

# An At-Home Advent Haggadah

a ritual meal with "storytelling" and candle lighting printed from [www.Rotation.org](http://www.Rotation.org)



This is an invented and inventive celebration centered around a home meal. We've borrowed bits and pieces from three great storytelling celebrations, Seder, Hanukkah, and the lighting of the Advent Candles, to create a familiar and approachable at-home celebration of the Advent story for Christians during the COVID pandemic. (In fact, you will note a 2020 "pastoral tone" to the questions and blessings.)

"Haggadah" is the Hebrew word for "telling a story." Please read the [explanation of Jesus' connection with both the Passover Seder and Hanukkah](#) here at [Rotation.org](http://Rotation.org). Notably, the storytelling in this "haggadah" meal includes participants reflecting on their OWN story this year. Links to the scriptures have been provided so participants can look them up on a tablet or cellphone. Who knows? Perhaps it will inspire a new tradition in the years to come.

Feel free to be inventive yourself if needed, adapting any of the following suggestions to your needs and situation.

**From the Passover Seder we are borrowing** the "scripted" nature of the Passover meal, the "cup of blessing," and special foods that help tell the story.

**From Hanukkah's** "Festival of Lights and Rededication" we are borrowing part of the Maccabean story that gave rise to Hanukkah -- the lamp oil that didn't run out of oil and the lighting of candles.

**From the Lighting of the Advent Candles** practiced in most Christian churches on the four Sundays of Advent and Christmas Eve, we are borrowing the five candles and their traditional meaning along with some of the traditional scriptures and carols heard on those Sunday. Together, the following functions as an "At-Home Lessons and Carols."

*The suggested script begins on the next page...*

# An Advent Haggadah

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## The menu:

Choose your own menu, just remember to include a sweet dessert (a feature of Hanukkah celebrations). You will also need a special drink for the "blessings."

## You will need nine candles:

- 5 Advent Candles
- 3 additional candles for the Menorah
- And 1 to light all the others (the "Shamash" or "servant" candle)

## Assign a leader to follow this outline and prompt participants.

Each participant is assigned one of the four Advent **candles to be lit**, along with the **"Question" they are to ask and answer**. If the person is too young to read, have someone "repeat after me" so the child can say the words and answer. Each Question can be answered by as many participants who want to.

Each participant will need a special cup or glass filled with a beverage to join in the **"cup of blessing"** (in the Seder this is called the "Kiddush"). When the leader recites the blessing, participants "clink" their glasses with each other (in a manner that honors and passes the blessing).

The familiar **hymn verses** being sung with each candle lighting are **only one verse long**. If you wish to sing more of them, please do so. If you need song lyrics, they can easily be found online using a cellphone or tablet. Ideally, everyone will sing the verse together, but you may also assign verses ahead of time so that people can practice, or have one or two people do the singing while others following along. Sing the verses twice if needed.

## Prepare the Meal and Table

As you prepare the table, explain to everyone that tonight's meal is going to be "led by" one of you and each person is going to have a special part to say and perform. If you have not already done so, explain that the following meal "borrows" from several traditions, including the Jewish Passover Seder Meal and Hanukkah celebration, as well as the Christian tradition of lighting candles on the Sundays of Advent. The point of all three traditions is to "tell the story" of God's goodness and mercy. Menu suggestions at the end of this post.

Invite everyone to have a "job to do" in preparing the meal and setting the table.

## The Haggadah (story) and Lighting of the Advent Candles

Five times during the meal participants will pause to watch one of the candles be lit and answer a question. "When" is up to you. Starting with the youngest and proceeding to the oldest, assign who gets to light which candle. You may choose to have everyone who wants to answer the question or just the person lighting that candle.

## The Welcome to the Table

Before sitting down, gather around the table and explain that the leader will be pausing several times during the meal to invite each participant to share special words, light candles, and sing a verse from a Christmas hymn.

Then, have the oldest person turn to the youngest and ask them **"Why is this night so special?"** (This is a traditional question from Passover.) After the youngest answers, the oldest then completes the answer with their own thoughts, invites everyone to take a seat and offers up a prayer of praise to God from whom all blessings flow. Now you're ready to begin!

→Light the candle as someone reads the linked scripture, then ask and answer the question.

### **Candle 1: Hope**

Scripture: [Isaiah 2:2-4 "In the days to come..."](#)

Question: What has been the hardest part of this past year for you personally? And for us as a family? What do you hope for in the coming year?

Cup of Blessing: May we live in the house of the Lord, learn his ways, and walk his paths which are goodness, justice, and mercy. Amen.

Song Verse: O Little Town of Bethlehem (the hopes and fears of all the years are met in thee tonight)

### **Candle 2: Peace**

Scripture: [Isaiah 9:6 "Prince of Peace"](#)

Question: What turmoil or trouble or personal battle have you been experiencing that you need some "peace" about this Christmas and in the coming year?

