

What to expect when visiting an Episcopal Church



Please note.... Each Episcopal church has a group of members called the Vestry, who along with the Pastor manage the individual church's operations. There may be some differences between individual churches and how they address each of the following topics based on the needs of each church. Links to each church's website are provided for more specific individual church information.

The Doors

When you first arrive you will be welcomed by the bright red doors of the Episcopal Church. The red doors are a tradition to symbolize a place of sanctuary for all.

Welcome

Church Greeters/Ushers will welcome you at the entrance. Let them know you are visiting and they will be happy to provide you with any assistance.

Duration

The service lasts about 1 hour.

The Bulletin

You will receive a bulletin for the service you are attending. It will indicate the different parts of the service and when the congregation will stand, kneel, sit, respond and sing.

The Books

There are several copies of two books in each pew.

The **red Book of Common Prayer** and

the **blue Book of Hymns**.

The bulletin you received will note,

on the **right side**, the page of each passage being used in the **red Book of Common Prayer** and

on the **left side** the number of the hymn being sung from the **blue Book of Hymns**.

The Service Participants

Along with the Church Pastor leading the service you will see:

- 1) Greeters/Ushers (adult congregation member) to welcome you at the entrance
- 2) A robed Lay Minister (adult congregation member) to assist the Pastor
- 3) A robed Acolyte (young congregation member) to assist in the service
- 4) A robed Crucifer (young congregation member) to carry the cross and assist during the service
- 5) Organist

Sunday School

Sunday School for adults and children is provided in many different ways, depending on the church. Groups may meet before, during or after a service. Most churches will have a 30 minute children's or young adult program in an adjacent room's while the adults attend the 1-hour service.

Church size and number of services.

All Episcopal churches are different as far as church size and the number of services. Some have one service on Sundays and some may be larger and have multiple services. Check the website links for service times and days of individual churches.

Collection/ Offering

The opportunity to provide a financial offering occurs during some services when a collection plate is passed by the Ushers.

Sharing the Peace

During the sharing of the peace the minister will say, "The peace of the Lord be always with you" and the congregation will respond with "And also with you". During that time, you may share the peace with the people closest to you and whoever you would like.

Communion

The congregations come to the alter and kneel or stand and have their hands out to receive communion. Some churches will have ushers to help guide you, however if there is not ushers, watch what others are doing to see when to go to the front. Everyone is welcome at the table of the Lord to receive communion if they would like, if you do not wish to take communion that is totally fine, you can stay in your seat in the pew, or you can come to the front and get a blessing from the minister by crossing your arms over your chest rather than receiving communion at the altar. If you do decide to receive communion you will hold your hands out and the minister will put a piece of bread or wafer in your hand and say "The body of Christ, the bread of heaven". You have two choices then, you can either eat the bread and sip the wine or when the lay minister comes around with the wine you can dip your bread in it and consume both at once.

Procession into the world

We will sing the recessional hymn and then be sent out into the world. After the service is over participants may stay and talk. The minister may greet the congregation as they exit the church. As you leave you should stop and introduce yourself to the minister as a newcomer. Coffee hour often follows church service and you can mingle and meet people that you didn't meet during the service.

Every church is different, but this gives you a little look into how an Episcopal Church service goes. We hope you decide to come give us a try!