

# Opinion: Giving up Christmas – a new tradition

By Kathryn Reed

I have struggled with Christmas for a number of years. This is the first year I've chosen not to celebrate it. Leading up to this day has been liberating, we'll see if I feel the same way when the day is over.

It's been liberating because there are no decorations, no year-end letter to write, no shopping, no baking. Every day is just another day. And it's a day in Tahoe, so that's pretty darn special already.

I will be working on a story today, ironically, with a bit of a Christmas theme. But working on the holiday is nothing new. That's the hazards of the news business. And personal beliefs must be cast aside when it comes to work.

For many years, Christmas was not celebrated on Dec. 25 in my family because of my schedule or my sister's – she is in the medical profession.

But this will be the first Christmas I have chosen not to be with family.

If memory serves me correctly, I was 30 the first time I didn't spend the holiday with my parents. They went off to see my sister in the Midwest; I was living in Las Vegas. I admit it was hard. A new tradition I wasn't quite ready for.

I'm wondering how my mom and sister are reacting to me not being with them today when originally I said I would be there. A new tradition for them.

My struggles with Christmas are that I'm neither religious, nor do I believe in Santa. So, that leaves me asking the

questions – What am I celebrating? And why?

I don't need Christmas to appreciate my family and friends. I certainly don't need to be buying presents for them or receiving any to show appreciation or feel appreciated.

I asked my mom, who is religious, years ago about why people give gifts at Christmas. Her answer didn't satisfy me. If gifts are to be given to someone, why not do so on their birthday – when it's all about them?

I don't need Dec. 25 to signify having some special meal. I can do that whenever or on other occasions that I believe are worthy.

I like receiving cards from family and friends – more as a year-end wrap than to wish me a Merry Christmas. I actually like receiving snail mail.

I'm skipping sending out correspondence this year – for reasons that go beyond giving up on Christmas. My plan is for 2016 is to send out new year's cards; or maybe in 2015 I'll send something out on my birthday – the start of my personal new year. Whatever I decide, it will be another new tradition.

I still like seeing all the lights on buildings and friends' houses decorated – even if I don't truly get the point of it. And the holiday parties are wonderful – who doesn't like a good party?

What I don't expect to change is to wish people Happy Holidays, Merry Christmas, Happy Hanukkah and Happy New Year. Nor am I offended when any of those greetings are said to me. No one means anything mean by expressing good times, good wishes upon someone. I won't be offended in whatever way they are said to me.

Whatever you are or are not celebrating today or this December, enjoy. And don't begrudge others their time to

celebrate what is important to them on whatever day that may be. And don't judge those who for whatever reason are not celebrating what you are celebrating.