

# ST JOHN'S LUTHERAN CHURCH ACOLTYE HANDBOOK

## Introduction

Congratulations! You have been asked to serve as an acolyte. That makes you a special kind of minister. To be an acolyte is to be a minister, for you will be serving at the altar of God, handling holy things, assisting the pastor, and helping everyone at church see something of the goodness and glory of God.

The word acolyte means 'follower' or 'attendant'. In the early days of the church, serving as an acolyte was one of the steps toward becoming a pastor. Today, no one expects every acolyte to become a pastor. But acolytes are needed because they have a special ministry to perform. They are needed to:

- Help the church get ready for worship
- Know what's supposed to happen and help it happen
- Do their tasks with reverence and care
- Make it obvious that worship is a holy event

Acolytes are ministers of the church. They are part of a long tradition in the Christian church, bringing to each service a useful and special ministry. As such, good acolytes know that God is being served at worship and that God should have the best.

## Lighting the Candles

Altar candles are lighted for each service and extinguished following each service. The altar candles remind us that Jesus is the Light of the World. It requires skill and training to deal with altar candles so that the flame of the candlelighter can easily reach the wick and so that the candles can be extinguished without smashing the wick.

- The signal for the Acolyte to enter the Sanctuary with a lighted candlelighter is when the organist begins to play the prelude unless Pastor or the Assisting Minister gives other instructions.

- To light the candlelighter, push out about 1" of taper and light it with the lighter (Mrs. Schirk or pastor will help you if you have any problems).
- With the taper lit, walk to the place in front of the center of the Altar. Pause in front of the altar and bow slightly at the waist.
- For worship without Holy Communion, use the following procedure:

Light the candle on the lectern side (the right side, right is right) first. Return to the center, bow slightly from the waist and light the candle on the pulpit side (the left).

During the Sundays of Easter and for Baptism, light the Paschal Candle.

After the candles are lit, extinguish the flame on the Candlelighter. Please Remember: after the flame has been extinguished, push the taper out so that it does not stick inside the candlelighter as the wax cools.

Place the candlelighter in its place and take your seat, ready to participate in worship.

- For worship with Holy Communion the candelabras are used:

Light the candles on the altar first in the same way as above, the lectern side (the right side, right is right) first. Return to the center, bow slightly from the waist and light the candle on the pulpit side (the left).

After the candles on the altar have been lit. Light the candles on the candelabra on the right first, starting with the candle nearest the altar and working away from the altar.

Return to the center; bow slightly from the waist. Then light the candles on the candelabra on the left side, starting with the candle nearest the altar and working away from the altar.

During the Sundays of Easter and for Baptism, light the Paschal Candle.

After the candles are lit, extinguish the flame on the Candlelighter. Please Remember: after the flame has been extinguished, push the taper out so that it does not stick inside the candlelighter as the wax cools.

Place the candlelighter in its place and take your seat, ready to participate in worship.

### Extinguishing the Candles

At the end of the service the acolyte extinguishes the candles. In our church this is done after the singing of the last hymn and before the postlude. After the last verse of the last hymn, the organist will pause and then play a verse of the hymn we've just sung quietly. That is your signal to pick up the candlelighter and extinguish the candles.

- For worship without Holy Communion:

Pick up the candlelighter and go to the center of the altar. Pause in front of the altar, bow slightly. Light the wick from the candle to your left (pulpit side). Turn the candlelighter around and extinguish the left candle.

Return to the center, bow slightly and extinguish the right candle. Return to center and bow.

Leave with the wick on the candlelighter lit. After you walk out the door by the organ, extinguish the taper and place the candlelighter back in its holder ready for next week.

- For worship with Holy Communion:

Pick up the candlelighter and go to the center of the altar. Pause in front of the altar, bow slightly. Light the wick from the candle to your left (pulpit side).

Extinguish the candles on the left candelabra first, in the reverse order in which they were lit. (Start with the candle farthest from the altar). Return to center, bow and extinguish the candles on the right candelabra.

Return to the center of the altar, bow slightly and extinguish the left candle and then the right. Bow slightly again.

Leave with the wick on the candlelighter lit. After you walk out the door by the organ, extinguish the taper and place the candlelighter back in its holder ready for next week.

### Distributing the Offering Plates

The Offering Plates will be distributed at the following times:

During Worship without Holy Communion after the Apostles' Creed is spoken.

During Worship with Holy Communion after the Peace is shared by the Congregation.

