

# The War on Christmas

## Activists:



- A curmudgeon in Warwick, New York, kicked up a fuss about a “Breakfast with Santa” fundraiser held each year by the PTA of Sanfordville Elementary School. One parent claimed that the popular fundraiser, which is held on a Saturday and is completely optional, is offensive to non-Christians because it includes a visit from Santa Claus. In an attempt to accommodate the parent’s concerns, the PTA agreed to change the name of the event to “Winter Wonderland Breakfast” and incorporate Hanukkah traditions among the activities. This, however, did not satisfy the parent who still took issue with the fundraiser, saying, “This shouldn’t be just for one person or two person’s religions... I wanted to represent all, not just a few.” The superintendent of Warwick schools had amiably offered to don a Frosty the Snowman suit in an attempt to add more winter-themed characters to the breakfast. His generosity, though, was not rewarded. He received a letter from a local attorney charging that, “The District should, at a minimum, modify the events to avoid potential litigation.” The superintendent later indicated that he should have seen the problem with a “Breakfast with Santa” earlier on.
- American Atheists, Inc. of Connecticut petitioned officials in the Town of Griswold to end a practice by which the government plays music from speakers connected to the top of a local church. Ten years ago, the local government purchased the sound system and worked out an agreement with the church, whereby the church allowed the government to install the system in the steeple. Throughout the years, the music of bells has been emitted from the speakers. During the Christmas season, secular songs as well as religious songs like “Away in a

Manger” have been on rotation. American Atheists took offense to the music, and demanded that the local government sell the speakers to the church, and then proceed to monitor the volume of the music. As one man complained, “It’s against the Constitution... It needs to be silenced.”

- The ACLU of Tennessee filed a new lawsuit against the Wilson County School System. The ACLU had accused Lakeview Elementary School in Mt. Juliet of improperly endorsing religion. Among the problems the group had with the school is that at a past Christmas pageant, students role-played the birth of Christ and sang the songs “Away in a Manger” and “Joy to the World.”
- ACLU of Idaho Executive Director Jack Van Valkenburgh criticized Wal-Mart for wishing shoppers a Merry Christmas. Van Valkenburgh had this to say of the retailer: “I think it’s a little insensitive personally and I think it would be better if they had a more inclusive message.”
- Americans United for Separation of Church and State Executive Director Barry Lynn charged Wal-Mart with showing religious bias by acknowledging the Christmas holiday. Lynn seems to think that non-Christians are intolerant of others and will be unable to stomach seeing Christians celebrate their faith. He said of the retail giant, “they are really making a statement that non-Christians should probably go elsewhere this holiday season.”

## **Education:**

- Student Affairs leaders at Northeastern University in Boston called the campus’s Christmas tree a “holiday tree.”
- Administrators at New Jersey’s Bear Tavern School banned

not only religious decorations, such as the crèche and the menorah, but secular decorations like Santa Claus and Christmas trees as well. The principal released four new guidelines:

- *1) All December parties need to be winter celebrations and not celebrations of holidays.*
  - *2) All holiday decorations should be changed in favor of winter decorations. Santa Claus, Christmas trees and menorahs are all holiday-specific decorations.*
  - *3) The holiday sing along will be discontinued as it has been at other schools. If anyone has a suggestion for an alternative, please let me know.*
  - *4) Films shown on the last day before break should not be about the holidays and should be curriculum-related*
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- The superintendent of New York State's Goshen School District was so afraid of offending rabid secularists that he banned religious music from school concerts. Explaining that even if a diverse array of music representing many religions was performed, the superintendent said atheists would still be offended. He stated, "Our concerts mix classical pieces with secular winter songs.... We are not representing any holiday." The superintendent admitted that his policy was unpopular, and explained: "Unfortunately, we try very hard not to offend people, but in our attempt not to offend, we offend people. We try to encompass and be sensitive to everyone's wishes. By doing that, we offend others." He offered no explanation as to why a small minority of groups must be appeased, while the majority of people who have no problem with most religious celebrations (of their own faith or of another faith) are not worthy of consideration.
  - Many of Virginia's public schools refused to acknowledge

Christmas on their calendars. According to the *Richmond Times-Dispatch*, “A spot check of calendars for 40 school systems (of the state’s 134) found only five rural counties still using the terms ‘Christmas holiday’ or ‘Christmas break.’”

