

# The Sacrament of Baptism

**Pastor:** ...you are invited affirm our own baptism by sharing now:

**Church:** Through God's grace, we celebrate our connection to this one in baptism, and we renew our promise to love boldly, show compassion without limits, and care for everyone around us—following Christ's example. We believe in God who created us, Jesus who walks with us, and the Holy Spirit who guides us in faith and hope.

## New Member Celebration

### **Children & Youth:**

**"I am the church, your growing, curious community. Will you walk with me, learn with me, and help me discover the wonder of faith together? Will you love all of God's children with me, especially those who are left out and forgotten? Will you be my family on this journey?" (I will)**

### **Adults & Seniors:**

**"I am the church, your loving and supportive faith family of Saint Paul's @ The Farm. Will you stand beside me, share in our mission of grace and justice, and love for all of God's children—especially the vulnerable, the marginalized, and those our world overlooks? Will you help spread God's love through your presence and actions? Will you be part of our shared story?" (I will)**

### **Church:**

**"With God's grace as our strength, will you commit to walking in Jesus' footsteps with our community? Will you love all of God's children without reservation, stand with the vulnerable, and share Christ's transformative message of hope and redemption through your words and actions?" (I will)**

## Sending Hymn

**Stanza 1: This little light of mine, I'm gonna let it shine**

**Stanza 2: Hide it under a bushel no, I'm gonna let it shine**

**Stanza 3: Everywhere I go, I'm gonna let it shine**

**Stanza 4: Jesus gave it to me, I'm gonna let it shine**

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During the recent snowstorm, many of you were unable to receive a copy of a Grace & Coffee letter from Pastor Tim about keeping church as intimate sacred space. We've had several requests to reprint it, so it's included as an insert in this week's worship bulletin.

Also, if you've been wanting to catch his monthly *Faith & Reason* column in the Daily Item, recent articles are now linked on our website at [spuccfarm.org](http://spuccfarm.org)—just look for the "Faith & Reason" link on the homepage.

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**Powered by Grace and Coffee**

*a weekly reflection by Pastor Timothy Hogan-Palazzo*

Dear Faith Family,

Have you ever noticed that every time Jesus gathered with a small group, others showed up wanting to hear the good news? People were drawn to something they couldn't quite name—hope, healing, belonging, love. That's what's happening here at Saint Paul's @ The Farm. People are coming for a reason, and we need to honor and respect that reason.

This week at our Consistory meeting, I heard a sentiment I hear occasionally: "I love how we have grown; however, I never want to lose the intimate feeling we have here." My response was what I have always felt: "Neither do I."

My desire has never been to grow a bigger church for the sake of being bigger. My desire is to stay out of the way of the Holy and offer a table to all those seeking a place to gather—a hospital for those hurting and needing sacred space for spiritual care and healing, a space of safe fellowship for all God's children. Not just the ones any of us believe deserve it, because we all deserve it, because we believe it's what Jesus freely offered and taught us to offer.

Here's what I'm learning: growth does not have to mean we lose intimacy. But that's not up to just me—that's up to us all.

Intimacy is how we welcome and get to know one another. It's calling each other by name, showing up and listening, gathering together and not becoming complacent with only those we already know. A growing church keeps intimacy by intentionally creating smaller community hubs—our Bible and book studies, choirs, Friends Who Breakfast, Word, Wine & Wisdom, Family Nights, Fresh Express and Community Meal volunteer opportunities. It's maintained through radical transparency and vulnerability, face-to-face connection, shared prayer and honest God moments (take a lesson from some of our smallest members here if you aren't sure how to do that). It's fostered when people feel seen, known, and truly cared for—not just like "attendees."

Here's my invitation to you in order to keep that intimate feeling: Meet new people. Welcome those who may be strangers to you. Let your conversations be more than a quick hello. Try "I'm glad you're here," or "How are you today?" or "Are you new here, or am I?" or simply, "Would you like to sit with me?" And listen, truly listen to one another.

Keeping that intimate feeling isn't rocket science. It's about welcoming every person the Holy leads to our doors. It's about listening, true connection, and loving people right where they are.

So don't stop showing up—for worship, events, and gatherings. Don't be afraid to speak to someone, listen and share stories, discover connections. Don't just always slip in the side door, attend or participate in your thing and slip out, learn a new person's name (and story). I used to be bad at names too, and sometimes still am, but the Holy offers grace and continues to work on me and will for your two if you allow the work in you to continue. Come in and be prepared for the Holy to use you too.

Want an intimate, safe, sacred space where all God's children are welcome? You too need to offer that same love and care that brought you here and let the Holy be concerned about how we grow.

I pray that people continue to find safe, sacred, loving, intimate space every time they walk through these doors. I also pray it for every church. But to do that means we all have to find our way to create that space with each person coming through our doors. Will you continue to walk with me on this journey? Show up, just be and allow others to be, welcome and love one another right where they are.

For I believe, as long as we continue to act as Jesus taught, welcoming every person, serving every neighbor, loving people right where they are, I believe the Holy will continue to bring this crazy, warm, funny and loving family together, and other crazy, lost saints and sinners alike will keep showing up. Our responsibility is to love everyone who does. And I believe, that's how intimate space continues to be intimate space.

Peace and Blessings, Pastor Tim