.

Christmas is a wonderful time of year with plenty happening at Bath Abbey to mark this very special season. From carol-singing to spectacular choral concerts, including the widely-popular Advent Procession, the Abbey hosts around 40 different Christmas services and three huge Christmas concerts.

During the Bath Christmas market (23 November to 9 December), Festive Tower Tours give shoppers the opportunity to climb the 212 steps to the top of the Abbey Tower in order to enjoy a bird's eye view of the market. Visitors and Bath residents alike can also get into the festive spirit with Shoppers Carols at 1pm, 2pm, 3pm and 4pm every Saturday while the Christmas Market is on.

Attendance for special services, such as the Advent Procession, Nine Lessons and Carols, and Carol Praise on Christmas Eve, sees the Abbey filled to capacity.

Revd Stephen Girling from Bath Abbey said: "The Abbey is very busy every day from Advent Sunday until Christmas Day. Visitors come to enjoy the festive atmosphere and local schools, community groups and members of the Abbey community attend our numerous Christmas services. We can seat over 1,000 people in the Abbey and for our most popular services such as the Advent Procession, we have to ticket the service to help us with our preparations.

"We also have Shoppers Carols four times a day on Saturdays during the Bath Christmas market when each service attracts 500-700 people. The busiest and most poignant moments in the Abbey are on Christmas Eve and Christmas Day. With four services on Christmas Eve and another three on Christmas Day, it's our delight to share worship with thousands. This year those numbers are magnified as the Christmas Day service on Radio 4 will be a broadcast from Bath Abbey.

"The combination of services, rehearsals and the relatively small space of the Abbey makes December a very busy but amazing time for us especially as we try to make each person important and each service special. Everyone has a great time and there's genuine community spirit with giving and receiving and plenty of Christmas joy."

To find out more about how you can join in the festivities at Bath Abbey and enjoy Christmas carols in the Abbey's beautiful surroundings, please see below or visit www.bathabbey.org/christmas2017

FESTIVE TOWER TOURS

Every 45 mins during the Bath Christmas market (23 Nov-9 Dec) Mon-Thu 1.30-6pm, Fri & Sat 12-7.30pm. No tours on Sundays. Get away from the crowds and into a festive mood as you climb the 212 steps to the top of the Abbey's Tower. Enjoy a bird's eye view of the Christmas market and a brief tour of the inner

workings of the Abbey's historic bells and clock. **Tickets: Adult £6, Child (5-15 yrs) £3. Includes free mulled wine or hot chocolate at the top.**

SHOPPERS CAROLS

Saturday 25 Nov, Saturday 2 Dec and Saturday 9 Dec 1pm, 2pm, 3pm and 4pm

An informal 20-minute service with traditional carols. Ideal for weary shoppers and those seeking some festive cheer.

All welcome, no reserved seating or tickets required.

FESTIVE CONCERTS

Handel's Messiah

Friday 1 Dec and Saturday 2 Dec 7.30pm

Bath Choral Society's annual and ever-popular performance of Handel's Messiah with the Bristol Ensemble, conducted by David Gostick.

Tickets: £6-£30 Available from Bath Box Office 01225 463362

***A Christmas Celebration with the Abbey Choir and Melody Makers**

Saturday 9 Dec 7pm

A festive selection of well-known and much loved Christmas classics for choir, organ and audience. Featuring the Abbey Choir of Girls, Boys and Men, and the Abbey's youngest Choir of 6-11 year olds, the Melody Makers and directed by Huw Williams, Director of Music, Bath Abbey. Organists - Shean Bowers and Sebastian Thomson. Audience participation required!

Tickets: £8, £12, £15 £18, (plus concessions)

Available from Bath Box Office 01225 463362 www.bathboxoffice.org.uk

***La Nativité – Messiaen**

Sunday 17 Dec 6.30pm

A liturgical meditation with organist Shean Bowers, Bath Abbey's Assistant Director of Music and readings. Messiaen's passionate Christian faith shines through in these exquisite and exotic musical meditations on the Nativity and the life of Jesus. The wonderful colours of this world famous Klais organ will enhance this spiritual experience. The performance will be atmospheric and uplifting and it will be framed by readings from Scripture.

All welcome, no reserved seating or tickets required.

SPECIAL SERVICES

An Advent Procession with Abbey Girls' and Men's Choirs

Sunday 3 Dec 6.30pm

One of the most popular services of the Abbey's year. Join us for an atmospheric service with music and readings to mark the beginning of Advent.

