

ACOLYTE TRAINING

Immanuel Lutheran Church

Welcome to this important ministry! We appreciate your commitment to God, Immanuel, and each other. As we go along together, please share your questions and your suggestions for making our acolyte program more meaningful and open to all.

ACOLYTE HISTORY



The word *acolyte* is derived from the Greek word *akolouthos*, meaning companion, attendant, or helper, who waits continually upon another: a follower. The Acolyte ministry has its roots in the Old Testament of the Holy Bible, where the prophet Samuel is seen assisting Eli, the Levite priest, and Elisha is seen assisting Elijah the Prophet.

A part of the four lower orders of clergy in the early church, acolytes were young men who were preparing for the priesthood. The first written record of acolytes was in a letter from Pope Cornelius to the bishop of Antioch in 251 C.E., which listed 42 acolytes in Rome. These acolytes performed many duties including lighting and extinguishing candles, carrying candles in procession, taking charge of the alms basin, helping the priest prepare for the Eucharist, and general fetching and carrying. Acolytes began to be a part of processions between the fifth and ninth centuries, carrying candles to provide light for the reader, a precursor to the Gospel procession. By the ninth century, the obligation to prepare for the priesthood was no longer a requirement, and acolytes were understood to be assistants to the priest.



Today, acolytes continue to assist the pastor through their service in lighting candles, being a part of the Gospel procession, collecting the individual cups during communion, and other duties as necessary. They are important participants in worship and perform vital tasks.

Church Hierarchy: Priest, Deacon, Acolyte
(2nd Half of the 16th Century)
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Why do we have candles and acolytes?

The lighting of the altar candles in the worship service is a symbol of Jesus coming into the presence of the worshipping community. Just as the Israelites were led through the desert by a pillar of fire, we are led by Christ, the light of the world.

To acolyte at worship is to bring:

- Celebration
- Reverence
- Anticipation



In short, you set the visual table for worship. It is not a merely cute errand you are doing; you are performing important tasks in the service.

Before the Service

1. Arrive at least 15 minutes prior to worship and present yourself to the elders. For special worship services, please arrive 30 minutes prior to worship.
2. *8 a.m. service only* - - Put on the acolyte alb and cincture –
3. You will light the candles 5 minutes prior to the service, during the prelude. Use the lighter found by the candle lighters.
4. Hold the candle lighter in front of you tipped slightly forward with the flame pointing ahead of you and the bell of the candle lighter pointing toward you.
5. Before lighting the candles, pause to give reverence to the cross and altar by bowing your head and saying a short prayer – for example: “Jesus you are the light of the world. AMEN.”
6. Light the seven candles (offices lights) on the altar, starting with the candle closest to the altar. Light the tall Paschal candle at the beginning of the 5:00 p.m. and 8:00 a.m. service. Extinguish the tall Paschal candle at the end of the 5:00 p.m. and 10:45 a.m. services.
7. After the candles are lit and you blow out the flame, make sure you bow again.
8. Take your candle lighter with you to your seat and quietly place it back in the stand.

If you are the crucifer...

1. Arrive at least 15 minutes prior to worship and check in with the elder.
2. *8 a.m. service only* - Put on the acolyte alb and cincture
3. Go to the narthex, locate the crucifix, and wait for the rest of the procession to gather.
4. During the last verse of the processional hymn, walk to the altar (do not bow) and place the crucifix in the stand. Reverence the cross as you leave the chancel.

During the Service

1. Participate in the entire service. Follow the service script in the binder on the acolyte chair. In other words, *pray the prayers, sing the hymns, and participate in the whole service.* You are a leader in worship.



2. Pay attention to when the Offering is being brought up. When you see the usher start to walk forward, come to the center of the chancel, accept the offering, turn and bow and place the offerings on the altar. Step back down and bow then return to your seat.

After the Service

On the second to last verse of the hymn, quietly pick up the candle lighter and prepare to walk up to the chancel. Extinguish the tall Paschal candle at the end of the 5:00 p.m. and 10:45 a.m. services.

Special Instructions

Advent – During Advent, light the Advent wreath after you have lit the altar candles. The first 2 Sundays you light blue candles, the 3rd Sunday you light 2 blue and the pink candle, and you light all 4 candles on the 4th Sunday. Do not light the Christ Candle (center) until Christmas.

Appropriate Dress

8:00 a.m. While you are mostly covered by the alb, the bottom of your legs and feet are not. **Please refrain** from wearing ragged bottom jeans, filthy tennis shoes, flip flops, and other items that will detract and distract from the duty you are performing. People notice these every week, and they can be distracted from looking at the cross to looking at your feet.

Also, the alb is somewhat transparent. Please refrain from wearing printed t-shirts or large designs that can be seen through the alb.

For all other services, wear your confirmation t-shirt with nice jeans or khaki's.

Celebrating Christ's victory over the grave is indeed a special event!

Also, **please refrain** from chewing gum while serving as crucifer or acolyte.

Your schedule

Please note your acolyte assignments for the upcoming months on your own and your family calendars; we won't be calling with reminders! Please remember that this is a year-round ministry. You will be scheduled at all the services. We will do everything we can to accommodate your limits. It is more important to us that you have a chance to serve, than how frequently you serve.

