

Activity Name: Holocaust Candle Ceremony

Purpose: To honor all those who died in the Holocaust on Yom HaShoah

Time: 0.5 hours

Materials: print-outs of the prayer sheet, six candles, a prayer space

Notes: This activity can be done alone or as part of a larger series of Yom HaShoah events.

Activity: The leader and participants gather in the designated space. The leader introduces Yom HaShoah. For each group of people, a participant reads the paragraph and lights a candle. An additional person reads Pastor Martin Niemöller's poem and everyone recites the last line out loud.

## **Holocaust Candle Ceremony**

We light this candle for the Jews, our people, who were persecuted during the Holocaust. We light this candle for those who were forced to wear yellow stars. We light this candle for those who were ridiculed and forced to watch their homes and businesses destroyed. We light this candle for those who were herded into crowded ghettos and then into the concentration camps. Finally, we light this candle for the 6,000,000 Jews who died throughout the war. For all of these people, we light.

We light this candle for the Afro-Europeans, because Nazi discrimination did not end with brown hair but instead extended to black skin. We light this candle for those who endured mockery and proved the strength behind those called “the Black Disgrace.” We light this candle for the hundreds of children who were kidnapped and sterilized for nothing more than the tone of their skin. Finally, we light this candle for the 50,000 Afro-Europeans who were murdered in the camps. For all of these people, we light.

We light this candle for the homosexuals, because Nazi discrimination reached beyond racial bounds. We light this candle for those who were forced to wear the pink triangle and face its stigma. We light this candle for the 50,000 people who were imprisoned and the 15,000 more who were sent to concentration camps. We light this candle for those who were beaten, segregated, ridiculed, and castrated because their loving acts were deemed indecent. Finally, we light this candle for the 15,000 homosexuals who were killed. For all of these people, we light.

We light this candle for the Roma, because Nazi discrimination of peoples did not end with the Jews but instead extended to the gypsies. We light this candle for those who were forced to live cramped ghettos without enough food or water. We light this candle for those who were exiled from their homes, those who were sent to concentration camps, and those who became guinea pigs for Dr. Mengele’s medical experimentation. Finally, we light this candle for the 220,000 gypsies who died—half of their total population. For all of these people, we light.

We light this candle for the Jehovah’s Witnesses, because Nazi discrimination extended to everyone who did not share their beliefs. We light this candle for those who stood strong, refused to give the Nazi salute, and sent their children to bible study instead of Hitler Youth. We light this candle for those who were forced into the military or held in prison for their beliefs. Finally, we light this candle for the 4,000 Jehovah’s Witnesses who died in the camps. For all of these people, we light.

We light this candle for the people with disabilities, because Nazi discrimination extended to all people who were deemed unfit for the Aryan race. We light this candle for the 400,000 people who were sterilized, whose right to parenthood was taken away, because the government deemed them “feeble-minded” and their children a burden to society. We light this candle for the thousands of people who died during this procedure. Finally, we light this candle for the 250,000 people with mental and physical disabilities who were taken from hospitals and shot or gassed. For all of these people, we light.

“When the Nazis came for the communists,  
I remained silent;  
I was not a communist.

Then they locked up the social democrats,  
I remained silent;  
I was not a social democrat.

Then they came for the trade unionists,  
I did not protest;  
I was not a trade unionist.

Then they came for the Jews,  
I did not speak out;  
I was not a Jew.

When they came for me,  
there was no one left to speak out for me.”

- Pastor Martin Niemöller

On this day of Yom HaShoah, we light these candles to speak out for all the victims of the Holocaust—because it was not just our people who were persecuted, but everyone.