

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 child's 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 you thanks, God, for the 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. As regimes become less restrictive and fledgling democracies grow stronger, endow the people with patience and courage, with wisdom and vision.

We pray for those within our community and church family whose homes are filled with dissension, discord, and even violence. Ask you to provide physical and psychological safety

For family members who feel trapped. We pray for  
your healing of those for those who perpetrate that violence.

May our eyes not look aside, May our resolution not waver  
May we seek your discernment and mercy in ~~the~~ being re-  
representatives of your restorative love.

In the name of the innocent child of Bethlehem we  
pray, Amen