

12 November 2008

Dear Colleague

Thank you for taking time to read this letter. No doubt you already have a full diary of Christmas events, but an excellent opportunity has just arisen which we would encourage you to be involved in if at all possible.

Sing Christmas is collaboration between the churches and BBC local radio and has been tried and tested in the Manchester and Leicester areas over the past six years. It has now been agreed that the Sing Christmas community carol service will take place on Monday 22nd December being broadcast live across Devon, Cornwall and the Channel Islands. The programme, which goes out at 8pm, will include traditional carols, the Christmas readings, interviews with Christians in the local community and some interactive elements for listeners to engage with. It will last for about an hour.

The concept is simple. Local Christians offer to 'host' the event in a local pub, café, residential home, community centre, or in their own homes. The 'hosts' encourage participation in the carol singing and provide the necessary resources for the participatory activities – which will include pulling crackers, lighting candles, writing prayers. All the venue needs is the ability to receive BBC local radio. When the broadcast is finished the 'hosts' then have an excellent opportunity to engage with other people in the venue, to talk about the real meaning of Christmas, or hand out invitations to Christmas services.

This is a simple, but effective piece of mission in the community. People who would not normally attend a carol service will have the opportunity to participate in an informal setting. Christians who long to feel they are making connections locally, have everything laid on for them. The BBC will announce the biggest carol service in the south west ... ever!

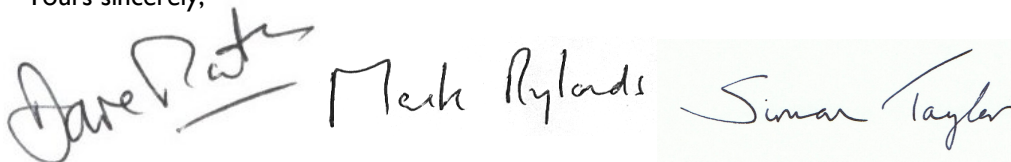
The programme outline, invitations, posters and carol sheets will be available to download from the BBC website (bbc.co.uk/devon/faith) Further information about the whole event and guidelines for churches can be obtained from Dave Martin at singchristmas@gmail.com or 07593 911143. If you want to see how it has worked elsewhere take a look at www.singchristmas.org.uk

We have already heard of churches working together in a variety of venues: The Berry Head Hotel in Brixham, The Volunteer pub in Yealmpton, the village square in South Molton and outside the Crown Centre in Stonehouse, Plymouth. We would love to be able to broadcast live from some of the venues, so please let us know if you are planning an event. Soon you should also be able to register participation in Sing Christmas on the BBC website given above.

It is not often that such a straight forward mission opportunity presents itself. Please do consider being part of Sing Christmas.

Whether you are able to be involved directly or not, please do pray that through this opportunity more people will come to understand the wonderful message of God with us – Jesus the Saviour.

Yours sincerely,



Dave Martin, Mark Rylands & Simon Taylor
On behalf of the Devon Hope 08 Planning Group