A Guide for Newcomers and Visitors

ST. STEPHEN'S
EPISCOPAL CHURCH

Wherever you are on your spiritual journey, you are welcome at St. Stephen's. If you're unfamiliar with the customs of the Episcopal church, let the congregation carry you in worship. The red book is the *Book of Common Prayer* (abbreviated BCP), the blue book is the *Hymnal 1982*, and the green book is *Wonder, Love and Praise*, a supplement to the *Hymnal 1982*.

The Sign of the Cross

The sign of the cross traces a cross shape on the body: forehead, chest, and shoulders. The sign of the cross is a reminder of baptism and is often paired with dipping the fingers in the baptismal font or at the mention of the Trinity.

One typically crosses themselves when blessings are said: at the opening of the acclamation, at the mention of the prayers for the dead, during the consecration of the Eucharist, and after the confession. Some cross themselves before or after receiving communion.

Before proclaiming the Gospel, a cross is traced on the forehead, mouth, and heart as a sign of opening the mind, speech and heart to the Word.

Recieving Communion

Holy Communion, or the Eucharist, is a meal of bread and wine that nourishes and strengthens one's relationship with Christ and the community. All are welcome to receive Communion at St. Stephen's.

To receive Communion, cup your hands together to receive the bread and either dip it into the wine or sip from the chalice. If you don't want ro recieve the wine, simply cross your arms over your chest when you reach the chalice bearer. To receive a blessing instead of Communion, cross your arms over your chest to signal the priest.

Bowing

The solemn bow (bending from the waist) is a sign of reverence for God and God's people. It's done at the beginning and end of the service, during the Nicene Creed and during the Sanctus ("Holy, Holy").

The simple bow is a slight bend of head and shoulders. One typically bows when they pass the altar, when the processional cross passes, and at the mention of Jesus or the Trinity (Father, Son, and Holy Spirit).

Thank you for joining the worship of this community.
You are very welcome here!

With thanks to St. Paul's Episcopal Church for inspiration and adapted language.