

# FIRST CHRISTIAN ASSEMBLY



**WELCOME** to First Christian Assembly, an independent church whose mission is articulated by Jesus in Mark 16:15 when he said "...Go ye into all the world, and preach the gospel to every creature". Following this great commission, First Christian Assembly preaches and teaches the gospel of Jesus Christ. In so doing, we trust that God, working through His Holy Spirit will draw souls to salvation in Christ Jesus our Lord.

## A Christmas Nativity

Tradition says that Francis of Assisi created the very first Christmas nativity scene in AD 1223 after a trip to the Holy Land and Christ's birthplace. Today, we can see nativity scenes in front of churches and homes, on street corners, and in pageants every Christmas season.

The word *nativity* is taken from the Latin *nativus*, which means "arisen by birth." A nativity scene is a representation of the night of Jesus' birth as depicted in the Gospels. Nativities can be pictures, live demonstrations, or carvings, but they usually contain the same elements: the Christ Child in a manger; His mother, Mary; His earthly father, Joseph; shepherds; angels; various barn animals; a star; and, sometimes, three wise men bringing gifts.

Displaying a Christmas nativity scene is a long-standing tradition, but it can also present a bit of a skewed view of the actual events of Jesus' birth. While each person depicted in a traditional nativity scene is a part of the Christmas story, not all the characters were present in one place on the night Jesus was born. Mary, Joseph, and Jesus were in a stable that night due to the overcrowding in Bethlehem's inn, but the Bible never mentions whether or not animals were present—in fact, it never even mentions a stable. The shepherds, once told of Jesus' arrival, left their flocks to worship the newborn King. However, the angels, which are often part of nativity scenes, bore the good news to the shepherds *in the fields*. As far as we know, there were no angels flying visibly over the place where Jesus was. In addition, the wise men (the Bible never says how many there were) were also probably not present that first night. The magi visited Jesus some time later, when He was in a house (Mat 2:1-11).

Despite these small details, a Christmas nativity scene is a wonderful reminder of what happened the night Jesus was born. Ever since Adam and Eve's sin, our relationship with God has been marred and broken. Out of love, God sent His Son in human form "to seek and to save the lost" (Luke 19:10). To that end, Jesus Christ was born in the town of Bethlehem. Modern Christmas nativity scenes help to proclaim Christ's birth and the true "reason for the season."

## Ministry Highlights

### Announcements:

- ⇒ *The Lord's Supper is being held TODAY.*
- ⇒ *Please SIGN UP now for New Year's Eve Service & Dinner so we can ensure enough food is provided. See Gloria Felicione.*

### Missionaries – Indonesia

*(excerpt from John & Joy Cutts 11/29 –PT2):*

I can remember some very tense stand-offs when trekking to this valley when the chiefs did their best to threaten me and chase us out of the area, while a few of the younger men were open to our presence, but could not stand up to the powerful chiefs. Then there were Moni evangelists who made visits to the area over time and on 12 different occasions the make-shift jungle church was torched and they were chased and sometimes beaten as they fled. On one of the final encounters I can remember evangelist Andreas Somau made it back with a huge gash on the top of his head where he had been clubbed. I treated and bandaged him up, but unfortunately he died early one morning. He and many others, were instrumental in opening this area long steeped in tribal warfare, witchcraft, and mystery, and without their prayers, dedication and love, this monumental day would not have taken place because the warring clans would never have been able to work together for 10 years. Even a group of friends from California had trekked in 5 years ago and donated shovels and wheel barrels and it was unfortunate they couldn't be there to see the final outcome.

Now as I was planning on bringing visitors from several countries to witness this celebration, I was facing a different type of war, just days before the big event! Local government officials informed me they were afraid to attend the opening because the top government boss was opposed to the airstrip and would not sign the documents to open it. . . because the people did not vote for him in the election! Now after 10 years this airstrip was destined to sit unused, because somebody wanted to use it as political collateral. . . If even government people hesitated to attend, who was I to be so brave as to attend and bring an entourage of international visitors, which would only challenge the iron grip of this control freak? Squeezed between 2000 people with pent-up enthusiasm to celebrate NOW, regardless of the consequences and an official with the capabilities of throwing us out of the country for opposing policy left me hyperventilating, even as my guests boarded planes headed to Papua! I was trapped and had to do something. *I winged a short prayer as I dialed the number of the official...*

(FCA) First Christian Assembly, 1900 S. 11<sup>th</sup> Street, Philadelphia, PA 19148  
 (PAC) Philadelphia Access Center, 1832 S. 11<sup>th</sup> Street, Philadelphia, PA 19148

215-389-6721  
 215-389-1985

*The Philadelphia Access Center* is a ministry of First Christian Assembly. Our mission is *revealing Christ through compassionate service*. Services available at PAC include social services information and referrals, biblical counseling, support groups, volunteer training, and community outreach. All services are free of charge and available to anyone. To learn more, visit us in person (across the street from FCA) or online at [www.philaccess.org](http://www.philaccess.org) or [www.facebook.com/philaccess](http://www.facebook.com/philaccess).

### **WEEKLY SERVICES /MEETINGS**

	FCA	PAC
Sunday	9:45 AM <i>Bible Study</i> 11:00 AM <i>Worship Service &amp; Children's Sunday School</i>	
Monday		7:00 PM <i>Stepping Stones</i>
Tuesday	6:30 PM <i>Prayer (Sanctuary)</i> 7:00 PM <i>Worship (Sanctuary)</i>	
Wednesday	6:30 PM <i>Men's Fraternity (on hiatus)</i>	1:00 PM <i>Women at the Well</i> 1:00 PM <i>Coram Deo</i>
Thursday		6:00 PM <i>Prayer Service</i> 7:00 PM <i>Bible Study</i>
Friday		7:00 PM <i>Right Path</i>

- *Coram Deo*: A men's Bible study and Christian fellowship.
- *Right Path*: A Christ centered support and recovery group for people whose lives have been affected by drug and alcohol addiction. In a warm and friendly atmosphere, we provide loving support and fellowship; in genuine confidential sharing, coupled with a Biblical twelve step model of recovery.
- *Stepping Stones*: A Christ centered support group for men and women impacted by a loved one's addiction. In a warm and friendly atmosphere, we provide loving support, fellowship, confidential sharing, and intercessory prayer.
- *Women at the Well*: This group is Biblically based and promotes hope, healing, and fellowship for women impacted and struggling with brokenness.

## Looking Ahead



- ❖ *There will be **NO** service on (Tuesday) December 24, (Wednesday) December 25, and **NO Bible Study** on (Thursday) December 26.*
- ❖ *Our annual New Year's Eve service and dinner will be held on Tuesday, December 31<sup>st</sup> at 6:30 PM. Please **SIGN UP** now with Gloria Felicione for this event to reserve a space.*

### **PRAYER REQUESTS**

- Ministries (present and future) at First Christian Assembly and the Philadelphia Access Center
- Christians around the world being persecuted for their faith.
- Our supported missionaries
- For our Pastor and his family.

