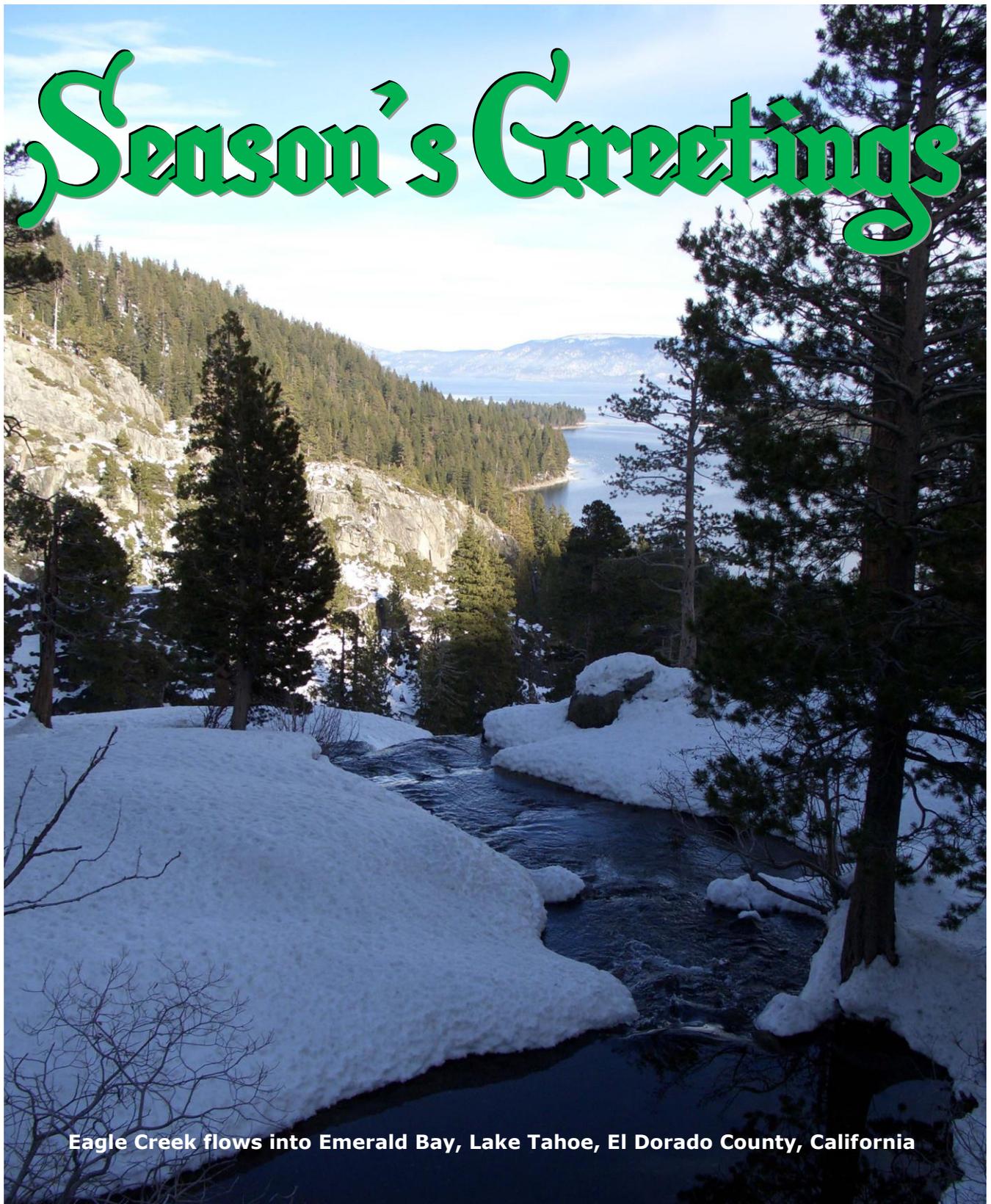


# The Holiday Herald

17 December 2009

California's Sierra Nevada



Eagle Creek flows into Emerald Bay, Lake Tahoe, El Dorado County, California

# Happy Holidays to you

The family and friends who receive this newsletter are in the midst of a season of holidays.

