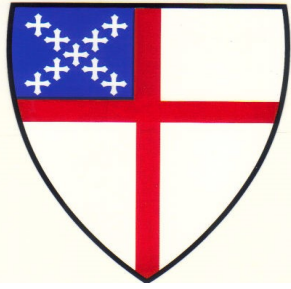


The Episcopal Church  
Welcomes You



# What to expect when you visit and worship at St. Stephen's Episcopal Church

NORTH MYRTLE BEACH SOUTH CAROLINA

[www.ststephensnmb.com](http://www.ststephensnmb.com)

## You Will Experience a Very Warm Welcome

We extend a cordial welcome to you as you visit and worship with us, and 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 and you will be greeted by our assigned greeters in the narthex; you will be asked to sign our guest book and given a name tag, PLEASE WRITE YOUR NAME AND WEAR IT. We strongly encourage you to please wear the name tag because we would like to greet you by name. There might also be much going on because in this same space members will also be getting their name tags. 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 to 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 or kneel. Even though practices vary—even among individual Episcopalians; the bulletin has directions and our rector usually directs us.

The general rule is to stand to sing—hymns and other songs as part of the worship. We also stand to say our affirmation of faith, the Creed and for the 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 we are able to, (or sit) for the 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 service on Sunday is the Holy Eucharist (Holy Communion). At 8:00 AM we have music and sermon.

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 the Holy Eucharist. 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; so 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 there are a series of prayers that are said by the lay-reader. 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, inspiring forms, and yet very mindful of the nature and needs of human beings.

## **Before and After the Services**

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 for Christ.

Worshippers are discouraged from talking in church before the worship service but, are encouraged to use this time for personal meditation and devotions, however, there are times when people greet one another during this time, this is also 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 the 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 some one who will.

Following the worship service, the rector and/or the assistant priest will greet you as you leave.

## **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 from 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 in this place.

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 10:00 am and 3:00 pm Monday through Friday and make an appointment to speak with our rector.

**Thank You for Visiting!**