

What do I do?

The “What” and “How” of worship at St. Stephen’s

Welcome to our worship!



Firstly: Please feel comfortable in this holy space! Feel *free* to participate to the degree you feel comfortable. Reciting, standing, sitting, kneeling, crossing yourself – they are all entirely optional. We want you to have an *experience* of Jesus while you worship with us. If you are unfamiliar or uncomfortable with particular elements, do what is comfortable for *you*.

This pamphlet describes what typically happens during worship in The Episcopal Church so you can become familiar with our customs. If you want to take this pamphlet home, please do. If you want to meet with the priest or a long-time member to learn more, we would be more than happy to share time with you.

St. Stephen's welcomes all persons to an open, caring Christian community that seeks to follow the example of Jesus Christ. Wherever you may be on your spiritual path, you are invited to worship, study and work with us. You are always welcome to our worship and fellowship, regardless of your background.

What do I do during worship?

Let's start with the basics, and then we will get into the detail.

Follow the person next to you or in front of you, and you will not look out of place. But here is the cheat sheet:

- If it is a song, it is probably in the blue book “Hymnal 1982”.
- If it is in bold, the people say it together.
- Stand to praise and proclaim.
- Sit to listen.
- Stand or kneel to pray. Standing is a modern form of an ancient practice of standing before God to pray (Mark 11:25), but it is also traditional to kneel. St. Stephen's has persons of both persuasions: do what is meaningful to you.
- Kneel or bow to show humility (penitence).
- Cross yourself (if you want to) when “Father, Son and Holy Spirit” are mentioned together and at the end of the Nicene Creed in solidarity with those who have died.

Before and After Services

Usually a person enters the church and takes a pew for a time of personal prayer and preparation for worship. In many churches it is a custom to bow the head to the altar and cross when entering and leaving the pew as an act of reverence for Christ. There was a time when Episcopalians did not talk in church before a service because it was a time for personal meditation. St. Stephen's is a very social congregation, and there is talking before the service. However, if you want to take time for personal prayer and preparation, you will likely not be pestered while you do so. At the end of the service you may also sit or kneel for personal prayer before leaving.

Our Act of Worship

The Sunday services follow a service booklet that will be handed to you on your way in. It contains all the material for the service that is the same week-to-week. The material that does change is in the bulletin that will accompany the service booklet. The hymns (songs) will be in the blue “Hymnal 1982” found in the rack in front of you. You will also find the red Book of Common Prayer (BCP). Much of the worship material (or *liturgy*) comes from this book. At St. Stephen's, we use some new liturgy and liturgy from our Sister Churches around the world which is not in the BCP, hence the need for the service booklet. There is a wealth of information in the BCP. Feel free to browse its contents. Please leave all books and the service booklet in the church; take the bulletin with you.

The principal service is the Holy Eucharist or Holy Communion. At the 8am Sunday service, it is celebrated simply and without music. At the 10am Sunday service, hymns and other music are added.

Worship in The Episcopal Church maintains a balance of Scripture, tradition and reason. The word "liturgy" means "work of the people", and *together* we offer praise to God, entering into a dialog that strengthens the Covenant between God and the People shown through the love in Jesus' Incarnation, Crucifixion and Resurrection.

The Holy Eucharist

The Holy Eucharist or Holy Communion is the pinnacle of our worship. It is the time that we engage in Christ's command to take, bless, break and share Bread and Wine in perpetual memory of His Body and Blood once broken. Everyone is invited to participate in the Eucharist. If you are moved by the Spirit to receive the Sacrament (the Bread and Wine), you are welcome to. The ushers will indicate when to go to the altar. Stand or kneel at the railing. Again, following the person in front of you will likely be helpful if you are unfamiliar with receiving the Sacrament. In general:

- To receive the bread, the right hand is placed on top of the left, palms facing up, and the Priest places a wafer of Bread into your palm. Your response is "Amen" before you consume the Bread. Gluten-free wafers are available: just whisper to the Priest.
- The chalice of Wine follows, guide the chalice to your lips and sip. Your response is "Amen." You do not have to take the Wine if there is a personal reason not to do so. Blessed grape juice is available: just whisper to the Chalice Bearer.
- For a blessing instead of the Sacrament, cross your hands over your chest, and the Priest will give you a blessing.
- After the Sacrament or blessing, return to your seat.

