

THE WAR ON CHRISTMAS

November 20



Alsip, IL – The Freedom From Religion Foundation used the threat of a lawsuit to force the Village of Alsip to cancel the display of a cross on its water tower, which had been a tradition going back decades.

November 27

Madison, WI – The Freedom From Religion Foundation placed its “Natural Nativity Scene” in the Wisconsin State Capitol Rotunda for the second year in a row. It featured Emma Goldman, Darwin, Jefferson, Mark Twain, Einstein, the Statue of Liberty, the goddess Venus and an African American baby girl in the manger. This was done in response to The Wisconsin Family Action’s nativity scene in the Rotunda.

November 29

Little Rock, AR – The Arkansas Society of Freethinkers put up its “Winter Solstice” display on the state capitol grounds for the fourth year in a row to protest the nativity scene, which has been displayed on the grounds for more than fifty years.

November 30

Providence, RI – To avoid any dissent, Governor Lincoln Chafee cancelled the tree-lighting ceremony before re-instating it with only 30-minutes notice. In the run-up to the annual Christmas tree lighting, protestors were expressing their dismay with Gov. Chafee, who persisted in calling it a “holiday tree.” Critics were vocal in their dissent over last year’s “holiday tree” lighting and flooded the governor’s office with thousands of telephone calls in protest, thanks in no small part to the efforts of the Catholic League. Local residents also went to the ceremony to express their outrage.

November 30 – December 19

West Milford, NJ – The Township Council decided to disallow

religious holiday displays on public grounds, referring to the “holiday tree” as secular symbol. The mayor said she did not want to “interject faith onto municipal property.” In a ruling at a December 19 council meeting, the Township Attorney declared the displayed tree a “Christmas Tree.”

November 30

Cottondale, FL – At Cottondale Elementary School, a nativity scene was replaced with Frosty the Snowman in compliance with the Florida Department of Education, which had sent an official to the school to talk about “the legalities of religion in the school systems and the separation of the two.” The decision sparked outrage and controversy. Residents in the community threatened to sue.

November 30

The website, tamponcrafts.com, offered instructions on how to construct nativity scenes out of tampons, including Jesus, Mary, Joseph, and the Three Wise Men. The opening line of the website carried these words: “Have a holly, jolly, bloody good Christmas with these tampon crafts.” It advised the reader: “Gather ‘round the manger for the Christmas Miracle. These three kings come bearing gold, frankincense, and...fresh-scented feminine hygiene products.”

December

Century, FL – A short article appeared on NorthEscambia.com in July about the Century Town Council’s plans to budget funds for new Christmas decorations, including a manger scene at town hall. Three days after the article appeared, they received a letter and fax from a Freedom From Religion Foundation attorney claiming a local resident tipped them off about the nativity on public property. The town decided not to put up a scene and instead sold the old nativity scene to the highest bidder.

December 3

Milwaukee, WI – For the second year in a row, the Freedom From

Religion Foundation placed their “Winter Solstice” sign in the Milwaukee courthouse to protest what they refer to as an “inappropriate nativity scene.”

December 3

Honolulu, HI – The Hawaii Department of Education caved into the demands of a local atheist activist affiliated with the Freedom From Religion Foundation when it cancelled Moanalua High School’s annual Christmas charity concert. The students in the award-winning orchestra have raised more than \$200,000 over the past six years for Mercy Ships, a charity which houses doctors on missions in Africa.

December 4

Little Rock, AR – Students at Terry Elementary School were invited to see the play, “A Charlie Brown Christmas,” at a local church. Seeking to avoid controversy, no students were required to attend, and bus service was scheduled for those who wished to go. A controversy ensued when one atheist complained, enlisting the help of the Arkansas Society of Freethinkers. In the aftermath of the controversy, the pastor cancelled its student matinee performances of the play.



The Catholic League’s nativity scene in Central Park.

December 5

San Angelo, TX – The Freedom From Religion Foundation sent a letter of complaint on behalf of a local member demanding the removal of the cross which the San Angelo Police Department places on top of its building as part of its annual Christmas display.

December 6 The Atheist Pig website published its official war on Christmas list, advertising “goals of this year’s campaign against the sanctity of Christmas.” There were five goals, the first two of which were notable. The first goal was to shop for “Holiday presents” and advocated the atheism of Richard Dawkins against the pope’s Christmas message. The second goal was “not to give hate groups money,” labeling the Salvation Army as a “hate group” for its defense of traditional marriage.

