

Before the Service:

1. Arrive at least 15 minutes before the service will start. (For 2nd service, come right after Sunday School.) Check in with the Altar Guild person in the sacristy (the room where the albs and communion elements are kept).
2. Have your hair combed and hands and fingernails clean. Wear clean clothing and shoes. Do not chew gum.
3. Make sure that you have something to light the candles with. (Matches or lighter)
4. Get a bulletin and a hymnal to put where you will be sitting during the service. Check to make sure the offering plates are where they should be for you to get them when the time comes. If they aren't where they should be, ask the person doing Altar Guild where they are.
5. If you need to, use the bathroom before you vest, or put on your alb. Find your alb (robe). Robe quietly and reverently. Use the mirror to make sure you are put together neatly.
6. Introduce yourself to the pastors. Ask if there are any special instructions the pastor has for you.
7. Take a moment to say a simple prayer about your acolyte ministry, for example:
Dear God, please be with me as I serve as a minister at your altar today. Please help me to remember that I am your servant today. May my ministry be pleasing to you. Amen.
8. Line up for the procession. Light the candles.
9. When you process, walk reverently down the aisle. Keep even spacing (about two pews) between you and the person in front of you. Stop or pause to reverence the altar before you step up to the altar area. (Watch the assisting minister, who carries the crucifer/cross, and do the same thing.)

During the Service:

1. Follow along in your bulletin so that you know what is going on.
2. Use your hymnal and sing all the hymns when they are sung.
3. Stand or sit when the congregation is supposed to. Watch the pastor or the assisting minister if you are unsure.
4. When praying please fold your hands at your waist when standing.
5. Do not lean on anything, squirm around when sitting, sway back and forth when standing, or take your shoes off while seated.
6. When there is a Gospel procession (when the Gospel is read in the midst of the people), you accompany the pastors and the assisting minister with the candles (you are the torchbearers!). The procession begins during the Alleluia Verse. Sometimes the organist will play a longer introduction to introduce the singing of the first acclamation (Alleluia!). Get your torches and follow the assisting minister who carries the crucifer. When you stop in the midst of the people, stand on either side of the pastor that holds the Bible. Face the reader. At the end of the reading of the Gospel, move to the sides to make room for the assisting minister to return to the altar area first. You follow the assisting minister. Remember to reverence the altar. Put the torches back in their stands and return to your seat.
7. During the sermon, sit still, rest your hands in your lap and listen to what the preacher is saying.
8. When it is time, exchange the peace with the congregation. You don't have to exchange the peace with everyone, but do not just stand at your seat during the peace.

During Offertory and Communion:

1. During the offertory it is time to set the table. Go to the credence (the table where all the communion elements and vessels are kept) and carry the chalices, wine pitchers, linen cloths, and patens (plates with the bread) and hand them to the pastor or assisting minister. Only carry as much as is comfortable in each trip. When the table is set, return to your seats.
2. Watch the ushers during the offertory to see when they have completed collecting the offering. When the ushers have reached the back pews, go to the front of the altar area, stand on the first step and wait for the ushers to bring the offering to the altar. Collect the offering plates. Before you take the offering plates back to the sacristy area, reverence the altar, or stop in front of the altar. Then carry the offering plates back to the credence.
3. Wait at the credence with the rest of the communion servers until it is time to serve communion. Acolytes carry the baskets to collect the communion cups. The Altar Guild person will make sure you have enough baskets to use.
4. After communion, help with the clean-up. Carry what you can back to the credence. When finished, return to your seat.

After the Service:

1. During the postlude put the candles out reverently.
2. Hang up your alb carefully and neatly. Check to see if it needs washing. If it does, give it to the Altar Guild person and politely ask him/her to launder it for you.
3. Go to the seat where you were sitting and straighten it up. Put the hymnals back in the rack and remove the bulletin so that everything is neat.
4. Now would be a good time for saying a quick prayer to thank God for the opportunity to serve at the altar and to be involved in the ministry of the church. For example:
Dear God, thank you for being with me as I served in my ministry as an acolyte today for the good of your church. Amen.
5. Make sure that everything is in place or ready for the next person who will be using it. If something isn't right, tell the Altar Guild person.

Introduction:

As an acolyte you are a minister and a leader of the worshiping community. It is your role to show the joy and reverence of worship. You are not here to attract attention to yourself, but to give glory and praise to God.

Basic guidelines for all worship ministers:

- Participate in ALL of worship -- you are a model leading the congregation: Be attentive. Say the prayers and sing the hymns.
- Put yourself in the background: Keep your focus and attention on God not yourself. Don't get between people and God. Minimize distractions: no gum chewing, no flashy jewelry, no fidgeting or distracting gestures with hands, face, or posture.
- Keep it simple: Every action has a necessary function.
- Position yourself deliberately: even spacing, graceful movements, like a dance.
- Do things naturally, not like in a parade or a magic show. Move naturally and directly from one place to another. Don't move backwards.
- Don't rush.
- When mistakes happen (and they will), don't panic: Continue with grace or repeat as required. If "lost," look to the pastor or assisting minister for direction.
- Follow the lead of the pastors and the assisting minister. Turn to them for directions.
- Remember God loves you and all the gathered people.



ACOLYTE HANDBOOK

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Hope**

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