- Management of Crane Middle School in Yuma, Arizona was so afraid of offending someone that they stripped holiday celebrations of any meaning. The school didn’t focus on any particular event, whether secular or religious. As the principal explained, “It’s a festive time, but we just try to be festive—not in a religious sense.” She offered no explanation for what makes the end of December such a festive time.
- The principal of Ohio’s New Albany Intermediate Elementary School ordered “Silent Night” and “Hoyo, Haya” (a Hanukkah song) removed from a student concert. One parent had complained about the line “Christ the Savior is born” in “Silent Night.”
- School officials at New York’s Unity Drive Elementary School censored students’ work. According to the American Center for Law and Justice, the students in one class were given materials and the homework assignment of decorating a Christmas ornament to be displayed at school. When one young boy made an ornament depicting a cross and the words, “The Reason for the Season: Jesus,” his work was not displayed along with the others. Instead, it was deemed too religious and the boy was instructed to create a new, secular ornament.
- Administrators at Rensselaer Polytechnic Institute in Troy, New York renamed the staff Christmas party a holiday party, and then renamed it once again a year-end party.
- The principal of an elementary school in Delray Beach, Florida had a need to show how inclusive she was. That’s

why she had no Christmas tree, nativity scene or menorah in her office. Instead, her office was adorned with teddy bears wearing sweaters. Moreover, only “winter parties” and “winter celebrations” were tolerated. “We’re very careful about this,” she said.

- Michigan’s Howell Public School District limited the number of religious songs that can be performed at school concerts. According to a 10-year-old policy, at least 70 percent of the music must be secular. As one choir director, frustrated at his limited selection, said, “I just find the whole thing disturbing that we’re not able to do all the literature I’d like to do.”
- At Brandeis Elementary School in Louisville, Kentucky a teacher asked her students to make a Christmas tree out of paper; it was put on her bulletin board. But when a Jewish teacher said she was offended, she complained to the principal, Shervita West-Jordan, and got her wish. According to a news report, “She, and the teacher who complained, were bothered by the fact that the tree was made up of hands which represented all the students in the class. “Both the teacher and the principal were angry over the words, “Santa’s Helpers,” that were placed over the tree. “Of course, the children in her classroom that were Indian and Muslim probably did not believe in Santa Claus,” Jordan said. They were not “Santa’s Helpers,” she insisted. She said the tree could stay but the words had to go. She suggested “Holiday Helpers” or “Winter Helpers,” because that would “make it a little more inclusive.” Instead of instructing the teacher on her need to practice tolerance, the principal rewarded her for her intolerance.
- At Missouri State University, the Office of Multicultural Student Services did not list Christmas as part of its December celebrations: but it did list Kwanzaa, which they unfortunately thought was spelled

Kwanza. They celebrate Hispanic Heritage Month from mid-September to mid-October; October is Gay and Lesbian Month; and Native American Heritage Month captures November.

- At SUNY Buffalo, they held a Holiday Carnival, which included “a Hanukkah table, Kwanzaa, Boxing Day [this is a Canadian holiday], St. Nick’s Day and Kings Day.” There were also red and green cookies for the nostalgic, and chicken was served at the Kwanzaa table.
- At Delaware College of Art and Design, they believed in diversity so much that “to help set the holiday mood,” says Lynda Schmid, director of admissions, “students make multisided solids based out of various materials, including paper and copper.”
- Penn State was clearly the most sensitive campus during the Christmas season. Patreese Ingram had a title that was just perfect for censoring Christmas: she is an Associate Professor of Diversity Education. She cautioned that we need to be careful when planning a holiday party. For example, “Try to avoid dates that may conflict with important dates in other cultures and religions.” Also, “Try to keep decorations neutral, with symbols—flowers, balloons, candles and snowflakes—that can be enjoyed by most people.” Best of all was her advice about eating and drinking: Remember, she said, “pork is forbidden for Jewish and Muslim people. Shellfish is prohibited for Jewish people and beef is not eaten by Hindus. While coffee, tea and caffeinated soda may seem ‘safe,’ members of the Latter Day Saints (Mormons) and Seventh-Day Adventists are prohibited from consuming caffeine. Therefore, juice may be an acceptable choice.”
- New York State’s Yorktown Central School District Board of Education refused a couple’s generous offer to donate

a crèche to each of its public schools. Though the lobbies of the schools were decorated annually with menorahs and Kwanzaa decorations, only a Christmas tree was permitted to represent this major Christian holiday.