Some recently celebrated Eid al-Adha, the Muslim Festival of Sacrifice marking the end of the Hajj pilgrimage to Mecca. Some lit the eighth and final Hanukkah candle Saturday night marking the rededication of the Holy Temple in Jerusalem. There likely are other holidays of yours that I'm unaware of.

My family is in the midst of Advent, and Friday we will celebrate Christmas. A week later everyone reading this will mark the first of the many New Year's Days in 2010.



**St. Nicholas Episcopal Church, Tahoe City, Placer County**

I don't write "Happy Holidays" out of political correctness but in recognition of reality. This newsletter is about wishing all of you happiness during your holidays by sharing scenes and sentiments from mine.

Emily and Gordon are in Charlotte visiting the Moaks, so my gift to myself was to load my car's CD player with Christmas carols and spend Saturday of my favorite season in one of my favorite places.

Mountains are, for me, inspirational and aspirational. They are of the land but not constrained by it. They reach beyond what is to what can be. They are the most reluctant places to surrender the light of a dying day yet also the most eager for the new dawn.

Mountains and Christmas are about promise and optimism.

## Where I went on my Sierra drive

All the pictures in this newsletter, except for the last, were shot Saturday on my drive through a favorite section of Sierra Nevada near Lake Tahoe.

**Nevada County:** Named for the Spanish word for "snowy" or "snow covered." Includes Donner Pass, Donner Lake and the railroad and resort town of Truckee.

**Placer County:** Rhymes with "platter." Named for a Spanish word describing sand or gravel deposits containing gold and the panning technique to find it. On the northwest quadrant of Lake Tahoe.

**El Dorado County:** Spanish for "the golden one." Includes site of California's original gold discovery at Coloma and the southwest quadrant of Lake Tahoe.

**Cross-country skier taking his tot out for a day in the mountains, Royal Gorge, Placer County**



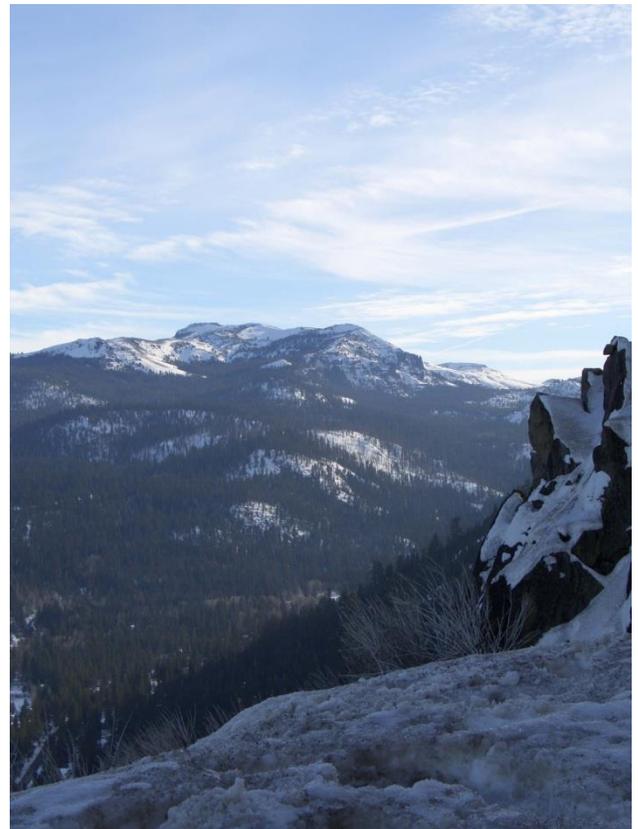
**Donner Pass Road, Donner Pass, elevation 7,085 feet, Nevada County**



