

Florida Capitol OK's Holiday Display of Satan Descending to Hell

If you think Christmas isn't what it used to be, oh, dear ones, you have no idea.

Satanists are being given display space in the Capitol building of Florida during this most holy season.

The *Tallahassee Democrat* newspaper reports that the Satanic Temple will be allowed to join several other holiday displays in the Florida Capitol this year, after previously being denied access.

This week, the applications of five groups vying for space for their holiday displays, some supporting religions, some the absence of religion and some just to make a point, were approved by the Department of Management Services (DMS), the newspaper said.

The Temple's diorama depicting an angel falling into a pit of fire and placards featuring two Bible verses was denied last year when DMS deemed it "grossly offensive."

Pam Olsen, president of the Florida Prayer Network, said the idea is to wish everyone a Merry Christmas through Christianity, not to cause uproar over state-sponsored religion.

"There's a lot of state capitols besides ours that are having Nativity scenes," Olsen said. "It's not government sponsored religion, it's freedom of religion, which makes America great. Our heart is not to cause any contention; it's simply to say Merry Christmas. It's really important that people understand that."

On the other hand, "The Satanic Temple sought the help of legal counsel at the educational, non-partisan Americans United for Separation of Church and State in getting their display into the Capitol," writes Karl Etters of the newspaper. "The Washington group threatened a lawsuit against the state on the Temple's behalf."

The Florida Prayer Network and the International House of Prayer Tallahassee plan to erect a Nativity scene and artwork depicting a Nativity; the American Atheists intend to place a banner as does the Freedom from Religion Foundation.