



The United Parish in Brookline

American Baptist • United Church of Christ • United Methodist



"Winter Solstice" collage art by Jodi Heights

December 21, 2025
Fourth Sunday of Advent
Longest Night Worship

Gathering Music

Jodi Heights, *piano*

Chiming of the Trinity

Gathering Song

Put Everything in Order
by Velma Frye

All Sing

Put everything in order as day begins to fade
Put everything in order as day begins to fade

All things are passing
Moment by moment, breath by breath
All things are passing
Moment by moment, birth to death

Welcome

Kent French, *Senior Pastor*
Jodi Heights, *Guest Musician*

Song

O Beautiful Darkness
by Velma Frye

All: *O, beautiful darkness, O, comforting darkness (repeat)*

One: *The arms of darkness hold us,*
Revealing now how dear we are.

All: *O, beautiful darkness, O, comforting darkness (repeat)*

One: *Enfold us and hold us,*
Inform us, transform us.

All: *O, beautiful darkness, O, comforting darkness (repeat)*

One: *Surround us, all around us,*
And hold our light, like sky to star.

All: *O, beautiful darkness, O, comforting darkness (repeat)*

Poem

To Know the Dark
by Wendell Berry

Peter Rempelakis

To go in the dark with a light is to know the light.
To know the dark, go dark. Go without sight,
and find that the dark, too, blooms and sings,
and is traveled by dark feet and dark wings.

Song

Aurora
by Jodi Heights

Poem

We grow accustomed to the Dark
by Emily Dickinson

Julie Anderson

We grow accustomed to the Dark—
When Light is put away—
As when the Neighbor holds the Lamp
To witness her Goodbye—

The Bravest—grope a little—
And sometimes hit a Tree
Directly in the Forehead—
But as they learn to see—

A Moment—We uncertain step
For newness of the night—
Then—fit our Vision to the Dark—
And meet the Road—erect—

Either the Darkness alters—
Or something in the sight
Adjusts itself to Midnight—
And Life steps almost straight

And so of larger—Darknesses—
Those Evenings of the Brain—
When not a Moon disclose a sign—
Or Star—come out—within—

Song

This is Our Longest Night

Lyrics by Mary Louise Bringle, Music by Sally Ann Morris

Verses 1 & 3: Jodi Heights

Verses 2 & 4: All Sing



1. The day - light dims as the sun sinks low.
2. A thou - sand ques - tions, a thou - sand sighs;
4. The fi - nal rays of the sun now gone,



One lone - ly star pierc - es heav - en's height.
a thou - sand wrongs tram - ple truth and right.
more stars ap - pear, shin - ing clear and bright.



A chill - ing wind has be - gun to blow:
With wea - ry hearts, we a - vert our eyes:
Life's deep - est dark - ness pre - cedes new dawn:

Fine



This is our long - est night.
This is our long - est night. *To Stanza 3*
This is our long - est night.

Verse 3

*One hope holds fast when all hope seems dead.
We keep our watch for returning light,
With trust that hangs on the slimmest thread:
This is our longest night.*

All may continue singing verse 4, printed above.

Poem

The Beauty of the Darkness by Barbara Feuchter

Barbara Feuchter

God created darkness as
a background to display
God's message of beauty,
and as a framework
to do God's good works.

Darkness teaches us that
the universe is much larger from our
horizon which encompasses
planets, moons, and inspires us
to discover even more new worlds.

We learn that darkness becomes a
loving, comforting blanket which
soothes the pain.
Darkness represents a safe haven
for our most precious and
sacred prayers, wishes, and dreams.

Indeed, in the darkness God endows
us with rest which allows us
to grow in courage, strength and
compassion.

Darkness instills even a sense of gratitude
as we experience a special serendipity
that lightens our hearts and brightens
our outlook.

Darkness is not always understood,
but under the veil of darkness, you
can always see the Glory of God.

Prayer and Song

Each Winter as the Year Grows Older

New Century Hymnal #435

Verse 1: Jodi Heights

Spoken Parts: Louise Bower, John Halbrook, Carolyn Melbye

Verses 2-4: All Sing

One: 1. *Each winter as the year grows older,
We each grow older too.
The chill sets in a little colder;
The verities we knew
Seem shaken and untrue.*

One: God, here in the midst of the holidays when it is easy to become lost in the rush,
we acknowledge that some of us are carrying heavy burdens.
Some of our bodies are not well. Some of us mourn loved ones lost.
Some of us struggle with mental illnesses that make daily life feel impossible.
Help us to hold each other with love.

continued...

