Thank you U.S. Attorney Stanton for your gracious words, and for joining us on this new year and new day.  Chairman Conrad, and all the Council members, I look forward to your service and leadership in the years ahead.

It was a privilege to have my Law School Ethics Professor Judge Donald administer the oath of office – know that I do not take these words lightly.

I want to thank the people of Memphis for the faith you have placed in me.  It is the greatest honor of my life to serve as your Mayor.

Most importantly, I want to thank Melyne Strickland, my first lady for the past 20 years.  I look forward to sharing your compassion and generosity as an ambassador for the city.  Thank you to my children James and Kathleen for your patience and support, and for always making me proud.

I want to thank my parents, Judy and Jim, for the values that have guided me throughout my life.

I also want to recognize Mayor Wharton for his help and assistance in this period of transition.  Mayor Wharton, you are, and have always been, a credit to your family, the profession of law, and the city you love.

I want to congratulate the members of the new City Council; Tuesday, we begin the hard work, together.

On Election Night, I told the people of Memphis that on January 1st, we would have “new eyes to solve old problems.”  I am excited about the staff we have assembled and know that these are the best and the brightest.  Thank you for agreeing to serve, and know that I am grateful for the sacrifice and commitment you have made.

You are looking at the biggest shake up in Memphis City government in a quarter of a Century, and we are just getting started.  The people of Memphis called for change, and that call has not gone unheard.

We will have more women in leadership roles than ever before.

We have restructured government in an unprecedented way to save tax dollars.

We brought together more than 150 people during the transition to share ideas and insight into how we can improve government and improve the lives of the people we serve.

Now today, collectively, we start the work of building a new city; let this be a day of renewal.

We no doubt face challenges greater than ever before.  We have debt that must be paid, a pension that must be funded, and a tax base moving away.  Yet, we stand with our feet forward ready to confront these challenges head-on.

As Mayor I inherit success and failure, projects stalled and those in motion…but I also inherit a city with amazing people who are generous and resilient, and who have demanded more from their leadership.

Over the next four years, I will do everything in my power to restore trust where it is broken and hope where it is lost.  I will work every day to make our streets safer and our city stronger - to create jobs and increase wages- to provide better roads and transportation, and to improve the quality and service of city government.

We will focus on the goal of retaining and recruiting quality police officers and firefighters; knowing public safety is at the forefront of rebuilding our city.

We will work harder than ever to renew our city’s sense of self-confidence, and I will work harder than ever to make Memphis a place where people want to move to again.

My vision for Memphis is a city that is prosperous and strong, and socially just.  It’s a city where our families feel safe and our children have a chance.  And while I have great expectations, I have simple ones too:  - pick up the trash – pave the streets – clean up blight - provide a 911 system that answers your calls.

My vision for Memphis is city government that is brilliant at the basics.

And while I dream of a city with bigger building and taller skyscrapers - my greatest dream is a city where more of our children are graduating high school, more of our homeless find housing, and more of those without a job find the dignity of work.

But to fulfill the promise of Memphis, I will need your help!  I challenge every citizen of this great city to do your part.  Show up to town-hall meetings, let your voice be heard, mentor a child, check on a neighbor.  Pick up litter when you see it on the street and volunteer for your neighborhood watch.

Because the problems we face as a city are too vast to be solved by government alone and too big to be solved overnight.

The solutions rest with each of us, doing our part; the responsibility is now ours.

And, here on this day of renewal, this time of celebration, we must recognize that we are a city rife with inequality; it is our moral obligation, as children of God, to lift up the poorest among us.

Every day, families throughout the world turn to Memphis because of St. Jude – a hospital known for hope – yet named after “the saint of lost causes.”  St. Jude is a blessing to millions of children, and we are grateful as a city for all they do.

Yet in the shadows of so much promise, in the recess of our mind, nearly half of all children in Memphis are growing up in poverty.  Let it be known, in the eyes of this Mayor and this administration, they are not a lost cause.

We will work with partners, public and private:

- To expand early childhood programs for the thousands of children left out of the system,

- To provide greater access to parks, libraries, and community centers,

- And, to increase the number of summer youth and jobs programs to help young people further their learning, self-confidence, and work skills.

It is these children that need our help the most - that need the good example of a neighbor, the encouragement of a teacher, the appreciation of an employer, the recognition of a city.  While Memphis City Government is no longer responsible for our schools, we are responsible for our kids.

Last year, 1,296 children were shot, shot at, or threatened with a weapon in Memphis.  Let me repeat that number, because it is startling – last year, 1,296 children were shot, shot at, or threatened with a weapon.

It is unacceptable that we ever let violence get to this point.

It is unacceptable that because of a child’s circumstance or station in life, they too often become the victims or perpetrators of crime; and we know of them only through a mug shot or memorial - a child we failed to reach.

This month, we will announce a partnership with the State and the West Tennessee Drug Taskforce, to target and remove gang leaders from our streets - to force those who are threatening and recruiting our kids out of our neighborhoods.

And on Monday, I will introduce a legislative package that will include enhanced sentences for repeat domestic violence offenders, and will allow law enforcement to seek immediate emergency orders of protection for victims.

Let this be crystal clear; it is a new day in Memphis.  We will no longer tolerate those that violate the safety of our citizens.

To the naysayer and cynics: write off Memphis at your own peril; we are a city resolute and strong; While some see a lost cause, I see hope.

I refuse to accept that we cannot build a better future for all our families – and neither should you.

One of the best moments for me as a candidate and during the campaign was the annual Orange Mound Community Parade.  It didn’t start out that way; because inadvertently we had missed the deadline and couldn’t be included.  So while many of our elected officials rode in the parade, I walked beside it.

It was beside the parade, where I got to talk to hundreds of voters. I heard remarkable stories from remarkable people.  Along the way, you invited me into your homes. You introduced me to your families. I listened to your questions, and did my best to answer them. And at the end of the day, I knew there was no place I would have rather been, than standing with you; beside the parade.

Right now, more than ever, that’s the kind of Mayor Memphis needs - someone willing to roll up his sleeves and walk with you – not in the parade, but along the route.  And that’s where I intend to be.

Together we can build a city that is a model for the nation.

Together we can end the inequity and division that has held us back.

Together, we can give the people of Memphis, a city and a government they truly deserve.

Thank you. God bless you, and God bless Memphis.