

An essay from

St. Paul's' Epistle

An unofficial blog about parish life at St. Paul's Episcopal Church in Mt. Lebanon, Pa., in the Episcopal Diocese of Pittsburgh

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Baptism

Rather wonderfully, St. Paul's baptized five people yesterday at three different services. As usual, I sang in the choir for the 10:30 service. Here are a few brief observations about how we handled things at that service.

Before the service, I found myself searching in vain for the names of the baptismal candidates. Remarkably, there was no item in the bulletin or the bulletin insert telling who was being baptized and when. Another choir member pointed out that the candidates were listed under the heading "St. Paul's Prayer List," along with, of course, other people we were to pray for. It was appropriate that the candidates should be listed there, but, in the past, special notice was taken in the bulletin of baptismal candidates. Families of people being baptized will likely save the bulletin and send copies to relatives. It should be made obvious that we believe that welcoming a new person into the Body of Christ is a big deal.

In fact, the "St. Paul's Prayer List" entry in the bulletin was something of a mess. Although it comprised multiple paragraphs, the paragraphs were distinguished neither by indentation of first lines nor extra vertical space. The structure was further muddled by an extraneous line break that left half a line blank in the middle of the last paragraph.

Also missing from the bulletin was the formerly standard prohibition against flash photography during the proceedings. I saw several photographers at work during the baptisms, and I observed at least one flash. The notice about flash photography should be restored next time.

There was some confusion as to when people should be standing and when they should be sitting. The choir sat for the Thanksgiving over the Water, but Lou did not invite the congregation to sit until that was completed.

On the lighter side, the congregation broke into laughter when infant baptismal candidate Fiona Young latched on to Kris's dreadlocks and refused to let go. I am told that one of the lighted candles given to a family member of one of the candidates singed the pony tail of another family member, but I did not see this myself and I'm not sure just who was involved.

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<http://www.stpaulsmtl.org/2011/01/baptism.html>