**I lift up my eyes to the hills near the top of Donner Pass, Nevada County**



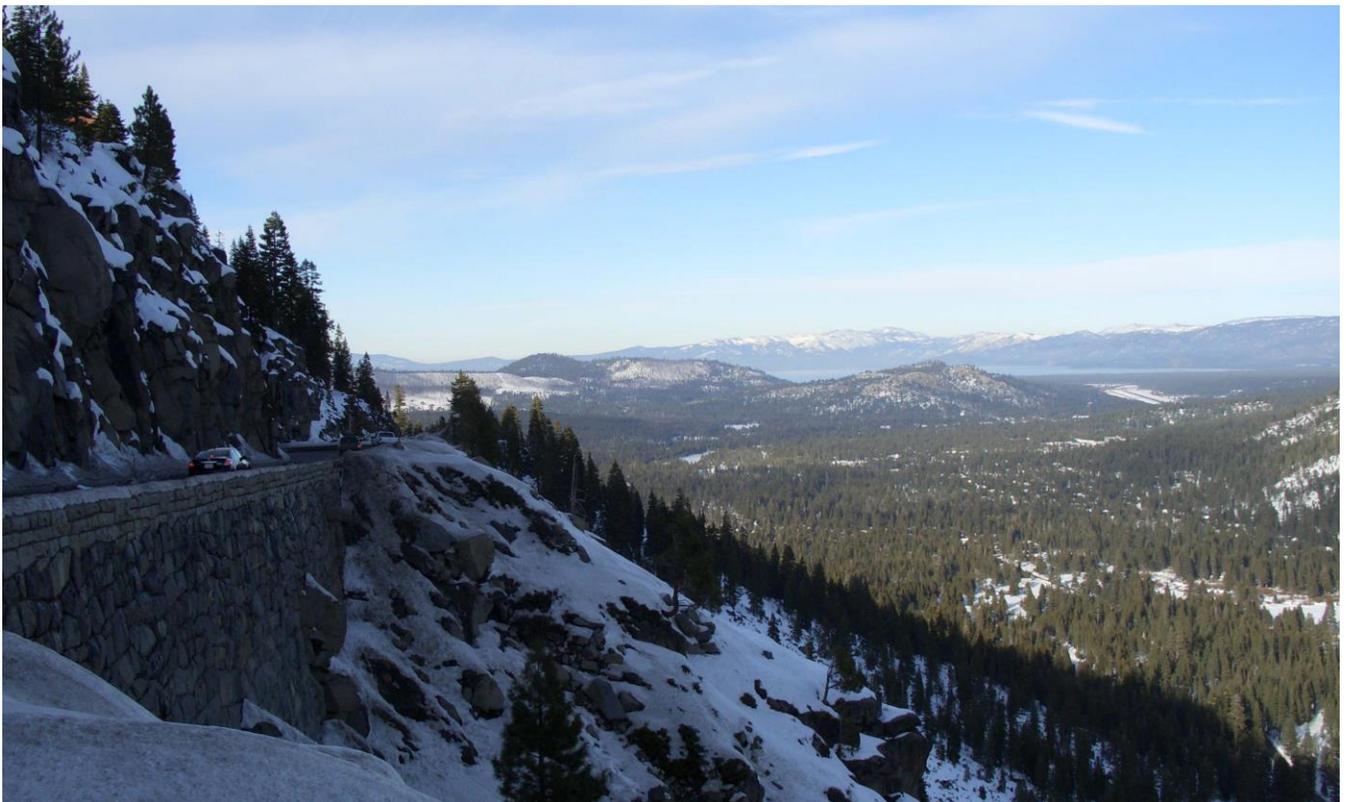
**Snowman and children in a park, Truckee, Nevada County**



**High Sierra, El Dorado County**



**Emerald Bay and Fannette Island, Lake Tahoe, El Dorado County**



**Highway 50 descends into the Tahoe Basin from Echo Summit, elevation 7,382 feet, El Dorado County**



**Flat land families up in the mountains for a day in the snow, Strawberry, El Dorado County**

**Dawn, Donner Lake from Donner Pass, Nevada County**





**I work for Working Partnerships USA. Every year our Union Community Resources program under Steve Preminger, who works across the aisle from me, hosts a Holiday Party for families in Santa Clara and San Benito counties who aren't well off. Steve and his volunteers took over a huge exhibition hall at the Santa Clara County Fairgrounds on Sunday, set up games for kids to play, did face painting, served food and played music. With the help of the U.S. Marine Corps' Toys for Tots program and a few dozen Santa Claus volunteers, we make sure every family that comes gets a personal visit with Santa and some toys. Mary Creasman, a former colleague, was one of my helpers this year. The weather was good, and we had a turnout of about 10,000. Some waited two hours in line for their Santa visits.**