

A Manual for Acolytes

“The Lord is my Light.”

What is the key function of an acolyte?

- To be an outward and very visible sign of Christ's light...to be reliable, attentive, expectant, worshipful, confident, caring, careful and joyful...to serve the Lord with gladness.
- To serve the Lord in the gathering of God's people by assisting in the drama and actions of the liturgies of the Church.

The Covenant

1. No gum or hats.
2. Hair, keep it tidy.
3. Don't wander away.
4. No sleeping.
5. No radios.
6. No pets, unless the liturgy calls for one or two.
7. Talking, see [Voice Modulation and Reverence](#).
8. When you listen, think quietly.
9. The Ten Commandments.
10. All rules from the section called "[Anticipated Absence](#)."
11. Wear the very best and/or cleanest shoes I have.
12. Be prepared for the unexpected or accidental.

Remember:

There is absolutely 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.

Voice Modulation and General Reverence

Any given Sunday morning requires communication. Obviously, to talk is essential even during the liturgy! But do it with discretion.

Anyone knows you can scream during a rock concert and no one will hear you. Conversely, if you get the stomach growls in class during a test, you'll destroy everybody's concentration. Church is a tricky place to talk. If you have to check something out with Pastor, the Assisting Minister or other acolyte, do so carefully.

Not just anyone becomes an acolyte. We don't recruit people from the Stanford Shopping Center. It is a privilege and an honor to serve.

Many of us have been raised in the Church and most all of us have been at an event where we are so moved we have to be still.....that's what it means to be reverent. That's what we are in worship.

The Anticipated Absence

Anticipated Absences occur whenever acolytes are honest enough with themselves to know they're not going to serve when they're supposed to do so. The rule is simple, universal, eloquent and decipherable:

FIND A REPLACEMENT

When a person agrees to become an acolyte, s/he is committed to a certain number of Sundays or services throughout the year.....Sounds scary, doesn't it? Alas but this commitment is not etched in stone. We are flexible. To this end, we have created the FIND A REPLACEMENT rule.

Can't make it? Find a replacement from among the acolyte crew and notify the Acolyte Captain who will notify the office.

Tips

A couple of notes to help the fledgling acolyte:

- ✚ When moving about the chancel, keep your hands folded at waist level. This is to protect your fingers and hands from becoming entangled in your cincture, alb or the air.
- ✚ As you cross the chancel, always stop and reverence (bow) in the direction of the Altar.
- ✚ When carrying a torch, nod instead of bowing. Melted wax is hard to scrape up after it cools.
- ✚ When the Pastor or Assisting Minister is addressing the congregation, stop what you are doing. Don't budge!

ACOLYTE PROCEDURES

— A General Outline

- ✚ Pre-Service
 - ✚ Arrival time: 20 minutes before the service.
 - ✚ Vest in alb and cincture (color of the season—check altar cloth) immediately.
 - ✚ Light the candles.
 - ✚ Gather and ready necessary items (LBW, WOV, bulletin, cross, lectionary, banners, baptismal things, torches, etc.)
 - ✚ Check with Pastor and Assisting Ministers.
 - ✚ Prayer with the ministers.
- ✚ Brief Order for Confession and Forgiveness
- ✚ Entrance Rite
 - ✚ Order of procession.
 - ✚ Carrying and setting procession items.
 - ✚ In the chancel.
- ✚ Liturgy of the Word
 - ✚ Being seated.
 - ✚ Participation in the liturgy and worship
 - ✚ Assignment (carrying lectionary, Gospel procession, baptism)
- ✚ Liturgy of the Eucharistic Meal
 - ✚ The Peace — exchange with those in the chancel; in nave too.
 - ✚ Offering, Offertory: Receive plates, bring vessels to altar.
 - ✚ Communion. Receive with ministers; assist as needed.
 - ✚ Post-Communion: Assist the AM and/or Pastor.
 - ✚ The Recession.
- ✚ After the service
 - ✚ Assignments (return all items to sacristy or resting places).
 - ✚ Vestments: Hang neatly. Note need for cleaning

While Serving

- ✚ Have a good time, with a feeling of reverence and dignity.
- ✚ Keep hands together when moving about the sanctuary.
- ✚ When crossing the chancel, pause and reverence the altar.

Vocabulary for the Well-Versed Acolyte

Alb

A white, long robe used as the basic garment of the ministers of communion, worn with a cincture.

Altar Guild

The wonderful, dedicated people who assist the clergy in preparations for the liturgies.

Ambo

The piece of furniture from which the lessons are read and homily is preached.

Ambulatory

A walkway (sometimes scary) behind the apse. Used by clergy, assisting ministers, acolytes, and other heavenly beings.

Apse

A semi-circular or polygonal alcove at the end of the chancel.

Blessing

Part of the final verbal send-off by the clergy to everyone else. Things are winding down, fast.

Candelabra

A heavy metal stand that holds a progression of candles.

Chalice

Goblet that shares the communion wine.

Chancel

The area (sometimes elevated) in the front of the worship place where the altar is located.

Cincture

A belt used to gather a garment at the waist and made of braided rope or band of cloth.

Crucifer

The acolyte who carries the cross. Usually is the head acolyte of a given liturgy.

Cruet

Small glass pitcher, which holds wine and water for communion.

Decanter

Large glass pitcher, which holds baptismal water.

Dais

A raised platform upon which the altar sits, or a chair is placed, or the ambo is located.

Dismissal

Part two of the send-off (see Blessing). This is the symbolic pat-on-the-back/go-gettum' following the parish announcements.

Eucharist

A Greek word meaning "thanksgiving" and often used in place of Holy Communion.

Flagon

Large silver decanter that holds wine for communion.

Geosynchronous

When two acolytes rotate together in such a way that one doesn't spin faster than the other but still may get dizzy.

Gospel Procession

When the lectionary cross, torches, and reader process to a central place among the people and the Gospel for the day is read.

Lector

The person who reads the lesson(s) for the liturgy.

Liturgy

A word that refers to any worship service. Literally it means "work of the people", what they do together in worship.

Nave

Refers to the inside of the church building, often referred to as a "sanctuary" and reminds us of the nave or the hull of a ship.

Oblations

The bread and wine used during the communion usually presented by the ushers.

Oil Stock

Small, round, gold container, which holds oil for anointing.

Paschal Candle

Tall, distinctive, ornamental candle wedged in a floor stand. Usually stands near the baptismal font.

Paten

Silver, gold or ceramic plate which holds bread for communion.

Presentation

When the ushers come forward in tight formation with offering plates and oblations. The cue for acolytes to begin their duties as communion gets underway.

Processional

Gala entrance of acolytes, choir and clergy during the Entrance Hymn.

Recessional

Gala exit of acolytes, choir and clergy during the Postlude.

Rook

Brass branch-shaped device used in lighting and extinguishing candles.

Sacristy

Room where clergy, ministers and acolytes vest before liturgies.

Shell

Used by Pastor to scoop water in the baptismal rite.

Station

Any place where communion is administered.

Torches

Tall pavement candles used in procession and at various places around the altar and in the chancel.

Transept

The side sections of the chancel area where people can sit facing the altar.

Vessels

Chalices, patens, decanters, cruets, flagons, trays used in administering the sacrament of Holy Communion.