December 10

Anchorage, AK – As part of its anti-Christmas campaign, the Freedom From Religion Foundation ran four signs on ten buses: 1) “Yes, Virginia... There is no God” 2) “Imagine No Religion” 3) “Sleep in on Sundays” 4) “Enjoy Life Now. There is no Afterlife.”

December 10

The homosexual lobby waged its own War on Christmas this year by attacking the Salvation Army for its support of traditional marriage. An organized effort to boycott the organization was promoted by the gay website, watermarkonline.com, which asked its readers nationwide not to give to the Salvation Army. Gays in Chicago launched their own campaign to withhold donations. The net result is that more of the needy went without during the Christmas season, due to the efforts of these homosexuals.

December 10

The War on Christmas became particularly vulgar this year when Urban Outfitters issued its seasonal catalog targeting teens. The catalog contained a mug and wrapping paper stating “Merry Christmas bit***s.” Several clothing items and gifts displayed

the F-word. Among the Christmas gifts was a candle with the F-word on it.

December 10

Niles, IL – The Freedom From Religion Foundation placed a “Winter Solstice” sign in the Village of Niles Plaza to protest the town’s life-size nativity scene. It featured the Bill of Rights in a manger surrounded by the Statue of Liberty and three Founding Fathers.

December 11 – January 10

New York, NY – American Atheists attacked Christians with a giant billboard in New York’s Times Square. The message read: “Keep the merry! Dump the myth!” The billboard also depicted Santa as well as Jesus with a Crown of Thorns on the Cross. To see a photograph of the billboard [click [here](#).]

The decision by American Atheists to exploit Jesus crucified as part of its annual attack on Christmas was not hard to explain. In 2010, it ran a billboard on the New Jersey side of the Lincoln Tunnel that said, “You Know It’s a Myth: This Season Celebrate Reason.” The Catholic League answered with a billboard on the New York side of the Lincoln Tunnel which read, “You Know It’s Real: This Season Celebrate Jesus.”

In 2011, the American Atheists billboard outside the Lincoln Tunnel featured a picture of a statue of the Roman god Neptune, a classical portrait of Jesus, a depiction of Santa, and a guy in a devil’s mask. It said they were all myths. Bill Donohue described it as “inane” to the *New York Times*.

In 2012, American Atheists decided to make a big splash. American Atheists and its supporters do not want to be left alone—they want to inflame the passions of those with whom they disagree. Unlike Christians who do not provoke, harass or otherwise mock atheists, American Atheists wants nothing more than to stick it to Christians at Christmastime.

December 12

In 2012, there were instances of denial from many quarters as to the very existence of the War on Christmas. An editorial in the *Duluth News Tribune* questioned, "There's Still a 'War on Christmas'?" Atheist Jeff Sorensen flatly declared in the the Huffington Post that "There is no war on Christmas." *Statesman Journal* columnist Dick Hughes wrote a piece about the "phony and irrelevant War on Christmas." MSNBC madman Lawrence O'Donnell said the War on Christmas had a "body count" of "zero." Frank Bruni of the *New York Times* said there could hardly be a War on Christmas given that "We have God on our dollars, God in our pledge of allegiance, God in our Congress." The *Boston Globe* editorialized that "Ignoring the 'war on Christmas' is the best way to eliminate it altogether."

December 12

On NBC's "Today" show, the network's chief medical editor Nancy Snyderman disparaged the religious aspect of Christmas during a panel discussion. A co-panelist asserted that she focused on the religious meaning of Christmas. Snyderman responded, "I don't like the religion part. I think religion is what mucks the whole thing up."

December 13

Missoula, MT – Parents sent an unsigned letter to the superintendent of the Missoula County Public Schools claiming that the songs chosen for the Christmas concert at Chier Carlo Elementary School were not secular. The letter stated: "We have no problem with it being called a Christmas concert, it's just the fact the material should be secular. Frosty the Snowman, Santa Claus, Rudolph the Red-nosed Reindeer. These are things that offend no one, but when the children are singing about their lord and savior, Jesus Christ...public school is not the place."

December 19

New Braunfels, TX – A utility company removed two giant "Keep Christ in Christmas" banners owned by the Knights of Columbus

after receiving complaints about the religious nature of the signs. Their removal sparked outrage in the community.

