

# *St. Paul United Methodist Church*

*A Good Neighbor*

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*Susan Allen Grady, Pastor*

*Doug Hollis, Family Life Minister*

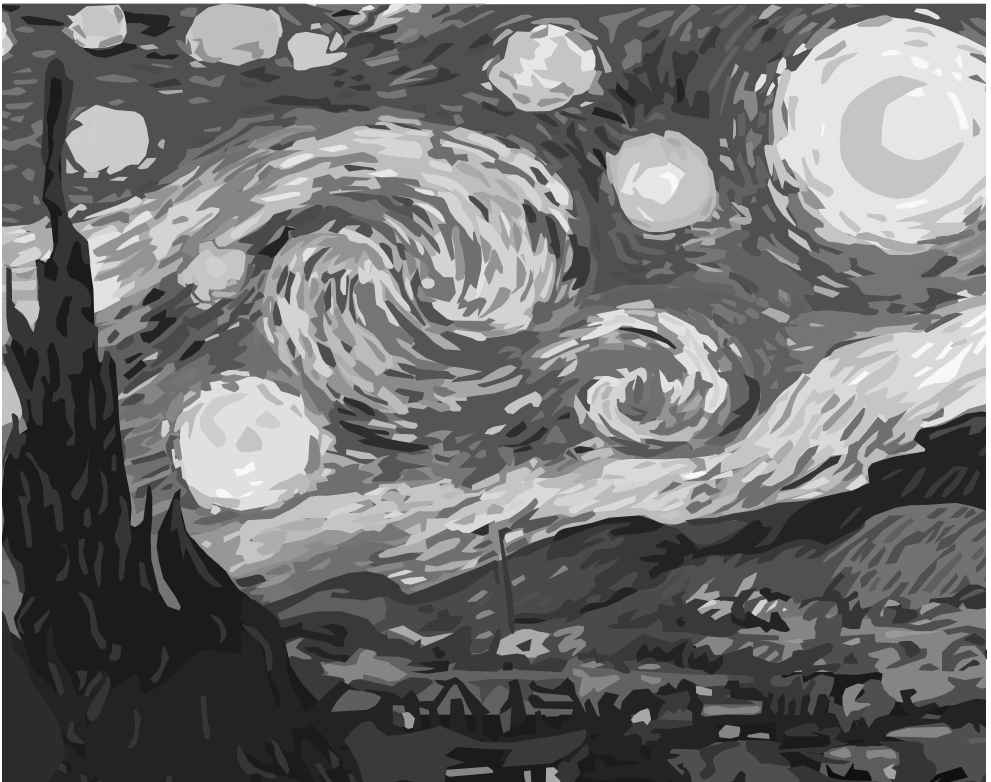
*Jonathan DeLoach, Organist*

*Becky Wellman, Golden Age Center Director*

*Laura Rappold, Deacon in Residence*

*Kevin Hill, Minister of Music*

*Ginny Pavey, Office Manager*



*Longest Night Service of Hope*

*December 17, 2008*

# Service of Hope

**Gathering**

*Silent Night*

Children's Handbell Choir

**Words of Welcome and Purpose**

Doug Hollis

**Call to Worship**

Jenny Stevens

Jesus said, "Come unto me all you who labor and are heavy laden and I will give you rest."

And so we invite each other to this time of peaceful worship.

Flee for a while from your tasks;

**Hide yourself for a little space from the turmoil of your thoughts.**

Come, cast aside your burdensome cares and put aside your laborious pursuits.

**Give your time to God, and rest in God for a little while.**

(from a prayer by Anselm of Canterbury)

**Hymn**

*O Come, O Come Emmanuel*

UMH #211

**Prayer of the People**

**O God, we come to you in prayer this night:**

**For all who have a song they cannot sing,**

**For all who have a burden they cannot bear,**

**For all who live in chains they cannot break,**

**For all who wander homeless and cannot return,**

**For those who are sick, and for those who tend them,**

**For those who wait for loved ones, and wait in vain,**

**For those who live in hunger,**

**And for those who will not share their bread,**

**For those who are misunderstood,**

**And for those who misunderstand,**

**For those whose words of love are locked within their hearts,**

**And for those who yearn to hear those words.**

**Show us the Way, O God, for we your people walk in darkness.**

**Amen.**

## Congregational Confession

Holy and Gracious God, you have searched us and you know us, and so you know how difficult it is for us to be whole-hearted in our celebration of your Good News. There are parts of us that will not listen to the angel's song—we believe their tidings of great joy are for some people but not for us. We grieve, God, and we hold tight to our sorrows. And so we confess, not our pain, but our embrace of it and our stubborn refusal of your grace and love.

Forgive us, God. Continue to love us, we pray, and help us finally to hear your assurance that you travel beside us, and you will help carry our burdens. Amen.

Words of Assurance and Comfort Isaiah 43:1-3a

Hymn *Silent Night (v. 1)* UMH#239

Old Testament Reading Psalm 147:1-11

Hymn *Silent Night (v. 2)* UMH#239

Gospel Reading *John 20:19-23, 26-27*

Hymn *Silent Night (v. 3)* UMH#239

New Testament Reading *Revelation 21:1-4a*

A Longest Night Reflection Doug Hollis

Anthem *Still, Still, Still* Chancel Choir

## Prayers of the People and Lighting Candles of Remembrance and Concern

Hymn *It Came Upon a Midnight Clear* UMH #234



## Sending Forth with Affirmation

*First Coming* by Madeleine L'Engle

One: God did not wait till the world was ready,  
till...nations were at peace.

**All: God came when the Heavens were unsteady and  
prisoners cried out for release.**

One: God did not wait for the perfect time.

**All: God came when the need was deep and great.  
God dined with sinners in all their grime,  
turned water into wine.**

One: God did not wait till hearts were pure.

**All: In joy God came to a tarnished world of sin and  
doubt.**

**To a world like ours, of anguished shame,  
God came and God's Light would not go out.**

One: God came to a world that did not mesh;  
to heal its tangles, shield its scorn.

**All: In the mystery of the Word made Flesh,  
the maker of the stars was born.**

One: We cannot wait till the world is sane  
to raise our songs with joyful voice, or to share our grief,  
to touch our pain,

**All: God came with Love: Rejoice! Rejoice!**

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In the middle of the night, when stark night was darkest,  
Then you chose to come.

God's resplendent first-born sent to make us one.

The voices of doom protest:

“All these words about justice, love and peace—

All these naïve words will buckle beneath the weight  
of a reality which is brutal and bitter, ever more bitter.”

It is true, Lord, it is midnight upon the earth,  
moonless night and starved of stars.

But can we forget that You, the son of God, chose to be born  
precisely at midnight?

-Dom Helder Camara