

Pastoral Prayer: O God, we thank you for the lives of your faithful servants who waited for the advent of your Son. We thank you that their witness speaks to us today. We give you thanks that we do not have to wait as did Abraham and Sarah and Ruth and Boaz. We ^{do} not have to rely on the prophecy as did Isaiah. Their prophecy is the source of our memory.

While we wait in expectation, knowing the outcome and the miracle, our excitement should not be diminished. Although it is with sadness that we admit, even with that knowledge, we often act as if there has been no revelation.

So we come before you, asking that as a woman carries and nourishes within her a new life, may ~~we~~ ^{we} allow to nourish within us a yearning for peace, which we will nourish, birth, and mature. As a woman prepares for the contractions of child birth, may we not shrink from discord, which is inevitable in our passage toward peace. Help us not to be afraid to attempt in possibilities of humanity, because we have lost sight of what is possible with you.

In the ^{name} of those who have waited that we might know this day, we pray - in the name of him who taught us when we pray to say -

Opening Prayer: Dear God, we need to be honest with ourselves; yet, that can cause discomfort when we take a close and candid look at ourselves. It is only in knowing your mercy that we have the courage to pray. Being aware that you call us to retrospection and our communal responsibility, we pray together now.

We confess that as we begin Lent, we are less concerned about our spiritual shape than about our preparations, which often become frantic. We recognize that we ~~are~~ ^{are} more excited about our rounds of parties presents and all we will consume than about our attending to our inner hunger. We even confess that there are times when we wish Christmas would go away! Help us, Lord, beginning this day to understand the significance of this day - Amen.