December 21

Cheboygan, MI – The Freedom From Religion Foundation (FFRF) made a request to the city manager to place their “Winter Solstice” banner in Washington Park to protest the Kiwanis Club’s nativity scene. After the Cheboygan City Council called for a special meeting to give it further consideration, it was decided to move the nativity off of public property instead of giving equal time to FFRF.

Grassroots Rebellion against the “War on Christmas”

When the “War on Christmas” began in the 1980s, everyone knew our side was on the defensive. In recent years, what began as a battle of advocacy groups has evolved into a true grassroots rebellion. This year, it was all too apparent that we had the militant atheists on the run. The following are stories that indicate this:

September 18

Faribault, MN – Last year, the Freedom From Religion Foundation (FFRF) sent a threatening letter to the city on behalf of a local resident and members of FFRF. The letter complained about a nativity that was set up at Buckham Memorial Library each year at city expense. This year, the Faribault City Council voted unanimously to display the nativity on public land. It was an emphatic, grassroots reaffirmation of a local Christmas tradition. One Councilor said, “This really bugs me. I mean, one person complained. There are 17,000 members [of FFRF] in the whole nation. That’s really a minority. We’re the majority here.”

October 26

Athens, TX – Henderson County officially denied the Freedom From Religion Foundation’s (FFRF) request to display an atheist banner at Christmastime on the grounds of the

Henderson County Courthouse, where a nativity scene is displayed every year. In 2011, FFRF also tried to display a banner, but it was promptly removed by Henderson County deputies. This was a victory for religious liberty.

November 15

Leesburg, VA – This year the Loudoun County Board of Supervisors approved “a county-sponsored Christmas display which included a nativity scene and menorah—but banned any other unattended religious displays on the property.” Rick Wingrove, director of the local chapter of American Atheists, received a permit to have an attended display featuring banners with quotes from famous atheists and readings from Darwin’s *The Origin of Species*.

November 28

Warren, MI – A nativity scene on a public median on Mound Road was removed in 2008 because the Road Commission capitulated to a complaint by the Freedom From Religion Foundation. In what was a victory for religious liberty thanks to the Thomas More Law Center, the nativity returned to its location after a four-year absence. The nativity belongs to a 76-year old citizen, whose family had been setting up the manger scene for over 60 years.

November 28

Crockett, TX – A nativity scene outside a courthouse incited the Freedom From Religion Foundation to send a letter to the Houston County Judge’s Office in protest. A Houston County judge said, “We have a long standing tradition here. We want the nativity scene; we feel it’s within our rights to have it and we’ll keep it for the holiday period.”

November 28

Morganton, NC – When officials at Western Piedmont College replaced “Christmas” with “holiday” in a student club’s announcement of a Christmas tree sale for charity, the Alliance Defending Freedom sent a letter condemning the

prohibition of “Christmas” as unconstitutional. In a clear victory for religious liberty, officials at the college changed “holiday” back to “Christmas.”

November 29

Woodcliff Lake, NJ – What was originally advertised as a “Community” or “Holiday” tree lighting was renamed a “Christmas” tree lighting. It was reported in the *Cliffview Pilot* that the New Jersey chapter of the ACLU was contacted. But, the mayor stood firm: “There’s no controversy. There’s no story. It is a Christmas tree and a Menorah lighting.”

November 29 – January 5

Santa Monica, CA – In 2011, atheists were driven to display their hate-filled message alongside religious symbols in Palisades Park. In order to avoid controversy in 2012, local officials practiced their neutrality by censoring all displays equally. A federal judge agreed with city officials and ruled that displays of any kind would destroy the turf and obstruct the ocean views in Palisades Park, though this apparently never happened for the 60 years that a crèche had been displayed there.

An attorney representing nativity scene advocates said, “The city, on the advice of its city attorney, has abdicated its duty to protect the First Amendment’s guarantees of free speech and the free exercise of religion within a traditional public forum, a city park. The City Council members surrendered to the angry mob and in the process have announced to the world that religious freedom can be sought elsewhere but not in Santa Monica.”

In response to the ban on unattended permanent nativities in public spaces, church organizations exploited a loophole and responded with live displays of people reenacting the Christmas story. In addition, a private business stepped forward and donated space on private land nearby for the permanent nativities.

December 3 – 6

Ellwood City, PA – A First Amendment lawsuit threatened by the Freedom From Religion Foundation resulted in the removal of a nativity scene from the front of the Ellwood City municipal building, ending a fifty-year tradition. Where there had been a nativity at the municipal building, there now stood a snowman and Santa Claus. Grassroots pushback took two forms: A new, larger nativity was put up on private property at a former church a few blocks away, thanks to the owner, a local attorney. Citizens circumvented the ban when members of Ellwood City Moose Lodge No. 93 took the initiative and put a nativity on a trailer attached to a truck and drove it in front of the municipal building to display it there.

