

## Prepare the way

It's one thing to prepare dinner, or to prepare for finals, company, surgery, a move, a new profession. Practicing what we've learned and experienced, following prescribed procedures, modeling mentors and referring to DIY manuals, we manage to pull off change and challenge without falling on our faces. But "Prepare the way of the Lord?" Really? The prophets made good effort, remember?

Does anyone recall the fix John the Baptist found himself in for preaching that bearing fruit worthy of repentance was a much bigger deal than pedigree papers? And the One he is telling us to prepare for did not seem to take the fastest or easiest choices by Google map standards, prepared by generations of his faith ancestors. Preparation for any coming of the Lord is likely prefaced by a humble confession that we cannot predict or determine what "way" Jesus will take. Or take us. It appears he may favor detours over pavement.

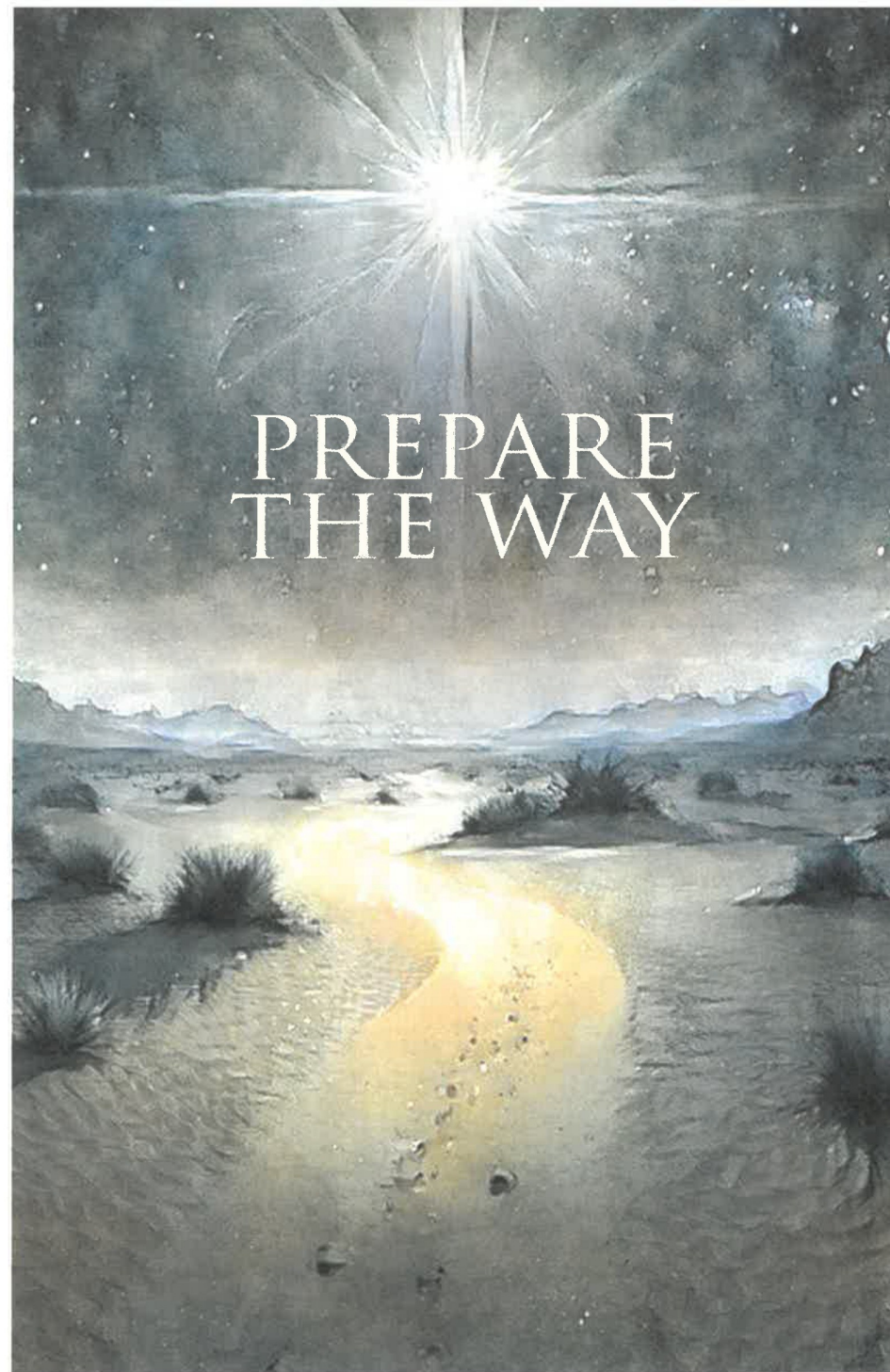
Jesus frequently left the temple track to encounter the sick and hungry on hills instead of highways. Just when folks felt he'd set a sensible course, he dispatched them on a route that led through storm rather than serenity. He made more of a father who ran out to meet a son fresh from the pigpen than he made of a checklist proving he'd cleaned up his act. He suggested the dangerous Jericho Road, and the native population there, represented as likely a place for rescue and mercy as better-secured highways provided by church and state.

