

**STATEMENT FROM THE
NATIONAL CHRISTIAN COUNCIL OF SRI LANKA (NCCSL)
CHRISTMAS 2016**

The birth of Jesus or the commonly celebrated 'Feast of Christmas', is fundamentally a message and a commemoration of 'Hope'. Originating in a context of a longing expectation by the 'poor' who, crushed and trampled under life burdens of political, economic, social and religious freedom, are looking for deliverance from their plight of sin, suffering and slavery through the advent, of the 'Promised Messiah'. This concept of 'hope' reigns supreme and primary throughout history.

As Sri Lankans living in a post war context, the relevance of 'hope' in the light of struggle for the 'right to life' is loud, clear and evident. It is because of the hope which lies behind the meaning of Christmas, that Christians celebrate the birth of Jesus with great joy, and invite their neighbours to celebrate with them. It may be timely to speak a word of caution against the tendency to commercialize the season, which is threatening to drown out the true value and essence of Christmas, through the outer extravagance of Christmas decorations, false merriment especially through excessive advertising etc. We wish to call people to pause amidst their festivities, to hear the cries and heed the suffering of those who are in pain at this time.

We are saddened to note the latest addition to the celebrations in the erection of the tallest 'Christmas Tree' in the world at Galle Face Green. What is alarming and disturbing is the fact that the placement and location

of this giant 'Christmas Tree' with all its glamour and splendor, purposefully and discreetly hides the pride of human sin in the 'Port City Development'. This development project raises serious questions and will have severe consequences on the environment, livelihoods and the displacement of our people.

It is against this backdrop that The National Christian Council of Sri Lanka (NCCSL) calls upon all people to observe and celebrate the birth of Jesus with joy but also in a sense of sacredness of true spirituality, rooted and guided in Scripture.

*'And this will be the sign for you; you will find a babe wrapped in swaddling clothes and lying in a manger' – **St. Luke 2: 12.***

Therefore, let us seek the Lord where He is to be found; not in the merriment of excessive and unnecessary spending, nor in the disguise of the duplicity of a tainted Christmas Tree at Galle Face Green, nor in high temples and palaces, but in the mangers of human misery and in solidarity with the down-trodden, the poor and the marginalized who long for true dignity of life.

Signed by:

- Rev. Saman Perera - Chairperson of the National Christian Council of Sri Lanka and President, Presbytery of Lanka
- Rt. Rev. D.R. Canagasabey –Bishop of Colombo, Church of Ceylon. Diocese of Colombo.
- Rt. Rev. Dr. Daniel S. Thiagarajah, Bishop of Jaffna Diocese, Church of South India
- Rev. Asiri P. Perera, President/Bishop, Methodist Church of Sri Lanka
- Rev. Priyantha Wijegoonawardene, President, Sri Lanka Baptist Sangamaya
- Rev. Stanley Nelson, President, Christian Reformed Church
- Colonel Alistair Venter, Territorial Commander, The Salvation Army
- Rev. G. Nadarajah, President, Lanka Lutheran Church
- Rev. Michael Dissanayake, Chairperson, Assemblies of God of Ceylon
- Rev. Leslie Keegal, President, Church of the Four Square Gospel Church in Sri Lanka.
- Ven. M. Nimal Wickramaratne, Archdeacon, Church of Ceylon. Diocese of Kurunegala.
- Rev. W.P. Ebenezer Joseph, General Secretary, National Christian Council of Sri Lanka

The NCCSL also represents the following Ecumenical Organizations:

- Young Men's Christian Association (YMCA)
- Young Women's Christian Association (YWCA)
- Student Christian Movement (SCM)
- The Ceylon Bible Society
- Christian Literature Society
- Theological College of Lanka.
- Back to the Bible Broadcast
- Colombo Theological Seminary
- Youth for Christ

15th November 2016

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