December 6 – 7

Newhall, CA – Residents at a senior citizens' apartment complex were told by the management company, JB Partners Group Inc., to remove their Christmas tree because it is a religious symbol. The residents, including those who were not Christian, wanted the Christmas tree. The Catholic League responded decisively by asking members to e-mail the Human Resources department at JB Partners. The e-mail campaign worked; the Christmas tree was returned.

December 8

Tulsa, OK – For the second year in a row, the Tulsa Christmas Parade took place in opposition to the "Holiday Parade of Lights," a parade which originally had Christmas in its name. A group opposing the "sensitive" name change formed their own parade and restored the word "Christmas." Grassroots resistance yielded crowds showing support for the Christmas parade.

December 14

Chicago, IL – The Arlington Heights Park District approved the display of a nativity scene on public property after intervention by the Thomas More Society when a donated nativity was initially rejected by Park District officials.

The display was finally set up apart from the annual seasonal lights display in the same park and the nativity display was marked private.

December 12

Woodbridge, NJ – After the Freedom From Religion Foundation objected to the display of a nativity on town hall property in 2011, the display was late in being set up in 2012. When a local media outlet noted that the nativity was still missing from town hall on December 10, there was an outpouring of comments on the outlet's Facebook page. The nativity was erected after the city council ruled that the nativity could be put up again so long as it is accompanied with other non-secular decoration.

December 12

Oskaloosa, IA – In a special meeting that overflowed with concerned residents, the Oskaloosa City Council voted to keep a nativity scene in the city's square after the city manager was contacted by a local resident who was offended by the nativity. After the city manager received the letter, the nativity was removed the next day. The city council then voted to add a group of decorations to the city square that would then also include the nativity.

December 28

Pitman, NJ – The Freedom From Religion Foundation (FFRF) placed a banner saying "Keep Saturn in Saturnalia" in response to the Knights of Columbus banner saying "Keep Christ in Christmas" that was hung between a privately-owned building and a privately-owned utility pole in the heart of the business district. FFRF claimed that they were given the "runaround" by borough officials and were not allowed to display their banner. A militant atheist group known for bullying Christians at Christmastime was now claiming to be victimized.

December 29

McDowell County, NC – More than 50 people rallied in defense of a courthouse nativity scene after Americans United for Separation of Church and State asked that the county remove the crèche or make it part of a larger, more secular display. “We have got to stop being the silent majority,” said one local resident.

Christmas Vandalism

During each Christmas season, our desks are loaded with stories on Christmas vandalism. This year was no different. Here is a list of incidents that came to our attention:

November 22

Ulster, NY – Thieves stole 60 Christmas trees from the Boy Scout tree lot. The trees were being sold to raise money for the local Boy Scout camp and amounted to a loss of about \$3,000.

November 23

Nederland, TX – The nativity display of a Wesley United Methodist church was vandalized when it was run over by a car in a drive-by attack.

November 25

Spartanburg, SC – Christmas decorations were stolen from several front yards of homes within a two-mile radius.

November 28

Portland, OR – Vandals damaged and decapitated statues of baby Jesus, Joseph and Mary located at “The Grotto,” the popular name of The National Sanctuary of Our Sorrowful Mother.

November 29

Beloit, WI – Vandals cut the light cords to Christmas decorations on four separate occasions in a six-week assault on the elaborate Christmas decorations of a local resident.

November 30

Huntington, WV – A hand-painted antique baby Jesus figurine was stolen from a nativity scene set up on the porch of a local business office. It was defaced with sexual obscenities, anti-religious statements, anarchy symbols, an upside down cross, and the numbers 666, along with other offensive markings. The figurine's eyes were blackened. Horns were drawn on each side of the head.

December 3

Shrewsbury, MA – At St. Anne's Parish, thousands of dollars in Christmas presents and gift cards were stolen by a thief who kicked in the storage unit behind the church. The gifts were collected for the Giving Tree, a project that provides gifts for 300 impoverished children.

December 4

Madison, AL – An entire nativity scene was stolen from the front yard of a home. It reappeared in a local high school classroom and was later returned to its rightful owner.

December 5 – December 12

Granger, IN – In a rash of incidents, thieves stole Christmas decorations and presents from homes all over town.