Go to the shelf where the offering plates are stored. Lift 4 plates and go to the center of the altar. Face the rear of the Church and step down the stairs to the center of the platform.

The Ushers will come forward and form a line in front of you. Distribute the plates beginning with the Usher closest to the organ side of the congregation.

When the Ushers turn to take up the Offering, return to your seat.

### Receiving the Offering Plates

The cue for the Acolyte to receive the Offering from the Ushers is as follows:

During Worship without Holy Communion when the Congregation sings, "Create in me a clean heart, O God..."

During Worship with Holy Communion when the Congregation sings, "Let the vineyards be fruitful, Lord....."

The Acolyte picks up the large offering plate and moves to the place where the plates were distributed facing the rear of the church.

When the Ushers arrive, the Acolyte receives the Offering Plates beginning with the Usher on the far left.

During worship without Holy Communion: when all the Offering Plates have been received, the Acolyte turns and hands them to the Pastor or Assisting Minister who then raises the plates as an offering to God. The Pastor or Assisting Minister will turn and hand the Plates back to the Acolyte who then places them on the ledge.

During worship with Holy Communion: when all the Offering Plates have been received, the Acolyte waits until the Pastor has placed the bread and wine on the altar then turns and hands them to the Pastor or Assisting Minister who then raises the plates as an offering to God. The Pastor or Assisting Minister will turn and hand the Plates back to the Acolyte who then places them on the ledge.

### Preparing for Worship

1. Arrive 15 Minutes before worship begins
2. Offer a silent prayer to God.
3. Immediately put on your Alb and Cincture.
4. Prepare the Candlelighter by checking two things before each worship :  
Is the taper usable? If too small, replace with a new one.

Is the taper stuck inside the Candlelighter? If so:  
try to loosen it by pushing firmly on the taper knob.  
If the taper cannot be freed, use the extra Candlelighter.

### Conduct During Worship

1. Be reverent! Reverent means to be very respectful. Worshipping God is the most important thing we do. The way you walk, stand, sit, and act sets an example for the Congregation.
2. Do not rush! Always walk and move at a respectful pace.
3. Participate in worship. God wants to hear your prayers and songs just like everybody else. Your presence and participation is special to God and to everybody else.
4. Please dress neatly (shoes are preferred, rather than sneakers).
5. Have clean hands and brushed or combed hair.
6. Do not chew gum.

### At the End of the Service

1. Extinguish the taper and place the candlelighter back in its place. If the wick is low, notify either Pastor or a member of the altar guild for that day so that the taper can be replaced.
2. Take off your vestments and carefully hang them up. If they are torn, worn, soiled notify whoever is in charge of repairing the vestments.

### Lighting of the Advent Wreath

During the season of Advent, our church uses an Advent wreath. This wreath has 5 candles—Four are blue and represent the Sundays of Advent, the center candle is white. It is called the Christ candle and is lighted on Christmas Eve.

During Advent we have a special candle lighting ceremony. For the first week, no candles on the wreath are lighted. The first candle is lit during the Advent candle lighting ceremony. However, from the Second week on, the acolyte should light the number of candles that were lighted the week before. For instance, on the third Sunday in Advent, two candles on the wreath will be lit at the beginning of the service.

### The Crucifer

The acolyte who carries the processional cross is the crucifer. To carry the cross is to give a signal to all the worshipers that Christ is about to enter their company in a very special way. In the procession the cross goes first as a sign that all Christians follow wherever the cross of Christ leads them.

#### At the beginning of the worship service:

Before the service begins, the crucifer needs to see that the processional cross is at hand and that the stand for the cross is in the chancel area. The crucifer will be dressed as the acolyte is in an alb and cincture.

The crucifer stands at the head of the procession. When the congregation begins to sing the first hymn the crucifer leads the choir down the left aisle.

Walk with dignity to the altar, up the steps and stand at the center of the altar. Turn and face the congregation.

The presiding minister walks last. The arrival of the presiding minister is a signal for the crucifer to place the cross in its stand and then take their place during worship.

#### At the end of the worship service:

When the service ends the procession out is lead by the crucifer.

Pick up the cross from the chancel area. Turn and stand at the center of the altar, facing the congregation. When the next to the last verse of the final hymn begins, move down the steps and exit out the right side of the church (from this perspective, it will be the left—the opposite aisle from which you entered).

Exit the back of the church and place the cross in its stand. Hang up your vestments.

***If you have any questions at any time when you serve as acolyte or crucifer, please see Pastor or a member of the altar guild.***