

Acolyte Handbook

"Lighted candles are among the oldest ornaments of worship, as fire has long been seen as a sign of God's presence. In ancient times, candles provided light for reading, but today they usually have only symbolic value. In the most basic sense, candles are a visual reminder of Christ as the light of the world (John 8:12; 12:46)." from the Altar Guild and Sacristy Handbook by S. Anita Stauffer.

acolyte - from the Greek word that means "to follow". One who helps.

There is no right or wrong way to serve. The best rule is that all should be done with dignity and care in the simplest way possible so as not to distract the congregation.

If you can't make it to the service you are scheduled to acolyte, find a replacement before the day you are scheduled and notify the office.

BEFORE THE SERVICE :

1. Be sure you look nice and never chew gum. Your shoes are the only piece of clothing that show beneath your robe. So, please try to wear nice shoes such as dress shoes, loafers, deck shoes as they look much nicer than tennis shoes and flip flops. Also, boys should not wear shorts. (Note: you do not have to robe for a Wednesday night service or for the 8:15 service, so please dress appropriately.)
2. Arrive at least 15 minutes before the service starts.
 - Wednesday night service begins at 6:15, except during Lent, then it starts at 7:15
 - Sunday Arise to Praise service begins at 8:15
 - Sunday traditional service begins at 10:30
3. Take a bulletin and a pew Bible and place them in the front pew. If you want to take a sermon note, also place that in the pew ahead of time.

4. Put on a robe which is called an alb. An alb is a full-length white vestment usually worn with a cincture (which is the rope belt). Tie the cincture with 2 knots. (not a bow)

Note: you do not have to robe for a Wednesday night or the 8:15 service.

5. Be sure the taper (the long wax stem in a candle lighter, often called a wick) in the candlelighter is long enough. 1-1.5 inches is needed to light. If it is short, please change it. Ask the worship coordinator to help you if you need help.

6. Let the worship coordinator know you have arrived. The worship coordinator is listed in the bulletin. Ask the worship coordinator for any special instructions and for which candles need to be lit.

Note: If it is Advent (the first season of the church year. Means "coming". It's the time before Christmas when we prepare for the coming of Jesus. There are four Sundays in Advent.) you may be asked to help light the advent wreath candles. Be sure to check with the worship coordinator or the Pastor.

AT THE BEGINNING OF THE SERVICE:

1. Light the candlelighter (the ushers or worship coordinator will help you if you ask) and then hold it in front of you with the flame pointing ahead of you and the bell pointing back toward you. One hand should be near the bottom of the staff and the other where it can adjust the knob that regulates the length of the taper.

2. Once the prelude music has started, walk in a dignified, unhurried manner up the center isle. Keep your head up and your eyes straight ahead. When there are 2 acolytes walk together.

3. If there is a Baptism, 1 acolyte lights the Christ candle (the tall candle that stands alone) and the other waits for that to be done. Then continue up the steps.

4. Pause once you reach the top of the steps in front of the altar rail, looking at the altar for a moment, then bow your head.

5. Walk to the outside of the altar rail closest to you and enter the chancel (the area inside the altar railing and contains the altar) and walk in front of the altar, turning inward to face the altar.
6. Light the candles starting in the middle working your way to the outside. If there is only 1 acolyte, light the candles on the right side first this way, then on the left side. If communion is being served at this service, light the two individual candles as well as the candelabras. If communion is not being served at this service, only light the candelabras.
7. If it is the Easter season (not Lent season), 1 acolyte should light the Christ candle (the tall candle that stands alone).
8. Snuff out the flame by pulling the wick into the stem of the candlelighter. Then push the wick out again.
9. Walk behind the altar, at the same time, and place the candlelighters on the holder behind the altar. Return from behind the altar the same way you went behind the altar. Walk back to the front pew and be seated. By sitting in the front pew, you are available to help the pastor should he need it. If this is a Wednesday night service, you will be responsible for running the power point projector.
10. Actively participate in the entire worship service: standing and sitting when the congregation does. If you are running the power point projector, please remain seated the entire service so others can see over you.
11. If the Christ candle is in front, for the entire children's sermon, you must hold the Christ candle so no child can knock it over. It is top heavy and it has happened!
12. If there is communion at the rail or by stations, you will help by collecting the used cups either with an empty tray or in a basket, whichever is provided for you. If communion is by intinction (Latin for "to dip"; the practice of administering the Eucharist elements by dipping the host into the wine) you do not need to help serve communion. Just participate in communion with the congregation.

AT THE CLOSE OF THE SERVICE:

1. After the 1st verse of the last hymn, stand and walk behind the pulpit and behind the altar to retrieve the candlelighter again.
2. Walk in front of the altar and in the reverse order you lit the candles, you put them out. From the outside in, gently place the bell over the candle, but do not touch the candle to put out the flame. When you reach the last candle, then re-light the candlelighter from the candle before putting the flame out. We do this to signify that we are carrying the light of Christ into the world.
3. Turn, and exit the chancel and meet in the front of the altar rail in the center, face the altar, pause, bow your head, turn and proceed down the center. If the Christ candle was lit, 1 acolyte snuffs it out while the other waits. Again if there are 2 acolytes, walk together.
4. When you exit the sanctuary, you then snuff out the flame by pulling the wick into the stem of the candlelighter. Then push the wick out again.
5. Return the candlelighter to the coat hooks. Return your robe to the coat hanger and neatly hang it back up.

Thank you for serving the Lord!