December 7

Warren, MN – Thieves broke into a church and stole a Christmas tree containing ornaments, a gold cross and statues of Jesus, Mary and Joseph.

December 10

Forest, VA – Thieves stole and destroyed 12 nativity scene figures from Shiloh United Methodist Church, amounting to an estimated \$2,000-\$2,500 in property damage.

December 11

Angus, MN – A Bible, a Christmas tree, Christmas ornaments, a baby Jesus sculpture, and sculptures of Mary and Joseph were stolen during a burglary at a rural church.

December 12

Brooklyn, NY – A four-foot white porcelain statue of Jesus was stolen from its pedestal outside Saints Peter and Paul Church in Williamsburg.

December 14

Staten Island, NY – A vandal shattered a one-foot-tall statue of Jesus and broke a five-foot statue of the Blessed Mother inside Our Lady of Good Counsel Roman Catholic Church.

December 19

Burlington, OH – Vandals broke lights and stole a Santa Clause figure and a baby Jesus figure at the playground of an apartment complex.

December 22

Huntington Beach, CA – At St. Bonaventure Catholic Church, vandals defaced a nativity scene. The damage included drawings of the numbers 666, a swastika, phallic symbols, “Heil Hitler” and curse words on nativity figures. Vandals also inscribed “Hail [sic] Hitler” on the forehead of a baby Jesus figurine outside a home elsewhere in town and drew a Hitler mustache on its face. A statue of one of the wise men was also defaced with a swastika.

December 23

Federalsburg, MD – Two men drove a truck through the Federalsburg Historical Society’s Christmas nativity. Five of the thirteen figurines in the illuminated nativity were decimated.

December 24

Tacoma, WA – During Christmas Eve Mass at Holy Cross Catholic Church, six windows were broken. Police were investigating the incident as a possible hate crime.

December 30

Pearl River, NY – The community manger in Braunsdorf Park was vandalized when someone spray-painted the face of the baby

Jesus figure brown.

January 2

Clearwater, FL – Just after Christmas, Clearwater Central Catholic High School was vandalized. Anti-Christian symbols were spray-painted on school buildings, vehicles, and a statue of the Virgin Mary. The symbols included pentagrams, upside-down crosses and the number 666.

November-December

Figures of the baby Jesus were stolen from homes, businesses or churches in the following locations: Birmingham, Alabama; Antelope, California; Live Oak, California; Torrington, Connecticut; Frostproof, Florida; South Bend, Indiana; Quincy, Massachusetts; Menominee, Michigan; Mt. Pleasant, Michigan; Dover, New Hampshire; Burlington, Ohio; Carlisle, Pennsylvania; Chambersburg, Pennsylvania; Schuylkill Haven, Pennsylvania; West Manchester Township, Pennsylvania; Moundsville, West Virginia; and Clintonville, Wisconsin.

This ad appeared on the op-ed page of the December 17, 2012 edition of the *New York Times*:

NEW YORK TIMES SALUTES POPE PIUS XII

On Christmas Day 1942, as the Holocaust was raging, the New York Times published an editorial on the heroics of Pope Pius XII. Here is a selection from that statement that ran 70 years ago:

"No Christmas sermon reaches a larger congregation than the message Pope Pius XII addresses to a war-torn world at this season. This Christmas more than ever he is a lonely voice crying out of the silence of a continent. The Pulpit whence he speaks is more than ever like the Rock on which the Church was founded, a tiny island lashed and surrounded by a sea of war.

"Pope Pius expresses as passionately as any leader on our side the war aims of the struggle for freedom when he says that those who aim at building a new world must fight for free choice of government and religious order. They must refuse that the state should make of individuals a herd of whom the state disposes as if they were a lifeless thing."

The previous Christmas was also marked by a New York Times editorial:

"The voice of Pius XII is a lonely voice in the silence and darkness enveloping Europe this Christmas.

"In calling for a 'real new order' based on 'liberty, justice, and love,' to be attained only by a 'return to social and international principles capable of creating a barrier against the abuse of liberty and the abuse of power,' the Pope put himself squarely against Hitlerism. Recognizing that there is no road open to agreement between belligerents 'whose reciprocal war aims and programs seem to be irreconcilable,' he left no doubt that the Nazi aims are also irreconcilable with his own conception of a Christian peace."

We feel confident that when the entire Vatican archives are released, there will be even more reason to salute the heroics of Pope Pius XII.



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