

## Let's call a truce on the imagined war over Christmas



**BARB GUY**

I don't know why everything looks like war to some people. What Sen. Chris Buttars sees as a war on Christmas I see as an effort to be polite.

What is the "smart bomb" the Utah state senator worries will land on Christmas? The innocuous greeting "happy holidays."

Buttars is even writing legislation to discourage use of the phrase in advertising. It's another proud, proud moment for Utah and for West Jordan, the community that just re-elected Republican Buttars.

It always amazes me when someone like this thinks there's a war against him. Good grief, he's a member of every majority that matters around here and all he can imagine is that people are out to get him.

Believe me, I know a lot of white, male, straight, Christian, American, LDS Utahns who are kind, fine men who understand that there's a thing called the world. They know it's a big place and we're all part of it. But this tiny subset Buttars is king of doesn't know about the world, or if they do, they're not in favor of it.

The world, and even our little microcosm, includes many people who don't celebrate Christmas, for dozens of different honorable reasons. Our world includes people who aren't like you and me, yet they're nearly always nice, good people.

One thing that nice, good people are is hospitable. When I host Thanksgiving dinner, for example, I make sure there's something just as wonderful as roasted turkey for vegetarians to eat. I do not wail that vegetarians are making war on Thanksgiving. If I throw a party, I have a special sparkly beverage on hand for folks who don't drink alcohol; I do not accuse them of making war on my glass of wine. And I certainly don't write legislation to get them to start drinking.

If I owned a retail establishment I would surely be one of the people Buttars imagines he's at war with. I'd use a phrase like "happy holidays" because I find it inclusive. I think any Christian

who doesn't recognize a wish for a merry Christmas within "happy holidays" isn't looking very hard. Same with a Jewish person who doesn't see "happy Hanukkah" there.

And I also would hope my customers could see my happy holidays message as a wish for a pleasant Kwanzaa, (belated) Diwali, or Three Kings Day. I would hope that the non-religious and those whose religions I've never heard of would look at my "happy holidays" message and understand my good will extends to them.

I hope the many wonderful and diverse people who shop at my imaginary store will find only friendliness and welcome in a message like "happy holidays."

There is no war on Christmas. It's needless paranoia. Instead, Chris Buttars is trying to stir up a war on everyone who isn't part of his teeny, tiny world. As it is, people who don't fit the mold Buttars popped out of have to deal with his making war on them all the time. It's not easy being the minority to his majority.

If I were speaking with Buttars during the holidays, I would wish him a merry Christmas because he has made his tradition clear to me. If I speak with someone else whom I don't know well, I might

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wish them happy holidays. This is not war; it's good manners.

Instead of putting so much energy into trying to convince people that a truly friendly message like happy holidays is a declaration of war, I would like to respectfully ask Sen. Buttars to give peace a chance.

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*BARB GUY is a regular contributor to these pages. © Salt Lake Tribune.*