

Dear LSC Community:

As I write this message, I am tucked into my cozy home with a hot cup of coffee steaming beside me. My dogs are curled near my chair, and I look out on a very cold morning. No sun, grey clouds. It is the middle of December, and our winter choir concert and December nursing pinning are just memories. Finals are coming far too fast for some of us, and the promise of a welcome break is ahead. As I look at the overcast sky and my frozen back yard, I am reminded of the opening verse of an old carol:

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, long ago...*

The holiday season can be a time of joy and wild celebrations. It is a time for family and friends, warm cookies and cocoa. It is a time of memories and reconnections. So many significant religious holidays and secular events happen during this winter season. Each of these celebrations includes fellowship, friendship, family, and warm wishes for a brighter new year.

The holiday season can also be a lonely and overly quiet time. It can be a time of struggle for those experiencing financial hardship or food insecurity. The holiday season can trigger painful memories and sadness. This year, many of us have lost loved ones: colleagues, friends, and dear family members. Getting through the “first” holidays without them can be difficult and heavy.

I find I am somewhere between these feelings: happiness and melancholy. And I want to say to each of you: it is OK to feel all of these emotions. It is memory that brings us the smiles of happy times and simultaneously honors the memory of our loved ones. What sustains me are warm memories, the gift of friends and family, and the true joy I have in sharing the work we do together here at LSC every single day.

Each of us could be doing anything else besides working at LSC. All of us have jobs on campus that could be performed anywhere else and we likely would be making more money. And yet, all of us choose to be here, working together, keeping our facilities warm and bright, supporting each other through every situation, and watching our students blossom and grow into successful citizens and professionals. It is not about money: We choose to find our riches in this calling we have to support and nurture and educate people on their path to fulfilling their potential, no matter what our job title might be. And it is a calling! The joy and the thrill of seeing our students thrive and find their path forward is a personally rewarding experience for each of us.

As I think about 2024 and begin to prepare for retirement in June of 2025, I have the mixed emotions of joy and sadness, both in my personal and professional life. And I also have the wonderful certainty that the memories of my time here at LSC with all of you will always bring me these mixed emotions, knowing that we accomplished so much, helped so many people find themselves, and made a major difference in so many lives. And it isn't only the work we do for students. We care about each other. We held each other during the hard times, nurtured each other during the sad times, and celebrated our many happy times.

So...I raise my coffee cup to the bleak back yard, to December's chill, and to each and every one of you. Cheers to the ones here today. Cheers to the ones that we lost on the way, and cheers to knowing that YOU, and together WE, make a difference in so many lives every single day. What a luxury of riches! What wonderful memories we share! Happy Holidays.

(I suggest you go to the YouTube link below to hear the Memories song from One Voice Children's Choir. A gift of beautiful voices.)

Memories

Here's to the one's that we got
Cheers to the wish you were here, but you're not
'Cause the dreams bring back all the memories
Of everything we've been through

Close to the ones here today
Close to the ones that we lost on the way
'Cause the dreams bring back all the memories (dreams bring back)
And the memories bring back, memories bring back you

There's a time that I remember, when I did not know no pain
When I believed in forever, and everything would stay the same
Now my heart feel like December (December)
When somebody say your name (ay, ay)
'Cause I can't reach out to call you, but I know I will one day, yeah

Everybody hurts sometimes (everybody)
Everybody hurts someday, yeah
But everything gon' be alright
Go and raise your voice and say, ay

Here's to the ones that we got (here's to the one)
Cheers to the wish you were here, but you're not
'Cause the dreams bring back all the memories (dreams bring back)
Of everything we've been through (everything we've been through)

Close to the ones here today (close to the ones)
Close to the ones that we lost on the way
'Cause the dreams bring back all the memories (dreams bring back)
And the memories bring back, memories bring back you

There's a time that I remember when I never felt so lost
When I felt all of the hatred was too powerful to stop
Now my heart feel like an ember and it's lighting up the dark
I'll carry these torches for ya that you know I'll never drop, yeah

Everybody hurts sometimes (everybody)
Everybody hurts someday, ay, ay
But everything gon' be alright
Go and raise your voice and say, ay

Here's to the ones that we got (here's to the ones)
Cheers to the wish you were here, but you're not
'Cause the dreams bring back all the memories (dreams bring back)
Of everything we've been through (everything we've been through)

Close to the ones here today (close to the ones)
Close to the ones that we lost on the way
'Cause the dreams bring back all the memories (dreams bring back)
And the memories bring back, memories bring back you **

*In the Bleak Midwinter. Christina Rossetti and Gustav Holst

**Memories. Maroon 5 (Adam Levine) 2019. Recorded by 222 and Interscope Records. Lyrics above altered by the One Voice Children's Choir. Available at: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=cUxxWbM9q5U>