

# 31,000 Scramble to Reserve Seats at Megachurch's Christmas Candlelight Service

An Alabama megachurch announced that more than 31,000 tickets were reserved for its Christmas candlelight services across its 16 campuses. Services will be hosted Dec. 19-24.

"We had 31,000 seats taken in the first five minutes that those reservations were online," Church of the Highlands senior pastor Chris Hodges says.

According to *Outreach Magazine's* 2017 report, Church of the Highlands is the largest church in the country with 40,000 regular attendees. Highlands is an ARC Church. Hodges co-founded the Association of Related Churches (ARC), which has planted hundreds of churches across the U.S.

The church has even "waitlisted" some people if preferred service time and location are not available.

Most of the reserved seats are at the flagship campus on Grants Mill Road in Birmingham, which will live stream all the Christmas Eve services.

"I know it seems attractive to come to this particular location where I'm speaking live, and you think the experience is so much better, but I want you to know that our team is working harder than ever before to make the Christmas experience great at every location," Hodges says. "In fact, we're sending some of our best musicians and talent to all the other locations to have great, great Christmas experiences. So, make plans to attend where you regularly worship."

Despite the reservations, Hodges says the 16-campus church should be able to seat those who show up.

“Of the 13 services that we’ll have here at Grants Mill, we have always had seats,” he says. “People grab seats and then don’t sit in them. People make a decision not to come when there were seats you could’ve sat in. Those reservations and tickets are neither reservations nor tickets. It gives people priority seating, but at 10 till, we are opening the doors to whoever wants to come sit in those seats.”

The church asks that people who booked too many seats return the reservations.