- Educators at Windmill Point Elementary in Port St. Lucie, Florida nixed a pageant called "A Penguin Christmas." Administrators at the school decreed that no mention of "Christmas" was permitted as part of any holiday celebrations. As one frustrated mother asked, "My child learns about Kwanzaa and dreidels... Why can't they sing about Santa and Rudolph?"
- New Jersey's K-8 Howell School District and Board of Education refused to allow nativity scenes among the schools' holiday displays, despite the requests of parents.

### **Equal Opportunity Offenders:**

*It is not just Christmas displays and celebrations that are stifled. Often, curmudgeons are opposed to public displays of any faith.*

- The Nyack Library in Nyack, New York turned down an Orangetown resident's offer of a crèche to accompany two menorahs in the library. At the same meeting in which the man's offer was declined, library officials also passed a resolution to prohibit all holiday religious symbols.
- Government leaders in Olean, New York refused to allow religious displays in the town's park. In 1995, the common council voted to ban all such decoration.
- Officials in Fort Collins, Colorado banned any religious symbols from the city's holiday displays. While the secular Christmas tree was permitted, a group requesting to erect a menorah was denied. (The group was permitted

to hold a lighting ceremony on city property before moving it to be housed in a local pub.) One city councilman explained why there was a ban on religious symbols: “we are just not trying to have the city in the middle of what can and cannot be displayed.”

- City Council members in Willis Park, Georgia denied a couple’s proposal to erect a nativity scene in the park. A majority of the council members decided they did not want religious displays installed on the public property.
- Officials in Southfield, Michigan removed a menorah from the city’s holiday display after requests were made to include a crèche as well. Rather than allow diverse religious symbols to be erected, city leaders preferred to display secular symbols such as toy soldiers and deer.

#### **Government Bodies:**

- City officials in Safety Harbor, Florida removed a nativity scene from City Hall grounds after receiving a complaint about it, but permitted a neighboring menorah to stay put.
- Officials in Washington State’s Department of General Administration permitted a menorah to be displayed in the Capitol Building, but not a crèche. According to the Associated Press, “officials were concerned that in comparison with a tree or menorah, a Nativity scene might carry a stronger impression of government endorsement of religion.”
- The U.S. Department of State restricted the content of the “seasonal cards” sent by ambassadors. While the ambassadors were permitted to use government funds to purchase and mail the cards, they were not allowed to send out anything of a religious nature. According to

the state department's memo on the issue, "any messages or images on the cards should be secular in nature (such as 'season's greetings' or pictures of wreaths, wintry scenes, snowmen or Santa Claus) and should not convey religious themes or messages."

- In Briarcliff Manor, New York, village officials put up a Christmas tree and a menorah, but balked at a request by an 80-year-old man to add a crèche (paid for by him). So he sued. In federal court, a judge ruled in his favor. Instead of adding the nativity scene to the display, officials in the Westchester town took everything down. "The Village erected a Menorah and a Christmas tree display in a spirit of inclusion," officials said. They did nothing of the sort: they gave Jews a religious symbol and Christians a secular one, and when they were told to treat both groups equally they instead elected to demonstrate intolerance towards both. That's their idea of neutrality—censor everyone equally.
- A city employee in Riverside, California was afraid of "God Rest Ye Merry Gentlemen" being deemed offensive. While Olympic figure skater Sasha Cohen was skating at a local rink, a high-school choir started singing the Christmas classic, immediately sending a city employee into orbit. The employee summoned a cop and got him to institute a gag rule: he ordered the choir to stop singing. Baldwin maintained that because Cohen is Jewish, she would be upset by the carol. But the city employee never bothered to ask the skater if she objected. As it turns out, Cohen couldn't have cared less. As usual, those who say we must be careful not to offend non-Christians at Christmastime are the ones who object to Christmas—not those whom they falsely claim to represent.
- Bureaucrats at an airport in Seattle removed Christmas

trees from a terminal, after the trees had been erected each Christmas for the last 25 years. When a local rabbi threatened a lawsuit if the airport did not erect a menorah as well, airport authorities opted to get rid of the trees. After much public outcry, the rabbi agreed not to file a lawsuit, and the airport restored the trees.

