

## Preparing Space to Make Our Paths Straighter

### 1. 'In the wilderness, proclaiming a baptism of repentance for forgiveness of sins'

- Wilderness: place of no control, where God wants to be alone with us
- The start of the spiritual journey is to be pulled up short
- There're things not working in my life, out of balance, addictive or even toxic
- Sin: missing the mark
- Repentance as a "change of mind", turning away & shifting direction
- Baptism: ritual of transition
- 12 Step Programs – greatest legacy C20th North American Christian spirituality:
  - Admitting that one **cannot control** one's alcoholism, addiction, or compulsion
  - Coming to **believe in a Higher Power** that can give strength
  - **Examining past errors** with the help of a sponsor (experienced member)
  - **Making amends** for these errors.

### 2. 'Preparing a way that makes paths straight'

- After turning away, need a new direction to take
  - What should it be? What is the way?
  - John the Baptist: living with responsibility-taking, justice, humility & integrity – whatever your profession & social class – king or pauper
  - Need a Higher Power who **gives strength and direction**
  - Isaiah 40:3-5 reference: way back from Babylon exile (C6th BCE) to their land  
"A voice cries out: 'In the wilderness prepare the way of the Lord,  
Make straight in the desert a highway for our God.  
Every valley shall be lifted up, and every mountain and hill made low;  
The uneven ground shall become level, and the rough places plain.  
Then the glory of the Lord shall be revealed, and all the people shall see it together,  
For the mouth of the Lord has spoken.'
- Spiritual practices offered by God to address our human condition in Advent:
    - Prayer, introspection & penance
    - Scripture study & reflection
    - Assisting those in need
    - Service
    - Carolling
    - Celebrating together as a faith community/community – all included
  - Helps fill the space we've created for God with Peace.

### 3. 'Going out to him ... in the river Jordan'

"The people shall see it together"

- People from Jerusalem and Judean countryside were going out to him
- 2 day walk – solidarity and community, on a transformative journey
- Roman bathing not for lower classes, slaves – John's offered was for every one
- We, too, are a new community of inclusion, faithfulness, justice
- We, too, can find our own ways to express this.

*God of all peoples,*

*Whose servant John came baptising and calling for repentance:*

*Help us to hear his voice of judgement, that we may also rejoice in his word of promise,*

*And be found pure and blameless on that glorious Day*

*When Christ comes to rule the earth as Prince of Peace. Amen.*