When it comes to preparing the way of the Lord, maybe we start by simply stepping out of the way. That could allow opportunity to discern which footprints are his, and to catch up to him in the places he's most likely to be caught again: neighborhoods off the beaten path, in the company of folks who are welcomed only there.

—Sandy Bosserman  
Peace Valley, Missouri

"This is the one of whom the prophet Isaiah spoke when he said, 'The voice of one crying out in the wilderness: *"Prepare the way of the Lord; make his paths straight"*'" (Matthew 3:3, NRSVue). **Today's Bible readings from the lectionary:** Isaiah 11:1-10; Psalm 72:1-7, 18-19; Romans 15:4-13; Matthew 3:1-12.

December 7, 2025, Second Sunday of Advent. Cover design by Paul Stocksdales © Brethren Press. Living Word Bulletin Series © 2025 Brethren Press. Printed in the USA.



CHURCH OF THE BRETHREN  
Hagerstown, Maryland

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**MORNING WORSHIP**

**10:45 AM**

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December 7, 2025  
Second Sunday of Advent

**WELCOME AND ANNOUNCEMENTS**      John Miller, Worship Leader

**WHERE HAVE YOU SEEN GOD?**

**PRELUDE**      "Come, Thou Long-Expected Jesus"      (arr. l.james)  
Becky Ernst and Becky Jackson (Piano Duet)

**CALL TO WORSHIP**

One: This day is a day of preparation.

*All: Open our hearts, O Lord, and make us ready to receive you.*

One: Repentance, changing our attitudes, our lives, is the beginning of our preparation.

*All: Lord, give us courage and confidence.*

One: God will fill us with joy and peace as we become witnesses to God's love.

*All: Lord, help us to be faithful servants all of our days. AMEN.*

**\*HYMN #184**      "Hark! the glad sound"  
[Verse 1]

*Hark, the glad sound! The Savior comes! The Savior promised long! Let ev'ry heart  
prepare a throne, and ev'ry voice a song. On him the Spirit largely poured, exerts its  
sacred fire, wisdom and might and zeal and love, his holy breast inspire.*

[Verse 2]

*He comes the prisoners to release, in Satan's bondage held. The gates of brass before  
him burst, the iron fetters yield. He comes the broken heart to bind, the bleeding soul  
to cure, and with the treasures of his grace to enrich the humble poor.*

[Verse 3]

*His silver trumpets publish loud the jub'lee of the Lord. Our debts are all remitted  
now, our heritage restored. Our glad hosannas, Prince of peace, thy welcome shall  
proclaim, and heav'n's eternal arches ring with thy beloved name.*

**OPENING PRAYER**

Patient and loving God, we so easily launch ourselves in preparation for the secular festival of giving and parties and the swirl of social events; but we

forget that the true preparation is the readiness of our hearts to receive you. Help us look again at our lives and turn them around so that they may be in tune with your will. We ask this in Jesus' Name, AMEN.

**LIGHTING OF THE ADVENT CANDLE**

One: The unfolding of God's word gives light; it imparts understanding to the simple.

*All: As we wait for the living light, let us hear God's word and live by Christ's teachings.*

One: Let us pray: Mighty God, Light of the world, shine in our hearts; let your words of wisdom teach us the way of salvation. Come with grace and mercy to cleanse our hearts for living light. Amen.

**CHORAL RESPONSE**

Christ be our light!

Shine in our hearts.

Shine through the darkness.

Christ be our light!

Shine in your Church gathered today.

Christ be our light!

**SERVICE OF GIVING**

**Call to Giving**

As we join our voices in prayer and praise, so, too, we bring together the symbols of our life investment: money we have earned, the hours we have before us, the abilities that are ours alone. Let us give our offerings with joy.

As we pass the offering plate here in the sanctuary, we also pass a virtual offering plate to those worshipping with us on YouTube Live. We invite you to give by mailing your offering to the church or dropping it off at the church during the week, or by going to the Hagerstowncob website.

