

The Acolyte

This information has been prepared for acolytes because it is important not only to know what to do, but to understand why. Our church is rich in scripture, history, tradition, and symbolism.

An acolyte workshop was held at St. Paul Lutheran and a booklet was prepared with the following information. The booklet is available in the church office. The workshop was video taped for anyone who was unable to attend the presentation.

When you observed the acolyte relighting the tool wick before extinguishing the altar candles, then carrying it down the aisle, this is symbolic of God's light which has been ignited within us and is to be carried by us into our daily lives.

What is an acolyte?

When God's people gather to receive the Word and Sacraments, God gives them His gifts of grace and the new life in Christ received in baptism.

Worship is an encounter with God – an experience that is filled with awe and great joy.

Leadership in worship is guided by:

- the minister and
- the acolyte. The acolyte provides leadership to the assembly of believers as he/she does the work entrusted specifically to an acolyte.

Who can be an acolyte?

- Any member of the assembly
- youth or adult
- male or female
- any age (must be tall enough to light the altar candles)



What is the work entrusted to acolytes?

Acolytes have been given tasks in three main areas:

1. Preparation
 - Lighting the altar candles, Pascal candle, and Advent wreath.
 - Carrying the processional Bible, cross, and/or banners.
 - Leading processions for Palm Sunday and Rally Day.
2. Leadership
 - Helping the worshippers focus on the reality of God's presence in the Word and Sacraments.
 - Helping guide the celebration of the worship's four main parts: Gathering, Word, Meal, and Sending.
3. Assistance
 - Helping with the distribution of Holy Communion.
 - Helping with the sacrament of Holy Baptism.



The cross symbol appearing in this booklet symbolizes procedures that are shared.

What does acolyte mean?

The word is derived from the Middle English term *acolit*, taken from the Latin *acolytus* which came from the Greek *akolouthos* (attendant) and *akolouthein* (to follow). Webster defines it as an attendant or follower who assists in worship.

Scripture References for Light



You, O Lord, keep my lamp burning; my God turns my darkness into light.

Psalm 18:28

Your word is a lamp to my feet and a light for my path.

Psalm 119:105

The unfolding of your words gives light: it gives understanding to the simple.

Psalm 119:130

Come, O house of Jacob, let us walk in the light of the Lord.

Isaiah 2:5

Arise, shine, for your light has come, and the glory of the Lord rises upon you.

Isaiah 60:1

The sun will no more be your light by day, nor will the brightness of the moon shine on you, for the Lord will be your everlasting light, and your God will be your glory.

Isaiah 60:19

You are the light of the world.

Matthew 5:14

Let your light shine before men, that they may see your good deeds and praise your Father in heaven.

Matthew 5:16

There He was transfigured before them. His face shone like the sun, and his clothes became white as the light.

Matthew 17:2

No one lights a lamp and hides it in a jar or puts it under a bed. Instead, he puts it on a stand, so that those who come in can see the light.

Luke 8:16

In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God...In Him was life, and that life was the light of men. The light shines in the darkness, but the darkness has not understood it.

John 1:1,4,&5

The true light that gives light to every man was coming into the world.

John 1:9

I am the light of the world. Whoever follows me will never walk in darkness, but will have the light of life.

John 8:12

I have come into the world as a light, so that no one who believes in me should stay in darkness.

John 12:46

I have made you a light for the Gentiles, that you may bring salvation to the ends of the earth.

Acts 13:47

For God, who said, "Let light shine out of darkness, made his light shine in our hearts to give us the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Christ.

2 Corinthians 4:6

You are a chosen people, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people belonging to God, that you may declare the praises of Him who call you out of darkness into his wonderful light.

1 Peter 2:9

God is light; in Him there is no darkness at all.

1 John 1:5b

The city does not need the sun or the moon to shine on it for the glory of God gives it light, and the Lamb is its lamp.

Revelation 21:23

Old Testament Tabernacle



Holy of Holies: the inner room with the ark of the covenant entered only once a year by the High Priest on the Day of Atonement.

Holy Place: housed the golden tables for bread of the Presence, gold lampstands, and altar of incense.

Portico: the outer courts of the temple.

The Old Testament Covenant (promise) lives under the Law.



New Testament Church



Sanctuary: The raised portion of the worship center on which the altar is placed, the lectern, and the pulpit. It is the remnant of the Holy of Holies significant of God's presence in worship. (At Christ's death, the curtain that symbolically separated the people from God was torn from top to bottom.)

Nave: The portion of the worship center where the people of God gather to worship. The word is Latin and means "the ship".

Narthex: Entrance hall and gathering space of a church building leading to the nave.

The New Testament Covenant lives under the Gospel, full of God's love and grace.



Vesture and Tools

Alb: A white ankle length garment with close-fitting sleeves. It is the church's oldest and most basic vestment.



White robes have been traditionally worn by worship leaders because they symbolize that the sinful nature of the person has been forgiven and clothed in the righteousness of Jesus, our Savior.

Cincture: Rope belt worn with an alb.

Candlelighter: A tool with a taper and extinguisher used to light the candles in the sanctuary and nave.



Precious metals are used in the sanctuary representing the reflective glory of God. The tool has a handle which should be used, so as not to touch the precious metals.

The Celebration of Holy Communion

I. Gathering:

In regular Sunday worship, the acolyte prepares the worship area (the nave) by bringing in God's light and lighting the two candles on the altar in the sanctuary.