- Officials in Hernando County, Florida were too afraid to call the decorated evergreen on the portico of the courthouse a Christmas tree. Instead, they insisted it was a holiday tree. One woman decorating the tree with red, white and blue ribbons explained, "It's not a Christmas tree... It shouldn't offend anybody."
- A town manager in Holden, Massachusetts stated that he would approve a menorah for display on town property (provided safety and other requirements were met), but not a crèche. According to the town manager, the menorah is "secular enough" to be permitted, but a nativity scene is not.
- Officials in Bay Harbor Islands, Florida removed Hanukkah decorations from the town's lampposts rather than add Christmas decorations to the mix. According to Christian Newswire, a Christian activist named Sondra Snowdon went to court in order to erect a nativity scene outside of the town square (a menorah was already on display) and add the Christmas symbols to the lampposts. Though a judge ruled in her favor, lamppost decorations were removed entirely and Snowdon paid for the crèche herself, while taxpayer dollars were used to maintain the menorah. In addition, Snowdon maintained that the town passed an ordinance stating that she would be arrested if she were to hold any ceremony (such as a blessing or prayer service) by the crèche. However, for the past five years a rabbi was permitted to hold a small prayer service by the menorah.

- Organizers of the Hillsboro, New Hampshire “Old Fashioned Christmas” celebration cancelled a portion of the evening that was to take place at the local Valley Bible Chapel. The festivities were originally set to include a Christmas tree lighting ceremony, followed by tea at the church and a reading of “The Night Before Christmas.” However, when the chapel’s pastor asked to read the Christmas story from the Gospels as well, those in charge cancelled the tea altogether. As one member of the civic organization Hillsboro Pride (which co-sponsored the “Old Fashioned Christmas” with the Chamber of Commerce) explained, the people at the chapel “didn’t want to do it unless it had Jesus’ name in there... We didn’t want to get involved in any religious stuff, to keep it as neutral as we can for everyone.” A Chamber of Commerce member elaborated, “A lot of people celebrate Christmas but are not Christian... and a lot of Christians celebrate Christmas and don’t go near a church. We’re trying not to leave people out because of their specific religious leanings.”
- Commissioners in Tippecanoe County, Indiana barred nativity scenes from the courthouse lawn. Though charities and organizations were permitted to erect displays, the commissioners decided in 1999 that they would determine what was acceptable for gracing the lawn and what wasn’t. (Prior to 1999, nativity scenes were acceptable.) Ribbons calling attention to drug abuse and ceramic animals were both permitted, but crèches were verboten.
- City officials in St. Albans, West Virginia erected a manger scene minus the Holy Family and the Wise Men. Visitors to the St. Albans City Park were treated to the bizarre sight of a lit-up stable containing statues of sheep, camels and a star. Asked about the lack of the baby Jesus, the park’s superintendent stated, “We try to

explain that by law we can't do that. We have been advised by the [city] council not to get into that." He further reported that the city was trying to avoid controversy or any complaints from the ACLU. After being deluged with complaints, the mayor of St. Albans announced that a figure of the baby Jesus was added to the manger scene.

- Reynoldsburg, Ohio town officials removed the nativity scene from the town's annual Christmas light display. Though the manger, donated by the local Vineyard Community Church, was among the decorations for the last five years, complaints from naysayers led to the mayor deciding there would be no religious symbols at all, rather than open the door to people of other religions requesting that their symbols be erected as well. (One local man, a critic of the Nativity scene, had suggested that the Hindu symbol for good fortune, a right-facing swastika, should be permitted if a crèche is permitted.)
- City officials in Chicago dropped New Line Cinema's new film "The Nativity Story" as a sponsor of the Christkindlmarket Christmas festival and then sent mixed-messages about the reason behind this decision. The city's executive director of special events originally advised the festival's organizers, the German American Chamber of Commerce, that allowing New Line to show scenes from the upcoming film would be "insensitive to the many people of different faiths" who attend the event (the name of which, in German, means "Christ child market"). City leaders then claimed that New Line's sponsorship was dropped because it would violate city guidelines calling for events to "refuse or reduce any blatant commercial message."
- The Berkley, Michigan City Council voted to remove a nativity scene that had stood in front of city hall for 65 years. The council acted after the ACLU threatened a

