



2024 | AT HOME RESOURCE DECEMBER 1-22

**“In the wilderness prepare the way of the Lord;
make straight in the desert a highway for our God.”**

— Isaiah 40:3b

Long ago — years before Jesus was born — the people of God were in a time of trouble. They had been taken from their homes and their land and sent into exile in Babylon. They were forced to work for a foreign king far from home, and they cried when they remembered Jerusalem. They felt lost and separated from God. But God had not forgotten them! God sent prophets to remind the people of hope. The prophet Isaiah told them:

God says: “Comfort my people.”

Listen, a voice is saying, “Prepare the way of the Lord, even in the wilderness!

Make a straight highway in the desert for God.

Lift up the valleys and lower the mountains and hills.

Make the uneven ground level and smooth out the rough patches.

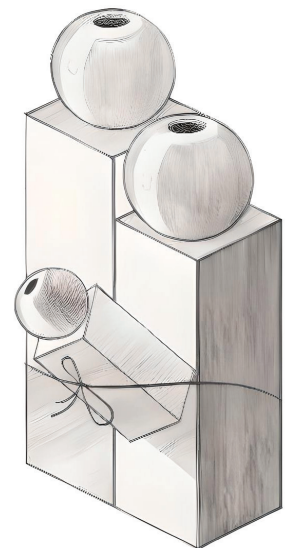
Then everyone will see God’s glory!”

—based on Isaiah 40:1, 3-5

Smoothing the Rough Edges

With your child, practice using sandpaper on a block or scrap of wood. Talk together about how sanding smooths the rough edges and makes the wood safer and easier to use for building. Gifts from the Christmas Joy Offering do the same thing. They help smooth the rough edges for church workers in need and make it easier to build a path for students of color to attend some of our Presbyterian-related schools and colleges.

If you like, turn the sanding exercise into a DIY nativity craft project. Do an internet search for “Jenga Block Nativity” for some ideas.



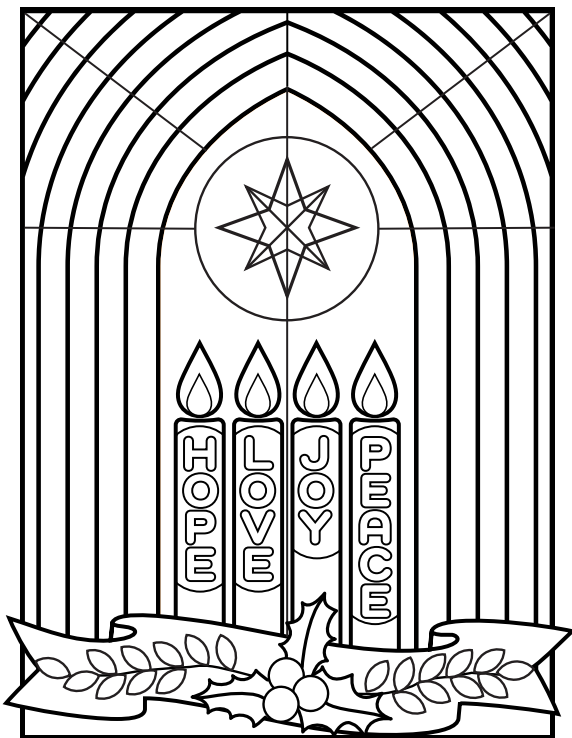
Preparing the Way

Will you have guests this holiday season? Get your child involved in preparations and use the time to talk about preparing the way of the Lord.

- As you clear away clutter, talk about making a clear pathway in the house. Just so, we are called to make a clear path for others to know the love of God.
- As you prepare food for guests or to give away, talk about how we are called to share our gifts of food and love with others.
- As you prepare gifts for loved ones, add in a gift for someone you don't know, perhaps through a local ministry or a church outreach project. Talk about how we are called to lift others up and prepare the way for them to see God's love at Christmas.
- Plan to give as a family to the Christmas Joy Offering. Give thanks for the church leaders that have been important to you and the opportunity to help past, present and future church leaders who show us the love of God.

Advent Candle Prayers

If you are using an Advent wreath at home, add in these prayers as you light the candles. Or use the **Christmas Joy Coloring Sheet** to color each candle. Any order is fine!



HOPE

What do you hope for?

Light or color one candle and ask God to bring hope to anyone who feels lost.

LOVE

Whom do you love?

Light or color one candle and give God thanks for the people you love and those who love you.

JOY

What brings you joy?

Light or color one candle and ask God to help you share joy with people who need it.

PEACE

Where is peace needed?

Light or color one candle and pray for people who need God's peace.

CHRISTMAS DAY

Light or color all the candles and ask God to use the Christmas Joy Offering to prepare the way of the Lord for those whom it helps. Give thanks for God's perfect gift in Jesus!

Prepared by the Rev. Julie Coffman Hester. Julie is a pastor and writer in North Carolina who has served in faith formation with all ages for over 30 years. Her current ministry focuses on writing curriculum and resources and teaching workshops on writing as a spiritual practice and writing through grief.



QUESTIONS?

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