



Established in 1886

Never been to an Episcopal Church?

Here's what to expect.

Your basic guide to quieting any fears you may have about visiting

Saint John's Episcopal Church

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It can be a little intimidating walking into a church for the first time. Or maybe it's just been a *long* time and lot has changed. With us you will find the songs are singable, the sermon understandable, and you don't need to come in a suit.

We'd love to see you at Saint John's on Sunday.

This tract may help shed some light on aspects of the Episcopal Church. We hope you'll find the material here interesting, entertaining -- even challenging. After all, in the Episcopal Church we hold that Jesus Christ came to take away your sins, not your mind.

What do Episcopalians believe?

The beliefs of Episcopalians can be considered quite diverse. The official standard of worship and belief for Episcopalians is defined in the **Book of Common Prayer**.

The Creeds: The two ecumenical creeds, both Nicene and Apostles', are used by the Episcopal Church in its worship day by day and week by week. They are the ancient and universal statements of Christian faith.

The Episcopal Church also has a **Catechism**, which summarizes the faith in question and answer format.

The Book of Common Prayer (BCP) is the primary prayer book used throughout the Anglican communion. Rich with language and heritage, the BCP is something which unifies Anglicans around the world.

What to Expect.

Think of this as your “First-Time Guide to Visiting an Episcopal Church”. Most important, remember this: **You'll always be welcome.** We extend a cordial welcome to you to worship with us, and offer this document as a brief introduction to the Episcopal Church and its ways.

THE PLACE OF WORSHIP

As you enter, you will notice an atmosphere of worship and reverence here at Saint John's. Episcopal churches are built in many architectural styles; but whether the church be small or large, elaborate or plain, your eye is carried immediately to the altar, or holy table, and to the cross. So our thoughts are taken at once to Christ and to God whose house the church is.

On or near the altar there are candles to remind us that Christ is the "Light of the world" (John 8:12). On most Sundays there are flowers, to beautify God's house and to help us recall the resurrection of Jesus.

On the north side in the front of the church, there is a Pulpit for the proclamation of God's Holy Word; here the Scriptures are read and the sermon may be preached.

THE ACT OF WORSHIP

Episcopal services are congregational. In the pews you will find the **Book of Common Prayer** (Red in color). This enables the congregation to share fully in every service.

The large print in the Book of Common Prayer, is the actual service. The smaller print gives directions to ministers and the people for conducting the service.

You may wonder when to stand or kneel. Practices vary---even among individual Episcopalians.

The general rule is to stand while we sing---hymns and other Praise Songs (many of these are from the Holy Bible.) We also stand as we say our affirmation of faith, the Creed; and for the reading of the Gospel and during the Holy Eucharist, when noted in the BCP.

We sit during readings from the Old Testament, Psalms, New Testament Letters, the sermon, and choir anthems. We stand or kneel for prayer in order to show our gratefulness to God for accepting us as children or as an act of humility before God.

THE REGULAR SERVICES

Our regular services are at 8:00 & 10:30AM. Holy Eucharist (Holy Communion), at our 8:00AM service is celebrated quite simply, with music, each Sunday morning. During our 10:30AM service on Sundays, music is contemporary and this is also traditionally a service for families with children's church occurring at that time.

While some parts of the services are always the same, others change. At the Holy Eucharist, for example, three Bible selections are read. These change each Sunday. As do the psalms.

Some of the prayers also change, in order to provide variety and to suit the season.. Page numbers for parts of the service printed elsewhere in the BCP are usually announced or given in the service leaflet.

Please do not be embarrassed to ask your neighbor in the pew for help. You will find the services at Saint John's beautiful in their ordered dignity, God-centered, and yet mindful of the nature and needs of newcomers.

BEFORE AND AFTER THE SERVICE

Before the service it is our custom upon entering church to kneel in one's pew for a prayer of personal preparation for worship. If the service has already started we join in without kneeling. It is also our custom to bow to the altar on entering and leaving the church as an act of reverence.

COMING AND GOING

Our Greeters and Ushers will greet you, and may escort you to a pew. If you desire, they will answer your questions about the service. Following the service our priest greets the people as they leave.

WHAT CLERGY WEAR

To add to the beauty and festivity of the services, and to signify their special ministries, the clergy and other ministers wear **vestments**.

One familiar vestment is the **alb**, a white tunic with sleeves that covers the body from neck to ankles. Over it ordained ministers wear a **stole**, a narrow band of colored fabric. Deacons wear the stole over one shoulder, priests and bishops over both shoulders.

At the Eucharist a bishop or priest frequently wears a **chasuble** (a circular garment that envelops the body) over the alb and stole. The deacon's corresponding vestment has sleeves and is called a **dalmatic**.

Bishops sometimes wear a special head covering called a **miter**.

Stoles, chasubles, and dalmatics, as well as altar coverings, are usually made of rich fabrics. Their color changes with the seasons and holy days of the Church Year. The most frequently used colors are white, red, violet, and green.

THE CHURCH YEAR

The Episcopal Church observes the traditional Christian calendar. The season of **Advent**, during which we prepare for Christmas, begins on the Sunday closest to November 30. **Christmas** itself lasts twelve days, after which we celebrate the feast of the **Epiphany** (Jan. 6).

Lent, the forty days of preparation for Easter, begins on Ash Wednesday. **Easter** season lasts fifty days, concluding on the feast of Pentecost. During these times the Bible readings are chosen for their appropriateness to the season.

During the rest of the year---the season after **Epiphany** and the long season after **Pentecost** (except for a few special Sundays)---the New Testament is read sequentially from Sunday to Sunday.

The Old Testament lesson corresponds in theme with one of the New Testament readings.

YOU WILL NOT BE EMBARRASSED

When you visit us at Saint John's, you will be our respected and welcome guest. You will not be singled out in an embarrassing way. You may be asked to let us know that you are a visitor, but the option to respond is yours.

Should you wish to know more about the Episcopal Church or how one becomes a member of Saint John's, the priest will gladly answer your questions and suggest the way to membership.

Come Join Us Next Sunday!!!