

*A user-friendly guide to
worship at Grace Cathedral*



Grace Episcopal Cathedral

701 S.W. Eighth Avenue

Topeka, Kansas 66603

First Things First

1. We're delighted you're here, and we want you to come back.
2. We suspect you may have some questions. Everybody you see was a newcomer at one time or another, and we've *all* had questions – probably the very same ones. So, don't hesitate to ask a question!
3. We want you to be comfortable so you can worship God and enjoy your visit today. You can't do that if you're wondering which book to pick up next or trying "to do everything right," which usually means doing the same things everybody else is doing.

So...

Relax.

The first rule is: **When you're worshipping God, you can't get it wrong!**

The second rule is: **If you need help, ask the person next to you.** We like people here at Grace Cathedral.

The last rule is: **Regardless of what anybody else is doing, don't do anything that makes you feel uncomfortable.**

*You can do whatever makes you feel comfortable.
You shouldn't do anything that makes you feel uncomfortable.*

*You may want to skip this introductory stuff for now and read it later. But there is something we want to handle right up front.
If you're wondering, "Am I allowed to take communion here?" the answer is not only "YES," but also "WE HOPE YOU WILL."*

Now, let's start with the basics...

What are these books in the rack in front of me?

The smaller red one is the *Book of Common Prayer*. The entire service as well as a lot of other stuff is contained in it.



And...

The larger blue book is the *Hymnal 1982*. The songs we sing are indicated in the bulletin the usher gave you and on the hymn boards on the wall in front. We have a wonderful music program here and the 10:30 service features our organ and adult choir except when the choir doesn't sing. Some days, there may also be a children's choir, a bell choir, and/or special instrumentals. If you're at the 8:30 a.m. service, there won't be any singing.

Why is everybody so quiet?

It's an Episcopal thing. We take time before the service to say hello to God, to prepare for communion (and, by the way, **everybody is invited to come to the altar rail or one of the other stations for communion**) and perhaps to go over the readings or other information printed on the inserts in the bulletin.

Speaking of which, what is all this stuff?

The major parts of the service are in the bulletin—if you want to follow the service word for word, this sheet directs you to the page numbers in the *Book of Common Prayer*. Also included in the “stuff” are announcements of upcoming events, a schedule of additional services during the week, a list of the members of the ministry teams (people who serve in specific ways in today's service) and a “Who's Who” at Grace Cathedral (our worship leaders).

One of the inserts in the bulletin contains the day's lessons and a title for this particular day in the Church calendar. The Collect, the opening prayer, is shown in two versions, Traditional and Contemporary. We use the Traditional for the 8:30 a.m. service and the Contemporary version for the 10:30 service. It also includes the first and second lessons (scripture from the Old and New Testaments), a Psalm (a canticle usually sung at the 10:30 service and recited at 8:30), and a reading from the Gospel.

The prayer list is included too, on the back of the bulletin. This is just what it sounds like—a list of people for whom we offer special prayers. If you would like to add someone's name to the prayer list, just call the church office or send us a note. They'll be included in our prayers for four weeks.

There's an awful lot of stuff in this church.

That's very true. The Episcopal way of worshiping exercises all the senses—sight, hearing, smell, touch and taste. We like to think of it as involving every part of us in worship. Which, by the way, gives God a lot of ways to reach us.

Why are some people bowing and some kneeling before entering the pews, and others don't do anything at all?

What you're noticing is called “reverencing” and people have different ways of doing it. Some bow in the direction of the altar, some “genuflect” (touch their knee to the floor), others reverence silently or without gesture. It's like we said, do whatever helps you to worship; don't do whatever hinders that.

Why do some people touch themselves on the forehead and shoulders?

Again, this is a personal worship style. This is called making the sign of the cross. Some people do it out of habit, others because it reminds them of the sacrifice Jesus made to enable us to respond to God's love; still others because it's their way of "taking up their own cross" and following him. You will see them doing this at times during the service, too. But *you don't have* to cross yourself just because others do.



This looks very Roman Catholic to me. Is this a Roman Catholic church?

No. Yes. Well, that's a hard one to answer in a booklet like this. Although the ancient Church from which the Episcopal Church sprang was Roman Catholic, the present-day Episcopal Church has practices and beliefs that are distinctly different from those of the Roman Catholic Church. The Episcopal Church is often referred to as a "bridge" church. We have deep roots in both the Catholic and Reformation traditions. The important thing, however, is our worship of God and our membership in the body of Christ.