**Offertory**      "Prepare the Way, O Zion"      (Smith)

**\*Doxology #119**      "Praise God from whom"

**PRAYER OF THANKSGIVING**

What a joy to give! What a delight to join our efforts to your purposes, amazing God! You inspire us to oppose wickedness, to stand up for the oppressed, to work for harmony among all your children. Lead us, together, to your holy mountain, where all are valued and no one is excluded. May our

offerings spread the knowledge of your ways across this earth, widening the circle of inclusion to embrace all your children, in Jesus' name. Amen.

## A MOMENT TO BECOME LIKE A CHILD

**HYMN #176**                      *"Comfort, comfort, O my people"*  
[Verse 1]

*Comfort, comfort, O my people, speak of peace, now says our God. Comfort those who sit in darkness, mourning 'neath their sorrows' load. Speak unto Jerusalem of the peace that waits for them. Tell of all the sins I cover, and that warfare now is over.*

[Verse 2]

*Hark, the voice of one who's crying in the desert far and near, bidding all to full repentance since the kingdom now is here. O that warning cry obey! Now prepare for God a way. Let the valleys rise to meet him and the hills bow down to greet him.*

[Verse 3]

*O make straight what long was crooked, make the rougher places plain. Let your hearts be true and humble, as befits his holy reign. For the glory of the Lord now o'er earth is shed abroad. And all flesh shall see the token that his word is never broken.*

## SHARING OUR JOYS, CONCERNS, AND HOPES

*Please remember our worship is also on YouTube and our website.  
Please do not share any personal information you do not want to be made public.  
An usher will hold the microphone for you while you share.*

## PRAYERS OF THE PEOPLE

**MORNING ANTHEM**    "O Come, Lord Jesus Come"                      (Angerman)

**SCRIPTURE READING**            Matthew 3:1-12                      NT 2

In those days John the Baptist appeared in the wilderness of Judea, proclaiming, "Repent, for the kingdom of heaven has come near." This is the one of whom the prophet Isaiah spoke when he said,

"The voice of one crying out in the wilderness:

'Prepare the way of the Lord;  
make his paths straight.' "

Now John wore clothing of camel's hair with a leather belt around his waist, and his food was locusts and wild honey. Then Jerusalem and all Judea and all the region around the Jordan were going out to him, and they were baptized by him in the River Jordan, confessing their sins.

But when he saw many of the Pharisees and Sadducees coming for his bap-

tism, he said to them, "You brood of vipers! Who warned you to flee from the coming wrath? Therefore, bear fruit worthy of repentance, and do not presume to say to yourselves, 'We have Abraham as our ancestor,' for I tell you, God is able from these stones to raise up children to Abraham. Even now the ax is lying at the root of the trees; therefore every tree that does not bear good fruit will be cut down and thrown into the fire.

"I baptize you with water for repentance, but the one who is coming after me is more powerful than I, and I am not worthy to carry his sandals. He will baptize you with the Holy Spirit and fire. His winnowing fork is in his hand, and he will clear his threshing floor and will gather his wheat into the granary, but the chaff he will burn with unquenchable fire."

**MESSAGE**                      "Prepare the Way"                      Pastor Twyla Rowe

**HYMN #183**                      *"On Jordan's banks the Baptist's cry"*  
[Verse 1]

*On Jordan's banks the Baptist's cry announces that the Lord is nigh. Awake and harken, for he brings glad tidings of the King of kings!*

[Verse 2]

*Then cleansed be ev'ry life from sin! Make straight the way for God within, and let us all our hearts prepare for Christ to come and enter there.*

[Verse 3]

*Stretch forth your hand, our health restore, and make us rise to fall no more.*

*Oh, let your face upon us shine and fill the world with love divine.*

[Verse 4]

*All praise to you, eternal Son, whose advent has our freedom won, whom with the Father we adore, and Holy Spirit, evermore.*

## BENEDICTION

*After the Benediction, you may be seated.  
Please continue in a spirit of worship as we listen to the Postlude music.*

**POSTLUDE**                      "Prepare Ye the Way of the Lord"                      (Blake)

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\*Please rise — in body or spirit — as an act of worship  
Thank you for joining us in worship today.

