Merry Christmas to 'all'

Ted Brown

While making my way through the mall recently, one of the 'regulars' stopped me to ask a question.

"Ted, why is it there are no more 'Merry Christmas' signs around here?" he asked. "It's all 'Happy Holidays' or 'Season's Greetings', and that sort of stuff. Why can't they just say 'Merry Christmas'? That's what the season is all about."

I chatted with him a bit, agreeing with everything he said. From a revenue point of view, this time of the year is the most important to a shopping mall, yet the merchants can't display Merry Christmas?

I recalled the big kerfuffle a few years back when then-Toronto Mayor Mel Lastman tried to rename the Christmas tree outside city hall a 'Holiday Tree' so as to not offend non-Christians.

His suggestion was met with a huge backlash, and the 'Christmas tree' designation was saved.

A few weeks ago, I received an email that had a copy of American broadcaster Ben Stein's rant about the trend to NOT use the word 'Christmas'. His words ring so true, and I quote a portion of it:

"I am a Jew, and every single one of my ancestors was Jewish. And it does not bother me even a little bit when people call those beautiful lit up, bejeweled trees, Christmas trees. I don't feel threatened. I don't feel discriminated against. That's what they are, Christmas trees.

It doesn't bother me a bit when people say, 'Merry Christmas' to me. I don't think they are slighting me or getting ready to put me in a ghetto. In fact, I kind of like it. It shows that we are all brothers and sisters celebrating this happy time of year. It doesn't bother me at all that there is a manger scene on display at a key intersection near my beach house in Malibu. If people want a crèche, it's just as fine with me as is the Menorah a few hundred yards away.

I don't like getting pushed around for being a Jew, and I don't think Christians like getting pushed around for being Christians. I think people who believe in God are sick and tired of getting pushed around, period."

As I read his words, I was struck by how bang-on Stein was. It is a Christmas celebration— and yes, it is also a holiday.

It has its origins from the birth of Christ, and no matter how you sugarcoat it, that's a fact. If people are of another faith, or are atheists, they still call it Christmas.

We have no reservations about saying 'Happy New Year' to everyone we meet on or before January 1. Yet, using the same logic as is used for Christmas, perhaps we should be more careful there too— after all, this year the Chinese celebrate their New Year on January 23.

We wouldn't want to upset them.

Recently, I was a guest at a Christmas office party. It was hosted by a devout Orthodox Jew.

He and his wife had absolutely no problem with those attending referring to it as a 'Christmas party' even though they celebrate Hanukkah, not Christmas.

The venue was decorated with 'Christmas trees' and all the other traditional Christian decorations. The hosts personally picked the location for its beauty— they had no problem with it having non-Jewish decorations.

We, as Canadians, are a pretty diverse group, and have more religious groups than we can keep track of. But we are still based on a Christian society— and Christmas is part of that society.

Christmas is a statutory holiday, yet non-Christians happily accept holiday pay for Christmas and Boxing Day.

I recently chatted with a Buddhist who said his family enjoy exchanging gifts at Christmas, in spite of the fact they are Buddhists. "Christmas is a happy time of the year," he said. "We enjoy that happiness at Christmas."

So I will continue be one of those people who greets everyone with 'Merry Christmas' at this time of the year, in spite of some people feeling it's politically incorrect. I disagree.

The Sidekick and I take great pleasure in wishing a Merry Christmas to all— every faith or nationality— and also the very best in the coming New Year.

HO HO HO...

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SHOP LOCAL SHOP SMART... SHOP HALTON HILLS

Halton District School Board
2010-2011 Financial Statements Available

As in previous years, the Halton District School Board will post its financial statements on the Board's website at www.hdsb.ca

A link to the 2010-2011 financial statements for the fiscal year ending August 31, 2011 can be found on the homepage under *"Also of Interest"*.

The 2011 audited financial statements include:

- Management Report
- Auditors' Report
- Consolidated Statement of Financial Position
- Consolidated Statement of Financial Operations
- Consolidated Statement of Cash flow
- Consolidated Statement of Changes in Net Debt
- Notes to the Consolidated Financial Statements

Halton District School Board

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