

**BLUE CHRISTMAS - LONGEST NIGHT SERVICE, 2020  
PARIS FIRST UNITED METHODIST CHURCH**

**Prelude**

**Cradle Medley**

John Massa, pianist

**Welcome to this time of Holy Reflection**

Joy Weathersbee

*In this season we often feel alone, sad, our hearts cry in the silence of this long night, but let us give ourselves this gift of time to embrace our hurt. Relax, find respite in the music and in the lighting of candles. Just as the seasons change and the light fades, remember the earth still moves and you are not alone this night. There are others who share in your grief. At the conclusion of this service, you will have the opportunity to express your thoughts through writing or simply a time of quiet reflection. If writing out what you feel is a helpful way to express your feelings, you might secure paper and a pen as we sing.*

**Song**

**“In the Bleak Midwinter”**

**221**

In the bleak midwinter, frosty wind made moan,  
Earth stood hard as iron, water like a stone;  
Snow had fallen, snow on snow, snow on snow,  
In the bleak midwinter, long ago.

Our God, heav'n cannot hold him, nor earth sustain;  
Heav'n and earth shall flee away when he comes to reign;  
In the bleak midwinter a stable place sufficed  
The Lord God Almighty, Jesus Christ.

What can I give him, poor as I am?  
If I were a shepherd, I would bring a lamb;  
If I were a wise man, I would do my part,  
Yet what I can I give Him — Give my heart.

**Scripture Readings**

**Ecclesiastes 3:1-11**

Susan Wolski

**Psalm 22**

Shani Campbell

**Psalm 23**

Chuck Haney

*(Quiet reflective music begins and continues through prayer)*

**Prayer**

Joy

*Lord, we carry much sadness in our hearts for the loss of time; the loss of loved ones; the loss of security and our own sense of loss of ourselves in these difficult days. Sometimes our hearts are heavy because of unrealized dreams of what never was: a job opportunity we desired, a child for whom we longed; a relationship of mutual*

*love and trust that was never realized.. This year many of us have faced multiple changes in our lives due to living during a pandemic. We've had interruptions of employment, homeschooling our children, limitations in our daily activities. Some of us have lost our sense of security because of the loss of jobs, and the loss of loved ones. We find ourselves burdened to look ahead. The uncertainty of what tomorrow holds can be a heavy load to bear.*

*Lift our hearts and minds to be comforted; help us realize that we are not alone. Teach us to reach out. Abide with us, O Lord, we pray.*

[\(Meditative Piano music concludes\)](#)

**Scripture Readings**

**Matthew 11:28-29**

Chuck Haney

**Revelation 21:1-7**

Joy Weathersbee

**Lighting of the candles.** [\(Quiet meditative music during readings and candle lightings\)](#)

***We light our first candle to represent GRIEF .***

Chuck Haney

*We hold the pain of losing loved ones in this past year and from long ago. We've suffered loss due to chronic and terminal illnesses and accidents. We've suffered loss due to living in this time of a global pandemic. We've suffered loss due to emotional struggles that ended with a loved one taking their own life. We've lost dreams, never to be fulfilled and hope that seems to evaporate.*

*Lift our hearts and minds to be comforted, recognizing that we are not alone. Teach us to reach out. Abide with us O Lord, we pray.*

***We pause to reflect, "O God, what do you want me to know about my grief?"***

***The second candle represents COURAGE***

Suzan Wolski

*To confront our sorrows we must summon strength beyond our own. Once again, we can learn to comfort others, even when our own fears are great. In the act of offering comfort, we will once again find our confidence, our voice to openly engage with others. We will learn to lean on what we stand for; lean on our values so that thru these challenges, we become more passionate and purposeful in our own life.*

*Lift our hearts and minds to be comforted, recognizing that we are not alone. Teach us to reach out. Abide with us O Lord, we pray.*

***We pause to reflect, "God, where do you want me to have more courage?"***

**We light our third candle which represents MEMORIES.**

Shani Campbell

*We pull our memories out of the containers of our hearts and minds. We search our memories for times of joy shared, recalling laughter, and moments of happiness but also we remember the times of sadness in the recalling the past. Sometimes our memories hurt or were never filled with love. While we can acknowledge the pain caused by some of our memories, we can also make the choice to focus on the memories that fill us with gratitude.*

*Lift our hearts and minds to be comforted realizing that we are not alone. Teach us to reach out. Abide with us, O Lord, we pray.*

**We pause to ask, “God, what do you want me to know about my memories?”**

**We have come to our fourth candle that represents LOVE**

Joy Weathersbee

*Through the years we have given love, received love and even felt love go unacknowledged. We recognize what some call “love” can feel toxic and here we will pause to pray for acceptance of this knowledge. We pray that in recognizing our own pain, we can seek to fill the spaces around us with positive experiences of love and acceptance. We give thanks for times of great joy and deep sorrow born out of our love for others. We recognize that we are only able to express love because we have been loved. We give thanks that You, O God, love us perfectly. Your love for us never ends, even when we have failed ourselves, others and your desire for our greater good.*

*Lift our hearts and minds to be comforted, recognizing that we are not alone. Teach us to reach out. Abide with us O Lord, we pray.*

**We pause to ponder, “God, how can I be more open to receive an outpouring of your unconditional love?”**

*(Instrumental Music ends after a time for meditation.)*

**Reaching Out to Others:**

*We regret the necessity, due to the pandemic, that this service has to be offered this year only in this virtual format. But you are still invited you to share your concerns, burdens, grief's, sorrows and all that causes you pain and sadness. At the conclusion of this service, you might reach out by calling a trusted friend or family member. You could write a letter expressing your grief and sadness or even just write out your feelings as a prayer to God. If you would like to submit a prayer request to have someone pray for you, you may do so by completing and submitting one of the prayer cards found on this Facebook page and on our website at [parisfumc-tn.org](http://parisfumc-tn.org). If you'd like to have someone pray with you, consider Connections, a prayer ministry started by Shani Campbell a member of Paris First who is also a licensed local pastor and operates this ministry out of the Campbell Therapy Center.*

*(Shani, shares about Connections)*

