

Understanding Episcopal Liturgy

#16. People keep talking about 'The Nave'. What is The Nave?

'The Nave' is the main part of the church building, extending from the western wall of the church, forward to the chancel steps and the raised area where the choir, lay readers, eucharistic ministers, acolytes, and clergy are seated.

Nave is derived from the Latin 'navis', meaning *ship*. (Think of *navy* and *naval*.) There are two connections to the idea of a ship. First, the roof above the nave resembles an upside-down ship. Second, a ship is one of the ancient symbols of the church as a whole, the idea being that the group of believers is venturing out across seas that are sometimes stormy, bringing the Gospel of Christ to the world. Many churches in Scandinavian and Baltic countries have a model of a ship displayed in the nave of the church!