~ ~ ~ ~ ~



*Second Sunday of Advent*



Hagerstown  
Church of the Brethren  
15 S. Mulberry Street,  
Hagerstown, Maryland  
21740  
301-733-3565

Office: Tuesday—Friday  
Flexible hours  
(appointments welcome/  
call ahead)

Morning Praise Worship  
at 8:30 AM  
Sunday School at 9:30 AM  
Worship and YouTube Live at  
10:45 AM

[www.hagerstowncob.org](http://www.hagerstowncob.org)

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[www.youtube.com/  
@hagerstowncob](http://www.youtube.com/@hagerstowncob)

Twyla Rowe  
Pastor

Allyson McPeak  
Administrative Assistant

Burton Young  
Director of  
Music Ministries

Don Rowe  
Interior Esthetics  
Technician

*We welcome you to our church and  
Rejoice in your participation with us in  
worship. It is our prayer that you will  
experience the presence of God's Spirit and  
that it will equip you for service and ministry  
in the week ahead. Our Pastor, Deacons, and  
Cluster Leaders are available after worship  
and during the week to listen and assist you in  
your Christian pilgrimage.*

#### **THE ANNOUNCER      December 7, 2025**

**If you placed someone** on the prayer list and they are now celebrating a recovery and would like their name taken off the list, please contact the church office.

**If you or a loved one** has surgery scheduled, is hospitalized, or would like a visit from the pastor, please notify the church.

**“Take A Moment”** Let this be our daily Take a Moment prayer beginning on Sunday, December 7 - Great God, The atmosphere of the holiday season is light and joyful. At the same time, I sometimes feel overwhelmed because of the pressure I put on myself to accomplish a lot of things to make this season a special time. I don't want to lose myself in a “to do” list to the point that I miss experiencing the simplicity and joy that really makes this season special. Instead, I want my spirit to radiate with joy and understanding as I talk to people. I want my spirit to ooze with your gentleness and love as I help others. That's what the season is all about, right? It's not about me and a “to do” list. It is about letting the light of the season illuminate me with a renewed awareness of who I am in relationship to you and to others. So shine on me Great God and renew me to be an instrument of your love, joy, peace and hope to the world around me...and maybe then I can help make this corner of the world a better place. Amen.

**Attendance.** Please sign the attendance rosters found at the end of your pew, or possibly in the hymnal rack, and pass it down the row so everyone can sign.

**Our thanks** to John Miller for being our worship leader today and to Becky Ernst & Becky Jackson for their piano duet.

**The flowers on the altar** this morning are given to the Glory of God in loving memory of Glenn Young for all the support and dedication he gave to Service & Outreach.

**The Advent devotional**, “Word Among Us”, by John Fillmore is available this morning. Copies are on the credenza in the wing of the sanctuary and in the fellowship hall.

**Today is Food Pantry Sunday.** Thanks to all for your gift(s) of non-perishable food items and your continued support of this ministry to our community.

**The Flower & Altar Committee** has an opening on December 14th if you would like to place flowers on the altar in memory, celebration, or honor of a loved one. If you are interested, please contact Susan Hughes at 717-749-7017

**Christmas Eve Service**—Everyone is invited to the Christmas Eve celebration service of the birth of our Savior, Jesus Christ. Come and worship the newborn King through a traditional service of singing carols, listening to the angelic voices of the choir and the heavenly tones of the bell choir and the organ, and hearing the Christmas story, and we will also celebrate communion. Symbolizing the Light that came to the world on that holy night long ago, we will hold light high as we recommit our faithfulness to carry the light into the world. The Christmas Eve service will begin at 7:00 p.m. in the Sanctuary. Come...let us adore Him...Christ the Lord!

**The Breakfast Team** is asking for donations of winter coats and clothes for men, women, and children. Gently used Christmas Trees, ornaments and holiday items, as well as gently used kids toys for the Christmas Community Brunch on December 13th. Large Christmas items can be placed on the stage off the fellowship hall, please label the large items “for community”. A box will be in the west entrance for smaller items. If you would like to donate cookies for the December 13th Breakfast they need to be bagged 4-6 cookies to a bag and then labeled what kind of cookie is in each bag. We would need them before the December 13th Breakfast. All cookies can be left in the west entrance in the designated box closer to December 13th.

**Volunteer Needed**—The Flower and Altar committee is looking for a volunteer for the month of January. If you're interested, please contact Cinnamon Shay.

**The Mary Martha Circle** Christmas craft is now for sale in the west entrance. The price is \$20.00. All proceeds will go to Sleep in Heavenly Peace.  
**SAVE THE DATE!** HCOB's week to volunteer at the REACH Cold Weather Shelter is March 8-15. For those of you who plan to volunteer, please make a note of these dates. More info to come in the new year. Thanks!

**Cash for Causes/Martin's Gift Card Program.** Purchase Martin's gift cards to take to the store to pay for your groceries or gas, and 5% of the face value of the gift card is a donation to the church and goes toward your yearly charitable contribution. To purchase a card, please contact Donnie Maas (240-866-1077). We can make arrangements to leave cards in your church mailbox or mail them to you.