lawsuit. There was a lot of blame to go around. First, there was the ACLU, an organization so terrified of religion that it has actually expressed anger over a nine-foot statue of Jesus that is located on the ocean floor off the coast of Key Largo. Second, there were the spineless residents and clergymen in the area who liked the idea of giving the nativity scene to the Berkley Clergy Association for display on church property (it was one of three options on the table); in doing so, they handed a victory to the ACLU. Third, there was the bogus argument made by the mayor, Marilyn Stephan, who said, "It's a risk to the safety of the crèche. We want Santa to come and do the Christmas tree lighting and for the safety of all who come, you can't have all that stuff around." The stuff—baby Jesus, Mary and Joseph—has been in the same spot for 65 years, without incident. Fourth, there was the concern, expressed by some city officials, that the cost of litigation might prove prohibitive: six organizations, including the Thomas More Law Center, agreed to accept the case pro bono (the only reasonable concern was that if the town lost, it would have to pay the ACLU's legal fees).

- Bureaucrats in Colorado government dictated what the University of Colorado's faculty may call its staff parties. State auditors decreed that state money was not to be used to celebrate religious holidays. However, according to the school's spokesman, "Departments can spend a little bit of money at the end of the semester for a staff appreciation party, but the motivation cannot be the holiday itself." In other words, if, say, the philosophy department wanted to dip into the petty cash to buy some eggnog and a cheese platter during December, that would be fine—so long as they refer to their gathering as the "Semester's End Social." But they better not dare call it a "Holiday Party," or worse still, a "Christmas Party."

- Officials of the city of Portland, Maine, were squeamish about the word “Christmas.” The majestic blue-spruce tree decked with lights in the city square was called a “Holiday tree,” not a “Christmas tree.” A marketing director for the city explained the name: “We’re trying to keep it neutral... We don’t want to offend anybody. We are trying to celebrate the holidays, no matter what you believe.”
- The Board of Selectmen of Wellesley, Massachusetts refused to include a crèche among its holiday decorations, although a menorah and a crescent were both on display. A local resident wished to donate a nativity scene to replace the Christmas tree there. The resident rightly reasoned that a religious symbol of Christmas, and not a secular one, should be permitted along with the religious symbols of other faiths. However, the Board of Selectman denied the resident’s generous offer.

#### Private Groups/Companies:

- The Art Center of Corpus Christi, Texas featured an exhibit with the works of K-Space Arts Studio. One of the exhibits was a painting showing the womb of a nude Virgin Mother, holding a crucifix linked by rosary beads to the unborn son’s umbilical supply. Another painting looked like a black and white version of the Last Supper, but was actually a man who was eating dinner with rats. Another painting showed men dressed in different costumes, drinking from a keg of beer. One of the men was dressed as a priest from the Vatican.
- Management at the Orlando Cloisters in Florida banned all religious symbols, including angels and nativity scenes, from the public areas of the home for senior citizens. After the Liberty Counsel got involved and cited this as a case of discrimination in violation of the Federal Fair Housing Act, the Cloisters reversed its policy

- Executives at General Growth Properties, which operates over 200 malls in 44 states, refused to display nativity scenes, even when donated by an interested party called Operation Just Say Merry Christmas. The management of this Chicago company claimed they did not wish to decorate with religious symbols. However, menorahs were displayed in its shopping centers. This corporate policy discriminates against Christians by allowing a Jewish symbol representing a miracle, but telling Christians to make due with secular symbols.
- Supervisors at Commack, New York's Baumann & Sons Buses caved in to the complaints of one grumpy parent. When a school bus driver wore a Santa cap during his rounds in the Commack School District, he had to face his bosses at the end of the day. They told the driver that a parent complained to the district that his or her child doesn't believe in Santa Claus, and was offended by the hat. The driver informed other parents that he would likely lose his job for continuing to wear the hat. The school district's superintendent informed Baumann & Sons that the hat is not a religious object and should not be banned. The driver was ultimately allowed to keep his job and continue wearing the hat.
- A performer called Jessica Delfino took her "Merry S-tmas Tour" on the road. Described as "rife with Christmas-themed debauchery," Delfino performed on December 19 in New York City, appeared in Washington, D.C. on the 21st and traveled to South Durham, North Carolina on the 22nd. Her act included the showing of an obscenely-titled video banned from YouTube that features her rapping about her vagina, complete with obscene pictures flashing in the background. Rapping about her genitals, she sings, "it will become your true religion."
- On December 9, New Jersey's Courier-Post editorial board

ran an editorial saying, "Putting religious symbols on government property violates the law and challenges the constitutional right of religious freedom." The daily was twice wrong. As the Catholic League showed when we erected a crèche in New York City's Central Park, it is not unconstitutional to put a religious symbol on public property. Furthermore, it doesn't challenge religious freedom to display a manger scene or a menorah—it demonstrates it.

