

Press Release

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Regarding the CHRISTMAS NATIVITY SCENE At the FLORIDA STATE CAPITOL ROTUNDA

*“Glory to God in the highest,
And on earth peace, goodwill toward men”*

AN OPEN LETTER

For the last two years we have placed a **Christmas Nativity display in the Rotunda of the Florida State Capitol**. This has been to honor the true meaning of Christmas to millions of Christians- the birth of Jesus Christ and to exercise our freedom of religion, not freedom from it in the public square.

The Nativity scene was placed along with a Christmas tree and Jewish Menorah that had been displayed for years. The site of the baby Jesus, born in a Manger, brought out all kinds of protest displays and someone who tore down a protest display and was arrested. Some people misunderstand our freedoms in this nation, especially the freedom of a privately sponsored religious display in a government building. We are thankful that the Florida State Capitol is still an open forum. The Nativity is still welcome to be displayed in the Rotunda.

Our nation is in great grief and turmoil right now due to multiple mass-shootings that have taken place, people grieving their lost loved ones due to senseless violence, racial tensions growing across the nation, anger, fear and despair have gripped our county. Terror attacks across the nations and our concern for our own safety have left people feeling hopeless. America is in desperate need of God’s help! **We need to love God, love one another again, have hope and peace in our hearts, to act kindly and be civil to one another - this is the message of the Nativity!** Millions of Christians across Florida, our nation and the nations celebrate the birth of Christ our Savior, the Prince of Peace! We are still free in this nation to celebrate the holidays in whatever way we chose! For those of us who are Christians, we freely celebrate the birth of Jesus Christ, our Savior and Lord!

After much prayer, I truly want the **message of Christ, The Son of God, born in a manger so long ago in Bethlehem**, to be **heard** very clearly at this difficult time, instead of the dissension in the Capitol rotunda – **This is not the year for that kind of debate in our rotunda! We pray that Christ’s message of hope and peace will be communicated in a much stronger way this year from Florida’s State capitol, by us NOT placing the Nativity in the rotunda;** not because we are backing down from our freedoms to place a nativity scene at the capitol, or because we are giving in to the protestors (nothing could be further from the truth), but out of our love for people to truly enjoy what this season is all about and to experience the love, peace, hope and redemption that Christ came to bring to all in this desperate hour of history in America. We also want to affirm that we stand with those who are still placing Nativities in their Capitols, which is their right. We may place a Nativity in the Rotunda again but not this Christmas. We are not retreating; we will continue to take a stand at Florida’s Capitol for religious freedom in the public square that our Constitution affords us! May God heal our hearts and heal our nation!

May we may rejoice and truly take to heart the message the angel spoke that night in Bethlehem to the shepherds! This is the **Christmas Story from Luke 2:11-14**.

“ For there is born to you this day in the city of David a Savior, who is Christ the Lord. And this will be the sign to you: You will find a Babe wrapped in swaddling cloths, lying in a manger. And suddenly there was with the angel a multitude of the heavenly host praising God and saying: Glory to God in the highest, And on earth peace, goodwill toward men!”

Merry Christmas!

*Praying for healing of our State, our Nation and the Nations,
Pam Olsen, President, Florida Prayer Network*