



Written by [Dave Bohon](#) on December 1, 2011

Christian Groups Display Christmas Nativity Scene at Supreme Court Building

This year two national religious organizations, the Christian Defense Coalition and [Faith and Action](#), decided to take the fight for Christmas all the way to the Supreme Court — not with a legal challenge, but with a live nativity scene set up for all to see in front of the nation's judicial building.



The November 30 display, which included live animals along with actors in key roles from the biblical account of Christ's nativity, was actually a parade of sorts that wended its way past the U.S. Capitol building before arriving in front of the Supreme Court building before noon.

A [press release](#) by the groups explained that the display was part of the "Nativity Project," a nationwide campaign designed "to share the message of Christmas and also to confront the erosion and hostility toward public expressions of faith, especially during the Christmas season."

Patrick Mahoney, director of the Christian Defense Coalition, noted that secular humanist groups have made their antagonism toward faith a particularly obnoxious Christmas tradition. "Sadly, we are seeing an erosion and hostility toward public expressions of faith in the public square," he said. "The is especially true during the Christmas season." He noted that the Nativity Project has become a public reminder to the ACLU and other secular watchdog groups that the U.S. Constitution guarantees the freedom *of* — rather than *from* — religious expression. "By encouraging people of good will to publicly display nativity scenes all across America," he explained, "we are not only supporting religious liberty and First Amendment freedoms, but we are loudly proclaiming the powerful message of Christmas. That timeless message needs to be heard now more than ever: 'Peace on earth and goodwill toward man.'"

Rob Schenck, president of Faith and Action, noted that the "traditional crèche, portraying Mary, Joseph, and the Christ Child, along with angels, shepherds, Wise Men, and animals, reminds us of what Christmas is all about."

The Nativity Project was launched several years ago in Boise, Idaho, by residents who were concerned that displays of traditional crèches had been stopped at their city hall as well as in front of the State Capitol. "Sadly this has been occurring with frequency around the country," Mahoney told the [Christian Post](#). "Cities and states, faced with potential legal action and negative court decisions regarding the public display of nativity scenes, have decided to refrain from setting them up."

But Christian groups discovered that, by securing the proper civic permits and without using public funds (which would make them vulnerable to lawsuits), they could set up their own nativity scenes at city halls, court houses, state capitol buildings, town squares — and in front of the U.S. Supreme Court Building. "No public funds are being used and the courts have allowed these displays to move forward,"



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Mahoney said.

Schenck added that “the fact that we have been granted a permit to hold this live nativity scene in front of the Supreme Court ensures the right for every American to set up these public displays in communities all across America.”

Mahoney told the *Christian Post* that there is an “interesting divide developing toward the public expressions of faith. On one hand, the general public in poll after poll seems very comfortable and supportive of public faith expressions.” However, he added, “The courts and groups like the ACLU and Americans United are mounting an all-out assault on public expressions of faith. So in America, you have this very fascinating situation. The general public is very warm toward public expressions of faith, while the courts and elite groups are very uncomfortable with it.” The good news, he noted, is that the majority of Americans seem willing to stand in support of public expressions of faith as guaranteed by the Constitution.

He said that the display of the live nativity scene in front of the Supreme Court Building was an effort to encourage others to publicly express their faith at Christmas time in their own communities. “Our hope and prayer is that many will secure permits, as we did in front of the Supreme Court,” he said, “to display nativity scenes in front of public buildings all across our nation and also to place them on the lawns of their homes.”



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