**2026 Pocket Directory**—Our pocket directory is a year-round work in progress. Updates are added as we are made aware of them, but with our busy lives, sometimes we don't remember to pass our changes along to the church office. Do you have any changes to your information that need to be included in the 2026 edition? If you do, either email, call, or leave a note for Allyson **no later than December 15th**. Directories will be printed after the first of the year.

**We're entering the season for high heating costs.** We remind everyone to please keep doors closed to the sanctuary, fellowship hall, church entrances, hallways, and church office. All classroom doors (2nd and 3rd floor) should stay open. Thank you for your awareness and cooperation.

**Our services are streaming through YouTube!** If you have not done so already, subscribe to HCOB's YouTube Channel and share it with others. You can do so by going to: [www.youtube.com/@hagerstowncob](http://www.youtube.com/@hagerstowncob)

**Inclement Weather Policy—If inclement weather is forecasted, be sure to:**

- \* Check your email—we will send out a group email as quickly as possible if the decision to cancel in-person worship is made.
- \* Check our Facebook page—Hagerstown Church of the Brethren ([facebook.com/hagerstowncob](https://facebook.com/hagerstowncob)) we will post updates there as well.

If we do hold in-person worship, and if you are uncomfortable driving in bad weather, please join us on YouTube Live. Be safe first and check your email!

**Because winter weather is here,** we'd like to pass along a gentle reminder to drive slowly in our parking lot, especially when it's snow-covered or icy. Always be on alert for children, pedestrians, dogs, cats, and those less mindful than you are of the pavement surface conditions.

### **Year-end Giving Guidelines**

The Internal Revenue Service states under the heading of Timing of Contributions: *Contributions must actually be paid in cash or other property before the close of your tax year to be deductible, whether you use the cash or accrual method.*

**This means all contributions for any given year must be physically at the church no later than December 31st to be applied to the year's contribution statement.**

<https://www.irs.gov/charities-non-profits/charitable-organizations/charitable-contribution-deductions>

## **CALENDAR**

### **Sunday, December 7**

Food Pantry Sunday

9:00 am Sunday School Orchestra/Fellowship Hall

9:30 am Sunday School, individual classrooms

10:20 am Fellowship Time/Mullendore Room

10:45 am Worship, Sanctuary & YouTube Live ([www.youtube.com/@hagerstowncob](http://www.youtube.com/@hagerstowncob))

### **Monday, December 8**

Church office closed

### **Tuesday, December 9**

6:30 pm Endowment Trustee Meeting/Mullendore Room

### **Wednesday, December 10**

Administrative Assistant/Work from home

12:00 pm Deadline for bulletin announcement submissions

6:30 pm GriefShare/Mullendore Room

### **Thursday, December 11**

5:30 pm Praise Band Rehearsal/Fellowship Hall

6:30 pm Brethren Bells/Choir Room

7:30 pm Temple Choir/Fellowship Hall

### **Friday, December 12**

8:00 am Bulletin prep/Church office

1:00 pm Islamic Center/Use of Parking Lot (1-3pm)

### **Saturday, December 13**

Pastor Twyla's day off

8:00 am Christmas Community Brunch/Fellowship Hall  
(Doors open at 9:00 AM to the public)

### **Sunday, December 14**

Junior Church

8:15 am Parish Nurse Blood Pressure Screening

8:30 am Morning Praise Worship/Fellowship Hall

9:30 am Sunday School, individual classrooms

10:15 am Parish Nurse Blood Pressure Screening

10:45 am Worship, Sanctuary & YouTube Live ([www.youtube.com/@hagerstowncob](http://www.youtube.com/@hagerstowncob))

*Remember our weekday schedule is subject to rapid change.*

You may mail your offering to  
15 S. Mulberry Street,  
Hagerstown MD 21740  
OR  
you can make a secure offering  
donation on our website using  
Breeze [www.hagerstowncob.org](http://www.hagerstowncob.org)

The church calendar is online at  
[www.hagerstowncob.org](http://www.hagerstowncob.org).  
Click the calendar tab.

***A Holiday Message...***  
*(GriefShare)*



Dear world,  
please be gentle with grieving hearts as the  
holidays near.

They walk among us, often quietly and unseen.  
They wear smiles that seem bright. They laugh  
in ways that sound real. They show up for  
others while silently carrying the weight  
of someone missing.

There will be real moments of joy—  
followed by the sharp sting of knowing new  
memories being made don't include the one  
they wish was still here. It's the strange beauty of  
being human: joy and grief, forever intertwined.

So when you see a grieving heart, don't look  
away. Lean in. Cry with them. And let your love  
be louder than their silence.

It's true, love can't fix grief.  
But it reminds us we're not alone in it.  
And that's what matters most.

—*Her View From Home*