Entry is by (free) ticket only. An application form can be downloaded from the website or is available from the Abbey office.

***Family Carol Services**

Sunday 17 Dec 3pm and 4.15pm

Children are invited to come dressed as a shepherd, angel, wise man or citizen of Bethlehem to create a festive Christmas tableau. Features a real donkey.

All welcome, no reserved seating so please arrive early to avoid disappointment.

Festival of Nine Lessons and Carols with Abbey Boys' and Men's Choirs

Saturday 23 Dec 7pm

All are welcome to join us for this beautiful service based around nine Bible readings interspersed with Christmas hymns and carols sung by the Abbey Choirs of Boys and Men.

Entry is by (free) ticket only. An application form can be downloaded from the website or is available from the Abbey office.

CHRISTMAS EVE

Holy Communion 8am

A said service of Holy Communion, using traditional language.

Parish Eucharist 10am

For the Fourth Sunday of Advent.

***Carol Praise 4pm and 6pm**

An informal service for all the family full of festive fun and traditional carols. Includes 'Twelve Days of Christmas' with all the actions!

All welcome, no reserved seating or tickets required but we expect the Abbey to be full to capacity so please arrive early.

Midnight Communion with Abbey Girls' and Men's Choir 11pm

Be there at the very start of Christmas. A celebration of Christ's birth, and with him the birth of new hope for the world.

All welcome, no reserved seating or tickets required.

CHRISTMAS DAY

Holy Communion 8am

A said service of Holy Communion, using traditional language.

Family Communion 9.30am

Celebrate 'God with us' at this informal service, suitable for all ages. Music led by the Abbey Boys' Choir.

Sung Eucharist for Christmas 11.15am

Preacher, The Bishop of Bath and Wells. Music led by the Abbey Girls' and Men's Choir.

VISITOR OPENING HOURS

The large number of special events and services taking place in November and December means that the Abbey will be closed to visitors at certain times. For details of opening hours please visit our website or contact the Abbey Office on 01225 422462.

THE ABBEY SHOP

A wide selection of Christmas cards, candles, tree decorations, nativity sets, CDs, books and gifts. Open Mon-Sat 10am-4.30pm with late opening during the Bath Christmas market.

- End -

Notes to editors:

For further information please contact Elaine Teh or Lucy Ryder, Communications Officer, on 01225 303320 or comms@bathabbey.org.

- Visitor figures are calculated using an automated counting device at the North West entrance while church service attendance is based on an estimated head count made by a member of staff.
- In December 2016, 29,172 visitors came into the Abbey through the North West entrance compared to 23,272 in December 2015.
- Abbey hosts around 40 different Christmas services and three huge Christmas concerts. This figure includes the Abbey's own carol services to which all are welcome to attend, ticketed services and concerts as well as closed services for local schools, local organisations and charities from 25 November to 25 December 2017.

About Bath Abbey

Bath Abbey is a flourishing Church of England parish church which technically serves a small city centre parish (Bath Abbey with St James). This parish has a small residential population and primarily consists of commercial properties; and most of the regular congregation and the 692 people on the electoral roll live in other parishes or come from outside the city of Bath. The Abbey holds daily services of morning or evening prayer or Holy Communion; and the standard pattern of Sunday worship is for five daily services attended on average by 630 people. Special services at Advent, Christmas and Easter are well attended; and many local organisations hold annual services in the Abbey. The Abbey has four choirs: Men's, Boys' and Girls' choirs support worship in services; whilst Melody Makers is a choir for younger children which performs in concerts in the Abbey once a term and at other events in and around Bath. The Abbey runs a successful Schools Singing Programme, an outreach activity which supports singing within local schools and holds regular workshops and concerts in the Abbey. The Abbey welcomes approximately 400,000 visitors annually and is open daily all year round; many of these visitors being families and school parties. Apart from being a place of prayer, worship, weddings and funerals, the Abbey has an important role as a visitor destination, a performance space (for audiences anywhere between 10 and 1,000), a general civic space and an exhibition space. www.bathabbey.org

About Bath Abbey's Footprint

The £19.3 million Footprint project aims to carry out essential repairs to the Abbey's collapsing floor, install a new eco-friendly heating system using Bath's unique hot springs as a source of energy and enlarge capacity by creating 200 sq metres of new facilities to fulfil the Abbey as a place of congregation, equal access and hospitality. A programme is also planned to record and interpret the Abbey's 1,200 years of history and this iconic church for millions of visitors including educational visits. www.bathabbey.org/footprint