

Church turns to advertising

Kirkheaton rector brings ad campaign to town

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A RELIGIOUS bus stop advertising campaign has come to town with the help of a local vicar.

Kirkheaton Parish Church has joined in the national 'Christmas begins with Christ' poster campaign.

The move by ChurchAds.net comes shortly after the controversial atheist bus campaign that began in London last year.

The bus-based adverts said 'There's probably no God. Now stop worrying and enjoy your life'.

Christian churches are now hitting back with their own marketing in a bid to swell their congregations around Christmas.

And it's got the backing of Rev Richard Steel of Kirkheaton Parish Church.

The campaign has installed poignant posters featuring Christian art work at more than 600 sites around the country, the latest of which is on a bus shelter near Waterloo Rise on Wakefield Road.

The billboard shows Jesus, Mary and Joseph in a bus stop, rather than a stable, with shoppers all around.

Rector of Kirkheaton, Rev Richard Steel was involved in coming up with the idea.

He said: "It's an opportunity to catch the eye of those who don't come to a church service.

"It's an intriguing design which I hope will stick in people's minds and get them thinking.

"Being in such a prominent site on a busy road means that hundreds, if not thousands, of people will get to see it.

"The poster has both a traditional and contemporary feel.

"Jesus, Mary and Joseph have halos, but they have shopping bags rather than donkeys and sheep at their feet.

"In the picture, some of the passers-by are looking on with interest, obviously intrigued, and others are more concerned about the bus timetable, or rushing past to get home.

"I think that highlights the mixed reaction to Christmas today.

"The fact that the scene is a cold one, with Joseph in a duffle coat and snow and icicles around, is an extra connection to our current weather and may make people smile."

The campaign was launched last year, and now has the backing of hundreds of churches around the country.



■ **CHURCH CAMPAIGN:** Rev Richard Steel of Kirkheaton with the church advertising poster at Wakefield Road, Waterloo and, left, the atheist campaign in London

Mike Elms, former CEO of advertising agency Ogilvy and Mather, and trustee of ChurchAds.Net, added: "For years churches across the UK have produced posters to promote Christmas, but no one has attempted to run a fully national

campaign, with a long-lasting slogan that runs and builds year on year."

Rev Steel's poster campaign can be seen at Sunnymead in Scissett, Peel Street and High Street in Huddersfield Town Centre, Heckmondwike and Cleckheaton.