Hey, I just want to know one thing. Is anybody going to make me stand up and give my name or anything like that?

No. Not because we don't care; in fact, you will find we care very much. We just don't want to embarrass you or make you uncomfortable. But we hope you will complete one of the "Guest" cards in front of you—just put it in the offertory plate—and introduce yourself to one of the clergy after the service.

So, what's going to happen next?

As you wait for the service to start, the first thing you'll probably hear will be the Prelude, usually an organ solo. You may see Altar Guild volunteers placing linens and arranging things around the altar and the lecterns. Sometimes acolytes (usually wearing white robes) will light candles on the altar. One thing you can do before the actual service starts is familiarize yourself with the bulletin and the hymnal. Whatever we will be singing first is listed in the bulletin as the Processional Hymn. If you love the hymn, belt it out, whether you're in tune or not. If you don't know the hymn or don't want to sing, you can just read the words to yourself. Whatever works.

Who are the people in the funny clothes?

Not much of a fashion statement, is it? Depending on the service you're attending, the procession may or may not be led by a vergers. The vergers wears a gray vestment, carries a staff and sets the pace for the procession. Next, you will see acolytes wearing white and carrying a cross (watch people bow as it passes them) and candles; sometimes acolytes also carry banners. If you're at the 10:30 service, the choir(s) comes next—they wear purple vestments with a white surplice over them. Then comes the clergy. Their vestments are the most festive and sometimes very elaborate—the colors of their stoles reflect the colors of the season in the church calendar. If the Bishop is present, he'll be last in the procession. You'll know it's the Bishop because he wears a pointy hat (called a mitre) and carries a fancy staff (called a crosier).



What about Communion? How does that work here?

All worshipers are invited and encouraged to participate in communion. Communion is received at the main altar and at two other stations in the nave. At the 10:30 service, acolytes dismiss pews (when they get to your pew, it's your turn to go). You may also receive the healing or other special prayers at the side aisle stations.

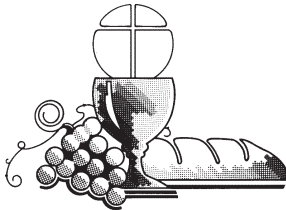


You may kneel or stand to receive communion. Just put your right hand, palm up, in your left hand and a priest or deacon will put a wafer or a piece of bread in your hand, saying either, "The Body of our Lord Jesus Christ keep you in everlasting life," or "The Body of Christ, the bread of heaven." Simply raise your hands to your mouth and eat the bread or wafer.

Next comes the wine. We use real wine, not grape juice, and a common cup. When the chalice bearer comes to you, help guide the cup to your lips and take a sip. If you do not wish to consume wine, just cross your arms over your chest as the chalice bearer approaches you. If you want wine, but don't want to drink from the cup, leave the bread in your palm—the chalice bearer will dip the bread in the wine and put it in your mouth. As the chalice bearer gives you wine, he or she will say, "The Blood of our Lord Jesus Christ keep you in everlasting life," or "The Blood of Christ, the cup of salvation."

If you have a child who you do not wish to take communion, just have your child cross his or her arms across his or her chest. The priest will say a blessing. (This is true for adults too.) Please remember that all who love God, most especially children, are welcome at the Lord's table and to receive communion.

A word about symbolism...



In the very earliest churches, most people could neither read nor write. So it became necessary to invent ways to teach people about religious matters and let them know what was going on, especially since all services and prayers were in Latin! Many of these traditions still exist—like different vestment colors to denote various seasons of the church year, stained glass windows to tell

Biblical stories, Sanctus Bells to indicate the most solemn moments of Holy Communion (listen for the chimes to ring three times), incense to indicate prayers. These subtle reminders enhance the beauty of our tradition and enrich our worship services today.

Look, tell you what...

Now that the service has started, let's hold the rest of the questions until afterward when you can join us for some refreshments and fellowship time. (During the school year, we'd love to have you also join us for Christian Education—Sunday School for kids and the Adult Forum for adults, both 9:30-10:15). Until then, though, just use your service bulletin and the hymnal to follow the service. Remember, do what makes you feel comfortable. The point is,

God's glad you're here, and so are we.

