“No matter who you are,
No matter where you are
on life’s journey,
You are welcome here.”
**St. Paul**  
**United Church of Christ**  
**Blue Christmas Service**  
December 21, 2021   7:00 pm

WELCOME  
Rev. Michelle Torigian

OPENING RESPONSES  
One: As we move through the shadows where light finds no home,  
**Many: God is sauntering with us.**  
One: As we journey through the desert without direction or goal,  
**Many: God is wandering with us.**  
One: As we endure life in the space between grief and joy,  
**Many: God is trekking with us.**  
One: Whether we abide in the wilderness or promised land,  
**Many: God escorts us.**

PRAYER OF INVOCATION (Unison)  
**Loving God, Divine Sojourner, in our minds we know you are**  
always our partner and you are forever present. Yet in the depths  
of despair, we can’t always sense your presence. We move about this  
earth with the desire that you see us. We cry in our grief, hoping that  
you will hear the lament of our hearts. As you hold us in the palm  
of your hand, open our souls in order for us to know the extent of your  
care in our lives. Amen.

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Service written by Rev. Michelle L. Torigian
In the Bleak Midwinter

1. 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.

2. Our God transcends all heaven, earth, and its domain;
   heaven and earth shall flee away when Christ comes to reign;
   cherubim and seraphim thronged the midnight air;
   sovereign God almighty, Jesus Christ.

3. Angels and archangels may have gathered there,
   If I were a shepherd, I would bring a lamb.
   But his mother only, in her maid'en bliss,
   worshiped the beloved with a kiss.

4. What can I offer, poor as I am?
   If I were a wise one, I would do my part; but
   in the bleak midwinter, all my heart.
   what can I offer; all my heart.
SCRIPTURE READING Psalm 88:3-7

PRAYER (UNISON)  
Some of us are in the depths of the Pit, God of Deliverance. Our hearts are swallowed by grief, and our souls overflowing with despair. As the shadows hide your presence, call us with a different voice and reach to us with different hands. May our seasons of despair evolve from times of loneliness to times of comfort. Amen.

SCRIPTURE READING Psalm 130

PRAYER (UNISON)  
Divine Heart of Mercy, in your steadfast love you call us along the journey from despair to hope. Allow us to see the trickles of light trespassing on shadow’s spaces. May slivers of expectation move us into places filled with your warm promises. Amen.

SCRIPTURE READING Isaiah 40:1-11

PRAYER  
God who thrives in the shadows-  
The frigid winds drive us back into our winter abodes  
Nearly isolating us from our neighbors and capturing our uplifted spirits until Spring.

As night arrives earlier than yesterday’s appearance,  
We ask that this season refuses to keep us from spiritual seclusion  
As we fight against our natural tendency to hibernate.

May this season of long nights be ones filled with warm memories, inviting conversations, cozy dwellings, and rooms of mirth.

When the shadows grow long and hope escapes,  
May our spirits find breath to endure until tomorrow.  
Amen.
REFLECTION The Middle Pastor Michelle

HYMN Creator of the Stars at Night (See page 6)

PRAYERS FOR THE PEOPLE AND THE LORD’S PRAYER

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 debts, as we forgive our debtors.
And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil.
For thine is the kingdom and the power and the glory forever.
Amen.

LIGHTING OF THE CANDLES

Please come forward to light a candle as you silently pray for the concerns on your heart.

CLOSING HYMN Silent Night (See page 7)

BENEDICTION

Even when lights have been dimmed
And shadows have lengthened, God is near.
May the fragments of light and slivers of hope
Nudge all of us to take small steps into Divine anticipation!
Amen.
84 Creator of the Stars of Night

1 Creator of the stars of night, your people's ever-
last-ing light, O Christ, re-deem-er of us all,
we pray you, hear us when we call.

2 When this old world drew on toward night, you came; but not in
splen-dor bright, not as a mon-arch, but the child
of Mar-y, blame-less moth-er mild.

3 At your great name, O Je-sus, now all knees must bend, all
hearts must bow: all things on earth with one ac-cord,
like those in heaven, shall call you Lord.

4 To God the Fa-ther, God the Son, and God the Spir-it,
Three in One, praise, hon-or, might, and glo-ry be
from age to age et-er-nal-ly. A-men.

The Latin original of this text for Advent dates from at least the 9th century, and the English version was created a millennium later as part of the 19th-century recovery of early Christian hymns. It is provided here with its traditional plainchant setting.
Silent Night

1. Silent night, holy night, All is calm, all is bright
2. Silent night, holy night, Shepherds quake at the sight,
3. Silent night, holy night, Son of God, love's pure light

Round yon virgin mother and child, Holy infant so tender and mild
Glorious, stream from heaven afar, heav'ly hosts sing alleluia;
Radiant beams from thy holy face, With the dawn of redeeming grace,

Sleep in heavenly peace,
Christ, the Savor, is born!
Jesus, Lord, at thy birth,

Sleep in heavenly peace,
Christ, the Savor, is born!
Jesus, Lord, at thy birth.

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Christmas with
St. Paul United Church of Christ

4:30 & 7 P.M. | December 24, 2021
St. Paul United Church of Christ

In-person worship at
St. Paul United Church of Christ,
115 West 'B' Street, Belleville
or watch on stpaulucc.org

Masks required for in-person worship