

Opening Prayer: God of history, we gather this Sunday in anticipation of celebrating that moment when you split history through a mother's pain, a husband's obedience, and a baby's first cry.

Prepare our hearts to welcome you into our lives as you welcome us with your mercy. Teach us how to live faithfully as you are ever faithful to us. Amen.

Pastoral Prayer: We give thanks, God, for stirrings in our world that have liberated minds and lives. We praise you as the Author of earthly governments of peace. Although we may perceive of ourselves as being incapable of affecting countries and cultures far from our own, we lift our voices in petition for the continued breaking out of peace.

We pray for those within our community and church family whose homes are filled with dissension, discord, and even violence.

We ask you to provide physical and psychological safety for family members who feel trapped. We pray for your healing of those who perpetrate that violence. Create within us a willingness to extend ourselves with equal compassion and energy to the

offenders and those ~~who~~ offenders.

May our eyes not look aside, may
our resolution not wane, may we seek
your discernment and mercy in being re-
presentatives of your restorative love.

In the name of the innocent babe of
Bethlehem, the one who taught us
to pray, saying

