



Proclamation

WHEREAS, today, we celebrate the **180th Anniversary of St. Paul United Church of Christ**; and

WHEREAS, on March 10, 1839, a group of 40 families gathered at the Court House in the City of Belleville, Illinois to listen to the Rev. John Jacob Riess preach. From this gathering a new church was born; and

WHEREAS, on September 7, 1839, construction began on the first church building of this congregation in Belleville, Illinois. Soon after, the church building became a school and the first library of Belleville. In 1857, the building was later rented out to the public-school system and ultimately sold as part of a new school site (Franklin School). A fire later burned the original church building; and

WHEREAS, the congregation decided to build a larger church and dedicated it on May 12, 1861. The church grew and more land was purchased in the same block where the church stands today on West 'B' Street; and

WHEREAS, in 1959, the new church and new educational buildings were built. In 1980, the new Activity Center, Kitchen, and modified Heritage Hall were built; and

WHEREAS, in 1990, the Fine Arts Committee of St. Paul's was formed by Mr. Norbert Krausz, bringing many world-renowned celebrities to Belleville ever since; and

WHEREAS, in 1992, the Franklin Neighborhood Community Association was formed with the church and the city working together to improve the quality of the neighborhood by supporting and unifying the students, faculty, support staff, parents, businesses and community as a family; and

WHEREAS, in April 2003, a new Welcome Center was dedicated. In 2010, the restoration of the Chapel was completed. In 2015, the hall portion of the building was restored; and

WHEREAS, through the years, many pastors have led the church of St. Paul UCC. The very first pastor was Rev. John Jacob Riess. After the first 100 years, St. Paul UCC had two pastors, Rev. Otto Frank Pessel and Rev. Benjamin J. Koehler, who helped grow the church significantly and who were a very big part in the beginning of Memorial Hospital. Today, Rev. Michelle Torigian serves as the current pastor; and

WHEREAS, today, St. Paul United Church of Christ continues to be a neighborhood anchor in the heart of downtown Belleville. St. Paul UCC provides worship and is committed to supporting our community through many branches of ministry, including care and compassion, education, music, involvement in the Community Interfaith Food Pantry, support to the Franklin Neighborhood Community Association, leader in establishing St. Paul Senior Community, Thanksgiving and Christmas charitable programs, Tuesday Community Dinner, hosting the Mother's Day Out Program, and serving those who need it most.

Pride in the Past . . . Promise for the Future

NOW, THEREFORE, I, Mark W. Eckert, Mayor of the City of Belleville, Illinois, do hereby recognize and congratulate St. Paul United Church of Christ on 180 years of service to God through service to individuals, the City of Belleville and surrounding communities.

IN WITNESS WHEREOF, I have hereunto set my hand and caused the seal of the City of Belleville to be affixed, this 27th day of October, in the year of our Lord two thousand and nineteen.

Mark W. Eckert

Mark W. Eckert, Mayor
Dated this 27th day of October 2019