Who's Who?

The minister of St. Stephen's is a Priest (*vocation*) who is the Rector (*job title*). A Priest's role is to proclaim the Gospel, bless in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, Baptize, and to administer the Sacraments. Priests have many job titles, but the Rector's job is to lead both the congregation and the business of running the church in this place. At the moment, the Rector is Father Ian Delinger, and our Associate Priest is Pastor Karen Siegfried. There may be another ordained minister who is a Deacon, whose role is to serve the congregation and the community.

Vestments or Robes

The clergy and choir wear vestments or robes as part of tradition but also to signify the importance of our worship. The Priest also wears a long, colored scarf called a stole, draped over the shoulders. This symbolizes the Yoke of Christ (*Matthew 11.28-30*).

You will see other colored cloths on the altar and the lectern. These are traditional and for beauty and dignity. They change in color (white, green, red, and purple) with the seasons and holy days of the Christian Year. The Episcopal Church follows the ancient Christian calendar: the anticipation of the Coming of the Christ Child, through His Death, Resurrection and Ascension, and His earthly ministry.

Take This Pamphlet Home: If this is helpful, it is yours!

Whoever you are, and wherever you are on your spiritual journey, St. Stephen's welcomes you!

This Place of Worship

Episcopal Churches are built in many architectural styles: but all are God-centered. Whether the church be small or large, elaborate or plain, the visual focus is the altar and the cross so that your spiritual focus is on Christ and God.

St. Stephen's was founded in 1867 as the first organized Protestant church in San Luis Obispo County. The church building is a "carpenter gothic" gem built of local Monterey Pine beams and covered with redwood. The stained-glass windows reflect both a pioneer heritage and a radiant future.

The Baptismal Font is near the entrance to remind us of our Baptism each time we enter the sanctuary. Blessed Holy Water is usually in the font, and some dip their finger into the Holy Water and make the sign of the cross on themselves as another reminder. *Info on Baptism can be found in the BCP on pages 299 and 858.*

Welcome from St. Stephen's

If you are a visitor, you are our guest and a participant in the liturgy. You will not be singled out, but you are encouraged to introduce yourself to those around you. You are here to worship God with us, and we want to provide a balance between worshipping together and getting to know you.

If you want to know more about The Episcopal Church, please get in touch. Father Ian, or members of the congregation, would be more than happy to meet with you, formally or casually, to explore St. Stephen's, The Episcopal Church and your spiritual journey.

If you are a visitor just for today, God bless you, thank you for joining us, and feel free to sign our Guest Book on your way out. If you will want to join us again, please fill in one of the blue cards in the pew and place it into the collection plate. Someone will be in touch with you during the following week or two.

What to do when...

Using the outline of the service of the Holy Eucharist, here is what you can expect:

Processional Hymn (10am)	Stand
Invocation and Preparation	Stand
The Gloria	Stand
The Collect of the Day	Stand
The Lessons	Sit
The Psalm	Sit
Sequence Hymn (10am)	Stand
The Gospel	Stand
The Sermon	Sit
The Nicene Creed	Stand
The Prayers of the People	Stand or Kneel
The Confession	Kneel or Stand
The Peace	Stand
Welcome, Birthdays, Anniversaries, Announcements	Sit
The Offertory and Anthem	Sit
The Doxology / Offering of the Gifts	Stand
Eucharistic Prayer	Stand
– Option to Kneel after “Holy, Holy, Holy”	
The Lord’s Prayer	Resume previous position
The Breaking of the Bread	Resume previous position
During the Ministration of Communion	Sit
<i>All are welcome to receive Communion or a blessing</i>	
When at altar rail	Stand or Kneel
Post-Communion Prayer	Stand or Kneel
The Sending forth of the Lay Eucharistic Visitors	Resume previous position
The Blessing	Stand
Closing Hymn	Stand
Dismissal	Stand