Christ brings the light of God into the sinful world. John 8:12 "I am the light of the world. Whoever follows me will never walk in darkness, but will have the light of life."

The acolyte approaches the altar reverently, bows from the waist, enters the sanctuary, and lights the candles from right to left.



Christ is at the right hand of God. Acts 7:55 "Stephen, full of the Holy Spirit, looked up to heaven and saw the glory of God, and Jesus standing at the right hand of God."

When stepping down from the altar, the acolyte turns faces the altar, and again bows. During the liturgy, the acolyte signals when to stand and sit.

On days of special worship, a procession ("prayers with feet") might include carrying the Scriptures, the cross, and/or banners.

During Advent, the four candles of the Advent wreath are lit: one on the first Sunday, two on the second Sunday, three on the third, & four on the fourth.

The Pascal (Christ) candle is lit on Easter and for baptisms and funerals. It is always lit first.

II. Word:

During the reading of the Old Testament and Epistle, the acolyte listens intently, participates in the Psalm, and rises for the reading of the Gospel and again listens intently.



The readings from the Old and New Testaments are the direct and most important communication from God during the worship. Matthew 11:15 "He who has ears, let him hear."

By good posture, focus, attentiveness during the sermon, hearty response in prayer, the acolyte offers leadership to the assembled worshippers.

III. Meal:

As this part of the worship begins, the acolyte engages in sharing God's peace among those present.



Those who follow Christ, call themselves Christians, but are at the same time saints and sinners. At this point in the service, worshippers have confessed and received forgiveness and are as close to God as possible. Have received God's peace, it is joyfully shared. Philippians 4:7 "And the peace of God, which passes all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus."

Acolytes received the offering, turn to face the altar, bow, and place the offering on the altar.



Offerings of time, talent, and treasure are gifts given in response to God's abundant love and blessing in our lives. 1 Peter 2:5 "You also, like living stones, are being built into a spiritual house to be a holy priesthood, offering spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God through Jesus Christ."

The acolyte assists in the sacrament of Holy Communion by providing cups for the communicants in which to receive the wine, Christ's sacrificial blood, confirming our forgiveness and oneness with Him.

IV. Sending:

At the time of the sending, the acolyte again bows in reverence, extinguishes the altar candles in the reverse order-left to right, steps down from the sanctuary, turns, faces the altar, bows, exits down the center aisle.

In some churches, before extinguishing the last altar candle, the candlelighting tool is relit, so that symbolically, the light and joy of being lifted by God can be carried out into our daily activities for the week.

***"The worship is ended. Let the service begin!"
Sending by Dave Hudson***



On Sundays without communion, the worship tasks for the acolyte are the same without the service of the meal.

Throughout the Church Year, there are special services with additional responsibilities for the acolyte:

- **Advent:** A wreath marking the four Sundays of Advent is lit. The candles of **Hope** (all four Sundays), **The Way** (second through fourth Sundays), **Joy** (third & fourth Sundays), and **Peace** (fourth Sunday) are lit. These are lit after the altar candles and sometimes as part of the children's sermon.
- **Ash Wednesday:** The acolyte may be asked to hold the container for the imposition of ashes.
- **Palm Sunday:** Includes the procession of palms reenacting Jesus' entrance into Jerusalem.
- **Good Friday:** If the Tenebrae service is used, the acolyte will assist in the withdrawal of light from the worship service. The pastor will give instruction as to when the candles should be extinguished.
- **Easter:** The Pascal candle should be lit first in celebration of the resurrection.

Special Services:

- **Baptism:** The Pascal candle is lit and usually a smaller candle is lit from the Pascal candle, then given to the parents and sponsors.
- **Funerals:** The Pascal candle is lit in assurance of the resurrection.

The Church Calendar



The church calendar, special festivals, and colors are denoted on the calendar in the church office.

Advent: Beginning of the church year. Awaiting the coming of Christ four Sundays before Christmas. Blue paraments.

Christmas: Birth of the Savior. December 25th. White paraments.

Epiphany: Revelation to the Gentiles. White paraments.

Ash Wednesday/Lent: Beginning of Lent. The Passion of Christ. Purple paraments.

Holy Week: Maundy Thursday (purple paraments). Last Supper. Good Friday (black paraments). Crucifixion.

Easter: Christ's Resurrection. White paraments.

Ascension: Christ's Return to Heaven. White paraments.

Pentecost: Sending of the Holy Spirit. Red paraments.

Sundays After Pentecost: Spiritual Growth. Green paraments.

Reformation: October 30th. On-going renewal of the church. Red paraments.

Christ the King Sunday: Final Sunday of the Church Year. White paraments.

Tasks, Procedures, Mechanics



- Arrive 15 minutes prior to service.
- Find an alb that fits comfortable and tie with a cincture.
- Check the candlelighting tool to see that it lights and has enough wick.
- Check with the pastor to see if there are any special assignments.
- Place a hymnal and bulletin on the chair where you will be worshipping.
- Light the candles at the beginning of the service.
- Extinguish the wick by pulling it into the wick tube, but slide it back out as soon as the flame is extinguished to prevent melted wax from blocking the wick tube.
- Set the tool carefully in its holder until needed either during the service or at the end of the service.
- Extinguish the candles during the last verse of the closing hymn.
- Return the tool and alb to its proper place at the end of the worship (the cabinet in the office).
- Report any problems you encountered to the pastor.