

## **Episco-Speak 101** **For Newcomers to an Episcopal Church**

Going to any church for the first time can be a challenge. Churches, like any group, have their own vocabulary that they all know and understand but which can be challenging for a visitor. We hope this short list helps.

### **The People**

Priest/Clergy:	Leads the service and celebrates Communion
Deacon:	Reads the Gospel and dismisses the people
Acolyte:	Carries the cross and helps with the service
Eucharistic Minister:	Assists in distributing Communion
Altar Guild:	The people who set up for each service
Sexton:	Cares for the church and the surrounding property
Vestry:	The governing board of the church
ECW:	Episcopal Church Women

### **The Building**

Narthex:	The entryway to the church
Nave:	The section where the people sit
Sanctuary:	The area at the front of the church
Lectern:	The podium on the left
Pulpit:	The podium on the right
Altar:	The large table front and center
Credence:	The shelf behind the altar

### **The Clothes**

Alb:	A simple white robe
Stole:	A long scarf worn by clergy
Chasuble:	An outer garment worn by the priest

### **The Stuff**

Host:	The wafer that becomes the Body of Christ
Paten:	The plate that holds the wafers
Chalice:	The cup that holds the wine (and a little water)
Ciboria:	The bread box (round with a cross on top)
Cruets:	The containers for the wine and water

### **The Colors**

Green:	Life (the most common color)
Purple:	Penitence (Advent and Lent)
White:	Joy (Easter, Christmas, and other major feasts)
Red:	Symbolizes the flame of the Holy Spirit (Pentecost), the Blood of Christ (Holy Week), and Christian Martyrs

### **What You'll See on Sunday**

It can feel a bit intimidating to go to a church for the first time, especially for those raised in a radically different tradition or no tradition at all, so we've created this page to help you know what to expect in advance.

### **When You Arrive**

You will be greeted by a friendly group of people. An usher will be waiting inside the door to hand you a bulletin and direct you inside. Sit wherever you feel like. In the pew you will notice a black book (The Book of Common Prayer—which contains the text for the service) and two blue books (*The Hymnal 1982* —containing traditional hymns, and Lift Every Voice and Sing—our “contemporary” hymnal). You may also notice a music insert in the bulletin. The hymns are listed in the bulletin, and on a hymn board at the front of the church. You will also find a kneeler at your feet. Please feel free to kneel and pray before the service begins if you are comfortable doing so.

### **Bring the Kids**

We welcome children, either sitting in the pews or playing (with a parent's supervision) in the back of the church. Either way, you will be able to see, hear, and participate in the service. Toy boxes are available for various ages.

### **Dress Casual**

We are not strictly a suit and tie church. While some of us feel more comfortable dressing up, you're just as likely to see someone in a t-shirt and jeans as a three-piece suit. Those of us up front are the only ones that need to dress up (in special clothing called vestments), and chances are that come August some of us have shorts on underneath our vestments!

## **What's with the Gymnastics?**

If you've ever been to an Episcopal, Roman Catholic, or "high" Lutheran church, you will recognize the various gestures that accompany our worship. If not, you may wonder about all the standing, kneeling, bowing, and crossing you will see. These gestures are an outward expression of our worship. The general rule is standing to sing, sit to listen, and kneel to pray, but there are some exceptions. Ultimately just do your best to follow along and don't do anything you don't feel comfortable doing. We all approach our worship a little differently and no one will judge you.

## **Let the Plate Pass You by**

We believe an important part of belonging to a church is joyfully supporting that church's mission to its surrounding community. For your first few visits, though, we invite you to let the collection plate pass by. Your presence with us is already a substantial gift.

## **What about Communion?**

Holy Eucharist (also called Communion, The Lord's Supper, or the Mass) is the focus of our worship. First we hear Christ through Holy Scripture, then we meet and receive him in Holy Communion. In our church (as in the Episcopal Church as a whole) all baptized Christians are welcome to receive Communion. If you have not been baptized, or are not comfortable receiving in our church (perhaps due to the restrictions of your own denomination) you are still welcome to come up front and receive a blessing. Just cross your arms over your chest to let us know that you will not be receiving this Sunday.

## **Stay and Visit with us**

We hope you will join us after the service for Food and Fellowship. Coffee hour is one of the traditions of the Episcopal Church and, not to brag, but ours always features great tidbits of food as well.