



Wednesday Prayer

2nd Sunday of Advent – Gratitude for Those Who Prepare the Way

***The beginning of the good news of Jesus Christ, the Son of God.
As it is written in the prophet Isaiah, “See, I am sending my messenger ahead of
you, who will prepare your way; the voice of one crying out in the wilderness:***

***‘Prepare the way of the Lord,
make his paths straight,’”***

***John the baptizer appeared in the wilderness,
proclaiming a baptism of repentance for the forgiveness of sins. Mark 1:1-4***

John the Baptist came before Jesus – a wild man in the wilderness foraging the way for Jesus. We may envision the wilderness as a scary place where one doesn't want to venture alone. Think about the desert and the elephant graveyards of Disney's *The Lion King*, or of the Israelites wandering the desert for 40 years.

Theologian Delores Williams reinterprets wilderness in considering the Biblical story of Hagar. It is in the wilderness that Hagar meets God – wilderness providing both struggle and Spirit. She goes on to reflect on the African American experience of wilderness as “a positive place conducive to uplifting the spirit and to strengthening religious life.”¹ I have always been in awe of survivors who have experienced the wilderness of exploitation and trafficking who reveal amazing strength, resilience and faithfulness.

This text also talks about preparing the way. If you've embarked on any of the amazing books that have been lifted up in this summer of awakening, you may be learning of Indigenous and Black leaders who have paved the way for generations who come after them. Leaders who risked their lives, as did John, to work for liberation and justice. When Cherish All Children began as a Bishop's Task Force in the Minneapolis Area Synod in 2005, there were bold leaders who prepared the way for this ministry to protect children from exploitation and trafficking. Deacon Amy Hartman strongly led the way as the founder and national director for over a decade. The movement was in its infancy, sometimes with just a handful of people coming to presentations in the early days, perhaps feeling a bit like being alone in the wilderness. You all helped strengthen the movement through prayer, advocating for new laws, and engaging your churches in ongoing action. This is the good news. Fifteen years later, we continue together in new and challenging ways.

**God, we thank you for those who prepare the way, who make sacrifices and work their way through the wilderness to bring us together to work for liberation and justice.
Amen.**

¹ <https://www.workingpreacher.org/commentaries/revised-common-lectionary/second-sunday-of-advent-2/commentary-on-mark-11-8-5>

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