**All: 2. *When race and class cry out for treason,
When sirens call for war,
They overshout the voice of reason
And scream till we ignore
All we held dear before.***

One: God, it is so easy to despair at the brokenness of our world.
All around us, people are suffering
and often we feel helpless to make any difference.
Teach us to rekindle our hope so we can continue to build a better world.

**All: 3. *Yet I believe beyond believing,
That life can spring from death:
That growth can flower from our grieving;
That we can catch our breath
And turn transfixed by faith.***

One: Oh God, remind us of the words of Psalmist:
“Even the darkness will not be dark to you; the night will shine like the day,
for darkness is as light to you.”
Teach us how to see in the dark.
Help us transform our communities and our world to create heaven on earth.

**All: 4. *So even as the sun is turning
To journey to the north,
The living flame, in secret burning,
Can kindle on the earth
And bring God's love to birth.***

Song

Lone Wolf
by Jodi Heights

Lighting the Advent Wreath

One: In lighting candles, building fires, and decorating with twinkling lights,
we bring balance to the cold, dark months of winter.

**All: Let us depart from this space,
comforted and renewed by the rest and richness of the dark night.**

One: Out of the vulnerability of darkness,

All: We light a candle of Hope

One: Out of the stillness of darkness,

All: We light a candle of Peace.

One: Out of the wonder of darkness,

All: We light a candle of Joy.

One: And out of the womb of night and the possibility in darkness,

All: We light a candle of Love.

One: Let us take our light out into the dark night,

All: To warm and enlighten ourselves and the world around us.

Closing Song

Blackbird

by Paul McCartney and John Lennon
arranged by Jodi Heights

We invite you to light a candle and take it with you out of this space.

Benediction

Kent French

Parting Music

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Jodi Heights Biography

Hailing from Boston, Alternative Pop artist Jodi Heights stands out in the sea of singer-songwriters with her classically-honed technique and her poetic prowess. She holds multiple degrees in music, including a Master of Music from New England Conservatory. Her most recent album and first Grammy submission is the night-themed *Nocturne*. She has also created a *Nocturnal Journal* offering people a place to explore their relationships with night and darkness. www.jodiheights.com

WELCOME

We at the United Parish in Brookline believe that all people are made in the image of God and embrace and cherish every person and every kind of family. Jesus Christ welcomed everyone; we seek to follow his example in our own life and worship, by extending God's love and grace abundantly and equally to everyone. We affirm and welcome all people to share in worship, fellowship and leadership with us, to join us in a diversity of race, gender, sexual identity, physical and mental ability, ethnicity and economic means.

We have joined with other Open and Affirming (United Church of Christ) and Welcoming and Affirming (American Baptist Churches USA), as well as with the Reconciling Ministries Network (United Methodist Churches) to declare that we are and will remain open to all people.

We invite you to consider becoming a member of the United Parish family. You may become a member by transferring membership or by a statement of faith. If you desire to retain ties with a former church, we invite you to become an associate or affiliate member for the time you are with us.

*We ask that you silence all electronic devices.
Please see an usher if you would like a hearing assistive device.*

*Because our building is open to the public,
an adult should accompany children if/when they leave the worship service.*

Ministers
Senior Pastor
Associate Pastor
Minister of Music
Seminarian
Handbell Choir Director
Choir Section Leader
Choir Section Leader
Choir Section Leader
Choir Section Leader
Multimedia Producer
Parish Administrator
Accounting Administrator
Building Manager
Head Custodian
Custodian
Custodian
Custodian
Nursery Supervisor
Nursery Staff
Nursery Staff
Nursery Staff
Nursery Staff
Pastor Emerita

The People of the United Parish
Reverend Kent French
Reverend Amy Norton-Benfield
Susan DeSelms
Matisse Peppet
Tricia Kopko
Ruby Abreu
Emma West
Joey Timmons
Valentine Umeh
Jordan Wuth
Sarah Fitzpatrick
Jim Smith
Rebekah Shore
Violet Nowlan
Emery Bibbins
Joy Hanlon
Jesse Kieffer
Katy Lum
Adrianna Dionisio
Anne Florient
Ione Madsen Hardy
Ashlyn O'Dowd
Patricia Coughlin

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