Cup of Blessing: May the God of Abraham and Sarah, Mary and Joseph bring peace to our souls and to our world. And may we be the instruments of that peace! Amen.

Song Verse: Silent Night ... (sleep in heavenly peace)

### **Candle 3: Joy**

Scripture: [Luke 2:8-20, the story of the angels surprising the shepherds](#)

Question: Which person are you in the Christmas story and why?

1. The lowly shepherds who are feeling a bit dazed and amazed this Christmas.
2. Mary or Joseph putting your trust in God that everything will turn out for the best.
3. The Magi/Wisemen who are searching for something or someone who will make the world a better place.

Cup of Blessing: May the God of great surprises find us and lead us to great joy in the year ahead. Amen!

Song Verse: Joy to the World (...and heaven and nature sing!)

### **Candle 4: Love**

Scripture: [John 3:16 for God so loved the world](#)

Question: If Jesus were having dinner with us right now, what would you ask him? What would he say to us?

Cup of Blessing: May we know that no matter where we are on our journey with God, he loves us and the world which he created. May we love God, his world, and each other now and even more in the year ahead.

Song Verse: Hark! The Herald Angels Sing (...God and sinners reconciled!)

## **Candle 5: The Christ Candle.**

Now light the Christ Candle while someone reads aloud **the words of John 1:1-18**. Then enjoy a cup of blessing and sing the first verse of "O Holy Night." Otherwise, explain that it is to remain unlit and moved after the meal to a place of honor in the home so that it can be lit on Christmas Eve or Christmas Day dinner (your choice).

## **Close by lighting the remaining candles to form a "menorah" and sharing dessert.**

You have already lit four (or five) candles, so now arrange them in a row and add four (or three) more unlit candles to form an eight candle "Menorah." (The word "menorah" is the Hebrew word for "candle stick" or "lampstand" from the word "to give light.")

**Final Cup of Blessing:** When Jesus walked the earth, one of the Holy Days he celebrated was the "Festival of Lights" (John 10:22). This festival is also known as "Hanukkah" and is still celebrated every December by our Jewish friends. The festival celebrates a rededication to the worship of God after a very troubling time in the life of the Jewish nation when their Temple had been taken over by a bad king named Antiochus the IV.

When they recaptured the Temple, they realized they did not have enough sacred oil to keep the Menorah or Temple Lampstand lit for more than a day, but in fact, the Menorah miraculously stayed lit for eight days! It was a sign that God had not forgotten them. (*Light the candles here.*)

And tonight we remember that once again God has not forgotten us - for unto us a child has been given, a wonderful counselor, a mighty God, and prince of peace. And so tonight we too rededicate ourselves to this child of light after a troubling and challenging year. May the God of light shine on you and shine through you in the days and years ahead. Amen!

***Raise and enjoy the final cup of blessing, then bring out the dessert!***

*Written by Rev. Neil MacQueen for the Rotation.org Writing Team*



# Advent Haggadah Resources

## Menu Suggestion:

Keep it simple so you can focus on the celebration. Suggested: Soup, salad, bread, and a sweet desert. Consider sparkling grape juice for the cups of blessing.

## Scripture and Hymn Lyrics

I've purposely kept the scriptures and hymns short. You are welcome to expand them. I suggest you have a tablet computer handy to look up the scriptures and Christmas lyrics online.



## How to Light the Menorah on Hanukkah

There are eight oil candles on a traditional menorah, each representing one of the days that the Temple oil did not run out during its rededication. One candle is lit at sundown on the first day, often as part of a meal, and left to burn for 30 minutes. Each night an additional candle is lit until all the eighth day when all are lit. A ninth candle called the "servant" or "shamash" is used to light all the others. There is no elaborate liturgy to Hanukkah, rather, it is a simple act of thanksgiving for deliverance, a rededication to the faith, and a time to be together with family.

<https://www.chabad.org/holiday...ight-the-Menorah.htm>

## The traditional meaning and scriptures assigned to the Advent Candles

Use the same "lighting" scriptures your church is using in its Advent worship this year.

There is no single "correct" way to do this liturgy and the scriptures assigned to each candle can change according to the liturgy or lectionary assignments. In my [Presbyterian](#) tradition and others, the four candles are sometimes labeled, "**hope, peace, joy, and love.**" The first two candles, usually purple, reference the hope of the Prophets. The third candle (often pink) represents the joy of Mary or the Shepherds, or Magi. The fourth candle speaks of the love of God entering our world through Jesus (John 3:16 for example). In all traditions the fifth white candle is the Christ candle lit either on Christmas Eve or Christmas Day. John 1:1-18 is commonly read for the Christ candle.

**Remember that you can include members of your family and friends in your Advent Haggadah by ZOOM or FACETIME.**

