

# Opinion: Merry Christmas – or whatever

By Kathryn Reed

It's OK to say Merry Christmas. It's OK to say Happy Holidays.

Do we really need to fight and be offended when someone is being nice?

It's more important to look at the intent of the words. Someone is wishing you a good day, a good season. If you are Christian or not, is it that hard to embrace "good will to all men – and women"? And one would think the Christian thing to do would be to welcome a Happy Holidays and wish the person the same instead of coming unglued they didn't say Merry Christmas.

As I write this I'm listening to Barbra Streisand, who is Jewish, singing Christmas songs.

There was a time when I didn't sing the songs in church because I didn't agree with the words. Then I caught myself singing the lyrics to some inane song while I was driving. I really didn't agree with those lyrics. And sometimes we belt them out with heartfelt emotion. Does it matter?

But if you want to be upset over the whole Christmas thing, let me add some fuel to a fire beyond Merry Christmas/Happy Holidays.

Let's just do away with how the majority of people in the United States celebrate Christmas. Really, what is the point? A whole lot of money is spent on crap that no one wants. And what is the point of giving gifts? If there are pearly gates at the end, they aren't going to open wider based on the gifts you gave to someone.

We heard cries from charitable groups that there weren't enough gifts for youngsters. Why don't we look at why we are teaching them to expect gifts from a fictional character and in the name of another? Where is the logic in that?

We've allowed Christmas to become more than a day. It is a season unto itself that for shoppers started before Halloween this year. And for those who really want a bargain, it will mean even better deals tomorrow compared to what you found on Black Friday.

I have no problem celebrating the holiday season starting with Halloween and lasting through New Year's Day. I love the festiveness of it all. There's a distinct change of seasons. Why not celebrate the Winter Solstice?

For those who can find the joy and not the stress, it's a great time. People, for the most part, actually seem happy. I think they are the ones who have realistic expectations for the whole season.

Having that good vibe all fall, into winter ... well, it's a great way to launch a New Year.

I like seeing all the outdoor decorations, even though I have no desire to do the same. I love baking and receiving goodies. The same goes with writing cards. I don't see them as Christmas cards per se, but a year-end wrap up to what went on in my life or theirs for the past 365 days – especially when it comes to family and friends who don't live in Tahoe.

I suppose in the end the holidays – whichever you celebrate – are what you make of them.

If you are celebrating Christmas today, then a very Merry Christmas; Kwanzaa starts tomorrow, so Happy Kwanzaa; the winter solstice was Saturday, so let's celebrate it and the fact that the days are getting longer.

But it shouldn't matter what you celebrate because our differences are what make the world unique. A little more tolerance – that's all we need.

Happy Holidays ...