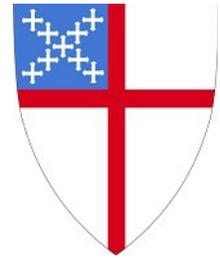


What to Expect When You Visit and Worship with Us

St. Stephen's Episcopal Church

801 11th Avenue North, North Myrtle Beach, SC

The Episcopal Church
Welcomes You



You Will Experience a Very Warm Welcome

We extend a cordial welcome to you as you visit and worship with us. We offer this folder as a brief introduction to our worshipping community.

The Place of Worship

Episcopal churches are built in many architectural styles; whether small or large, elaborate or plain. When you enter St. Stephen's, you will notice an atmosphere of welcome and excitement. You will be greeted by our assigned greeters in the narthex, be asked to sign our guest book and get a name tag. We strongly encourage you to please wear the name tag because we would like to address you by your name. There might also be much going on because that is where members get their name tags as well. When you enter the church, an usher will give you a worship bulletin and invite you to be seated. As you take your seat, it is our hope that your eyes will be carried to the altar, or holy table, and the cross so that your thoughts are taken at once to Christ, our Lord and our God, whose house the church is.

There are two candles on the altar and six behind the celebrant, three on each side of the flower arrangement, to remind us that Christ is "The Light of the world" (John 8:12). The flowers are to beautify God's house and to recall the resurrection of Jesus. Depending on the Season of the Church's Year (e.g. Easter) the flowers might be more elaborate.

On the left side at the front of the church, there is a lectern-pulpit, for the proclamation of the Word; here the Scriptures are read and the sermon is sometimes preached. Our rector usually preaches from the center aisle.

The Act of Worship

Episcopal church services are congregational, which means the congregation fully participates in the worship. Even though you will find the *Book of Common Prayer* and hymnals in the pews, the bulletin that you received when you entered the church contains the complete worship service. It is our hope that you will join us and share fully in the worship.

You may wonder when to stand, sit or kneel. Even though practices vary – even among individual Episcopalians; the bulletin has directions and our rector usually directs us. The general rule is stand to sing hymns and other songs as part of the worship. We stand to say our affirmation of faith, the Creed and for reading of the Gospel. The Psalm is read sitting. We sit during the readings from the Old Testament or New Testament, the sermon, and choir anthems. We kneel if you are able to, (or sit) for prayers to show our gratefulness to God for accepting us as His children or as an act of humility before Him.

The Regular Services

The principal worship on Sunday morning is the Holy Eucharist (Holy Communion). At 8:00 AM we

have music and a sermon and we regularly perform anointing, laying on of hands and prayer for those who desire it. This takes place immediately after all have received communion and before the post-communion prayer. The 10:30 AM worship includes the choir and is our largest worshipping community. Because of the choir presence, the singing is very lively and the congregation fully participates. The choir usually sings an offertory anthem as a part of our gift to God. On Wednesday at 12:00 Noon, we have A Public Service of Healing and Holy Eucharist. There is no music or sermon and this worship lasts about half an hour.

While some parts of the worship are always the same, others change weekly or seasonally. At the Holy Eucharist, for example, three passages from the Bible are selected to be read each Sunday. These readings change each Sunday as do the psalms. The prayers also change at various times in order to provide variety. A lay reader leads the Prayers of the People and a series of additional prayers visitors, travelers, people celebrating birthdays and anniversaries, etc. Page numbers of the Book of Common Prayer are printed in the bulletin for those who may wish to follow the service in the Prayer Book. The bulletin page numbers are usually announced so that our visitors are able to follow along regardless of when they arrived. Many visitors have expressed their appreciation for the bulletin.

In the end, you will find the worship services at St. Stephen's very beautiful in their ordered dignity, God-centered, and yet mindful of the nature and needs of human beings.

Sunday School

A few years ago we discontinued Sunday School because we did not have enough children. However, on April 7, 2013 our reorganized Sunday School resumed at 10:20 AM in the Parish Hall classrooms. It is a joy for us as a congregation to once again have Sunday School as part of our church Sunday morning activities. We begin at 10:20 AM with the morning devotion and at 10:30 AM the children are separated into groups for their lessons and other activities. At about 11:10 AM, the children are led into the church to join their families during the time of The Peace and to prepare for Communion. We also have a nursery provided for those in need.

Before and After the Service

Depending on when you arrive, as indicated earlier, you were greeted by the assigned greeters for that worship service. If you arrive after the worship has begun, there will be a sign inviting you to come in and join us. Five minutes before the worship begins, one of our members makes announcements, and concludes by asking you to turn off or silence your electronic devices. It is customary in the Episcopal church, upon entering the pew to kneel or sit for a prayer of personal preparation for worship. In many churches, it is also the custom to bow to the altar on entering and leaving the church as an act of reverence to Christ.

Worshippers are discouraged from talking in church before the worship service, but are encouraged to use this time for personal meditation and devotions. There are times when people greet one another during this time, however this is strongly discouraged out of respect for others. At the end of the worship service some persons kneel for a private prayer before leaving. Others sometimes sit to listen to the organ postlude. Whatever, might be the case, we try to be respectful of one another.

The Episcopal Church has an open communion policy; therefore, at the offertory an invitation is extended to all those who have been baptized in the name of the Father, Son and Holy Spirit.

If this is your very first visit with us, on your way out, one of our greeters will give you a gift bag. If

you desire to know more about us or have some questions, they will gladly answer your questions or refer you to someone who will.

Vestments

To add to the beauty and festivity of the worship services and to signify their special ministries the clergy and other ministers wear vestments. Choir vestments consist of a maroon undergown called a cassock and a white, gathered overgown called a surplice. The acolytes, lay readers and chalice bearers all wear a white cassock alb.

The clergy wears a white cassock 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 Holy Eucharist a bishop or priest frequently wears a chasuble (a circular garment that envelops the body) over the alb and stole. Bishops sometimes wear a special head covering called a mitre.

Stoles and chasubles, 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 is the time we prepare for Christmas. It begins on the Sunday closest to November 30. Christmas itself lasts twelve days after which we celebrate the feast of Epiphany (January 6).

Lent, the forty days of preparation for Easter, begins on Ash Wednesday. The 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 for Sunday to Sunday. The Old Testament lesson corresponds in theme with one of the New Testament readings.

When you visit, you will be glad you came.

When you visit St. Stephen's church, you will be our respected and welcomed guest. You will worship God with us as that is our focus and you will feel the presence of God.

Should you wish to know more about St. Stephen's or the Episcopal church or how one becomes an Episcopalian, the rector/pastor will gladly answer your questions and explain the way to become a member. Please call the church office at (843) 249-1169 between 8:30 AM and 4:30 PM Monday through Friday and make an appointment to speak with our rector.

Thank You for Visiting