- On the December 11 episode of the CBS sitcom "Two and a Half Men," one of the characters sang "Joy to the World," changing the lyrics to make a bawdy song about his plans for his date that evening.
- Managers at Ocean County Mall in Toms River, New Jersey eschewed a nativity scene in favor of secular Christmas decorations, while at the same time allowing a menorah. When asked about this discrepancy, a director of marketing for the mall (a branch of Simon Malls) replied that, "We are particularly careful to try and create a festive atmosphere that celebrates the spirit of giving and community, which dominates the holiday season, rather than focus on religious aspects." The manager did not explain how a menorah is not a religious symbol while a crèche is.
- Brooklyn's Shore Road Garden Council insisted on calling their Christmas tree a "holiday tree." After the neighborhood's state senator protested that it is absurd to call a Christmas tree by any other name, a council member attempted to justify the decision by claiming, "I'm aware of his opinion on this, but we're trying to include all the religions because we're trying to be inclusive... It is a Christmas celebration that we're having, but we're trying to include everybody."
- New York's Staten Island Mall ended the practice of

allowing an individual to erect a privately owned nativity scene outside of JCPenney each year. In response to complaints from those who did not like the crèche, the mall's managers decided individual religious decorations would no longer be permitted. Instead, the mall has erected a "holiday fixture" to celebrate Christmas, Hanukkah and Kwanzaa. *Staten Island Advance* reporter Judy Randall described the fixture as follows: "The thing, which is dusted with fake snow, might be best described as a 7-foot tri-cornered pole. It's totally no-frills and so bland that the other afternoon, as I watched and waited for 20 minutes, not one shopper stopped to take a look at it, much less admire it."

- Spencer Gifts sold obscene Christmas tree ornaments. The novelty store offered six different ornaments depicting images associated with Christmas, such as elves and reindeer, in sexually suggestive positions. To compound the problem, in a Spencer store in Jacksonville, Florida, the ornaments were displayed on the shelves in plain view of children and any shopper passing by.
- Avanti Press, a greeting card company, offered a card with a photograph of a nativity scene in which the traditional crèche figures are replaced by canines.
- Pittsburgh's Washington Square Unit Owners Association banned all "holiday decorations which are identified with a particular religious faith." The ban came after a resident and the Catholic League wrote to the board requesting that a crèche be permitted in the complex's common areas (a menorah was displayed each year). Rather than extend equal rights to the Christian tenants, the board decided only to allow completely generic displays. Menorahs and nativity scenes were out; snowmen and frosted windows were in.

- Event organizers at New York City's Lincoln Center were afraid to call a Christmas tree by its proper name. Though the plaza at Lincoln Center played host to a November 27 event that included a gospel chorale, a selection from "The Nutcracker," and a bedazzled tree, no mention was made of Christmas. Rather, visitors were offered a "holiday tree" and "Winter's Eve" celebration.
- A mail-order company, Collections Etc. offered a "Cat Nativity" set for sale in its "Holiday Favorites 2006" catalog. The "Cat Nativity" replaced the traditional crèche figures of the Holy Family, the shepherds, an angel and the Wise Men with felines.
- A headline writer at the Associated Press got cold feet. An article about Christmas tree farmers donating trees to the families of soldiers was originally titled "Growers donate Christmas trees for troops in combat zones and their families stateside" at 9:43 am on November 14. At 10:02 am the same article was sent out again on the wires. However the headline read, "Growers Donate Holiday Trees to Troops."
- Best Buy omitted any mention of Christmas from its advertising. The electronics retailer apparently thought that celebrating a major Christian holiday would be insulting to non-Christians. A spokesperson reported, "We'll continue to stick with 'happy holidays...' The fact of the matter is, there are several holidays throughout November and December. We want to be respectful of that."
- North Carolina's Northlake and Caroline Place malls avoided references to Christmas. Both malls preferred the greetings "happy holidays" and "seasons greetings."

