

or both? If you and your partner come from different religious traditions, how will you chose the traditions you will carry on? Will you have a Christmas tree and a menorah? What about Solstice or Kwanza?

Children act as instant witness to our decisions and reporters of how your family differs from those of their peers. Decisions made casually in the childless years are suddenly held to a new scrutiny when the open, innocent eyes of your wee one bear witness. Why don't we have a Christmas tree? Jacob gets 8 days of presents – how come we don't? Who is this scary, old, fat man with a big beard who is able to watch my every move and will be breaking into our house in a few weeks?

How do you wade through these decisions and create a holiday experience that, if not an experience worthy of gracing the front of a Hallmark card, would at least create some joy and set the foundation for some good memories?

Aside from the “something blue” bit, Cathy and I have framed our conversations of how we want to create the holidays for Oliver around the idea of “something old, something new, something borrowed...” She was raised in a fairly secular home that celebrated Christmas through gifts and food; I was raised in a very Catholic home with an Italian immigrant father who had no frame of reference for a Christmas tree but put one up every year anyway. From those old experiences, we've decided to pull the pieces of Santa Claus, Christmas trees, and stockings by the fire. Also, my family did the traditional Italian seafood feast on Christmas Eve, so we'll do that. She has fond memories of watching the *Nutcracker* ballet on TV with her dad, so we'll make sure Oliver knows that music. For our “something new,” we've decided to make an ornament each year as a family craft project. Finally, we plan to borrow Solstice ideas around creating light and honoring the shortest day of the year. We remain in discernment about the Baby Jesus and how much of that story we want to weave into our traditions, which is really a corner of the bigger question of how we want our child to understand and experience religion.

However you decide to celebrate the holidays that mark the winter and end of the year, may it be a time of joy and belonging. §

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