

The City Church, New York

The Prayer of Thanksgiving and Intercession – Sunday December 25, 2005
Christmas Day

Christians first celebrated Jesus' birthday on December 25th in A.D. 336. A Jewish belief that prophets died on an anniversary of their conception or birth prompted Christians to mark March 25th as the day of Jesus' conception. December 25th was 9 months later. Palestinian winter nights are too cold to stay out in the fields, so Jesus was likely born in spring. But what's important is that he was born!

Let us pray.

Our Father: We don't always prepare for Your coming to us – not even in Sunday morning worship. Perhaps we're least prepared in the "announcements" we can tend to think of as merely "commercial breaks." But announcements can make all the difference in the world – and surely so if they come from You. Indeed, we would not be here today or any other day but for long-ago Announcements made in Your name – to prepare us.

There were all those Announcements made by Your prophets. Those of Isaiah: "Behold, a virgin shall conceive and bear a Son and call him Emmanuel" – God with us. And again Isaiah said: "His authority shall be as Wonderful Counselor, the Mighty God, the Prince of Peace." And then there was that Announcement through Micah: "You, Bethlehem Ephrathah, you're small among the clans of Judah, yet out of you will come one ... whose origins are from everlasting." And then there was that Announcement that Gabriel made to Mary: "Don't be afraid! God favors you with a son. Call him Y'shua. He will be called the Son of the Most High." And there was that Announcement that the angel made to Joseph: "Don't be afraid! Take Mary as your wife, for the one who is conceived in her is of the Holy Spirit. ... And you're to call him Y'shua, for he will save his people from their sins." And there was that Announcement of the angels to shepherds in Bethlehem's fields: "Don't be afraid! I bring you good news of great joy for all people! For to you is born this day, in David's city, a Savior – Christ, the Lord!"

So Father, we thank You for every Announcement of Your Good News – every proclamation of the Gospel – down to this day's service of worship. May we, as Mary did, ponder Your Good News in our hearts. And may we, as she did, surrender ourselves fully to Your holy purpose. We pray in the name of Your Son, the Christ of Christmas, our Savior and our Lord, who taught us to pray to You, His Father, saying:

Our Father, who art in heaven, hallowed be thy name. Thy kingdom come. Thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven. Give us this day, our daily bread. And forgive us our trespasses as we forgive those who trespass against us. And lead us not into temptation but deliver us from evil. For thine is the kingdom and the power and the glory forever. Amen.