### **Vandalism:**

Vandals and thieves struck nativity scenes in the following

cities and towns during the Christmas season:

Tucson, AZ; Concord, CA; Millbrae, CA; Mission Viejo, CA; San Francisco, CA; Moorpark, CA; Vista, CA; Naugatuck, CT; Southington, CT; Stratford, CT; Waterbury, CT; Beverly Hills, FL; Fort Walton Beach, FL; Wellington, FL; Ammon, ID; Weiser, ID; Chicago, IL; Edwardsville, IL; Jackson County, IL; Tinley Park, IL; Floyd County, IN; Fort Wayne, IN; Montgomery County, IN; Portage, IN; Des Moines, IA; Newell, IA; Sioux City, IA; Wichita, KS; Hardin, KY; Lafayette, LA; Youngsville, LA; Portland, ME; Unity, ME; Winthrop, ME; Calvert County, MD; Towson, MD; Brookline, MA; Fitchburg, MA; Hopkinton, MA; Norwell, MA; Southborough, MA; Three Rivers, MA; Gladwin, MI; Milford, MI; Portage Township, MI; Hastings, MN; Neosho, MO; Columbus, NE; Plaistow, NH; Galloway Township, NJ; Hopewell Junction, NY; Rockland County, NY; Fayetteville, NC; New Bern, NC; Raleigh, NC; Dover, OH; Utica, OH; Artemis, PA; Belle Vernon, PA; Bucks County, PA; Greenfield, PA; Monessen, PA; Hilton Head, SC; Sioux Falls, SD; Grand Prairie, TX; Halom City, TX; Houston, TX; Santa Fe, TX; Salt Lake City, UT; Fairfax County, VA; Blue Lake, WA; Seattle, WA; Whidbey Island, WA; Winfield, WV; West Allis, WI; Stevens Point, WI.

Although all of these acts were inexcusable, some stood out among the crowd:

- The nativity scene at Our Lady of Grace Catholic Church in Stratford, Connecticut was vandalized twice. First someone stole the baby Jesus statue. More than a week later, it was discovered that an angel's wing from the nativity scene had been broken. On Christmas Day, vandals smashed to bits a crèche in front of the local Knights of Columbus Hall. Nativity scenes at two other churches in Stratford were later victimized. Thieves then stole the baby Jesus at St. James Catholic Church and smashed other figures, and also smashed figures at Christ Episcopal Church.

- Serial thieves in the Clearing Garfield Ridge neighborhood of Chicago went on a spree during which they stole 32 statues of baby Jesus. The figures were eventually dumped on the lawn of St. Symphorosa Catholic Church.
- An employee at the Wichita, Kansas clinic of late-term abortionist Dr. George Tiller moved a nativity scene from public property to the clinic's property. According to LifeSiteNews.com, after a member of Operation Rescue placed the crèche on a public strip of land outside of the clinic, the employee deemed the nativity scene "offensive," picked it up and moved it behind a fence on the clinic's property, where it would no longer be visible. A police officer retrieved the crèche.
- Thieves in Lafayette, Louisiana stole the baby Jesus from the front yard of a private residence. After a man donated a new figure, that was also stolen. To make matters worse, the man who donated the baby Jesus figure was later victimized; his Jesus figure was also stolen.
- A hooligan in Plaistow, New Hampshire swiped the baby Jesus from a homeowner's manger scene and replaced it with an empty beer can. The vandal later returned the statue, but had drawn devil horns on Jesus' head.
- A group of hoodlums in Rockland County, New York, calling themselves "the Opiates," victimized nativity scenes. The group struck twice in Suffern and four times in Haverstraw in December, each time stealing statues of the baby Jesus. They also committed similar acts in 2005. Three former high school students were later arrested for the thefts and charged with 14 counts of petty larceny.
- Four college students were charged in connection with the theft of nativity scene figures from Newness of Life Ministry Church in Monessen, Pennsylvania. The pastor of

the church discovered the figures were missing. One statue that remained was a defaced Virgin Mary. The statue's eyes and mouth had been blackened and an obscenity was scribbled on its forehead.