Substitutes

If you find you cannot serve on one of your scheduled dates, please find a replacement or arrange a trade as soon as possible and email Deaconess Suzanne of the assignment change. ***This is the acolyte's responsibility.*** Some last minute cancellations are unavoidable, but every attempt should be made to minimize them.

Our expectations

We expect you to help each other, keep a flexible attitude about changes, show responsibility about your schedule and commitment, and serve with attention and care. We also look to you to help train new acolytes and make them feel welcome and happy in our program.

Feel free to ask questions about the altar, and rely on each other and the clergy (Pastors and Deaconesses) for guidance. We're a team. Just remember that you are very visible as a member of the altar party. No one will really know if you make a mistake in your service—we do it all the time!—but they will know if you look as though you don't care about what's going on in your role as a worship leader.

Most important, we hope you will enjoy serving as an acolyte as a spiritual experience. You are acting out your love of Christ by leading God's people and serving God right at His table.

Special Services

If you are scheduled for a special service, please be sure to arrive 30 minutes before the service to review special procedures. Your role on the worship team is particularly visible and important on these special days. Special service days include:

Installations

Reformation (October)

All Saints Day (November)

Christmas Eve / Day (Dec. 24-25)

Ash Wednesday

Holy Week Services

Easter

Crucifers:

- After the Epistle lesson the crucifer will approach the chancel, reverence, and go to the crucifix. Remove the crucifix from its stand and walk over to Pastor in front of the altar.
- During the Alleluia, process down the center aisle to the middle of the church. Turn and face Pastor as he reads the Gospel.
- After the Gospel reading, walk back up to the altar, put the crucifix in the stand, and walk back to your seat, reverencing as you leave the chancel.

The acolyte team

One Crucifer*: the senior member of the acolyte team provides leadership for the team; oversees all acolyte tasks during the service; carries cross in the processional, gospel procession, and recessional.

One or Two Candle lighters: light and put out altar candles; carry torches in the processional, Gospel procession, and recessional;

Please arrive 15 minutes before each service. Even if you are very experienced, there may be service changes we need to discuss. It is also important to have the full team assembled 15 minutes in advance of the service. The service begins when the organist begins the prelude.

Our commitment to you

We will do everything we can to help you, listen to you, and grow with you in this service. Please share this handbook with your parents, too, so they can be a part of our team. On behalf of the entire congregation, thank you.

May the Holy Spirit, who has begun a good work in you, direct and uphold you in the service of Christ and his kingdom. Amen.

Prayers

Before Worship

O Lord, my creator, redeemer, and comforter, as I come to worship You in spirit and in truth, I humbly pray that You would open my heart to the preaching of Your Word so that I may repent of my sins, believe in Jesus Christ as my only Savior, and grow in grace and holiness. Hear me for the sake of His name. Amen.

Before Serving

Grant, O Lord, the help of thy Spirit in my heart, that I may enter into thy holy presence with reverence and gladness and render a service acceptable unto thee; through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

After Worship

Almighty and merciful God, I have again worshiped in Your presence and received both forgiveness for my many sins and the assurance of Your love in Jesus Christ. I thank You for this undeserved grace and ask You to keep me in faith until, with all Your saints, I inherit eternal salvation; through Jesus Christ, my Lord. Amen.

Words an Acolyte Should Know

Acolyte – means “companion” or “one who helps.” An acolyte brings the symbolic light of Christ into the worship service. Once the acolyte brings the light, the worship service may begin.

Alb – is a white robe that is worn with a cincture around the waist, symbolizing the robe of righteousness.

Altar – is the table at the front of the church that holds the communion elements. An altar is a visual reminder of Old Testament sacrifice and of Christ’s sacrifice on the cross.

Candle lighter – is used by an acolyte to light candles. It consists of a taper, or wick, from which the candles are lighted and a bell for snuffing out the flame.

Candles – signify the presence of Christ among His people. Because God created light and Jesus said, “I am the light of the world,” candles are an important part of the Christian service.

Chancel – is the elevated area in the sanctuary where the Pastor leads the worship service. The altar is in/on the chancel.

Church Year – is a 12-month cycle of Christian celebration. The first season is Advent, which prepares for Christ coming into the world. Christmas is next, when Jesus was born. Epiphany is the season beginning when the Wise Men see the Christ Child and including Jesus’ baptism and the beginning of His ministry. Lent follows and recalls Jesus’ temptation and suffering for us. It is a time to think about Baptism and rebirth in preparation for Easter, which is a seven-week festival that starts with Jesus’ resurrection on Easter day. The Day of Pentecost and the Season of Pentecost are celebrations of the Holy Spirit active in the life of the church. There are additional feasts and festival days that mark particular celebrations in the church calendar, but they do not mark a church season.

Cincture – is the rope worn around the waist over the alb.

Crucifer – is the person who carries the crucifix, leading the procession into and out of the church.

Crucifix – is the cross that the crucifer carries during the procession and recession. It generally has the figure of Christ hanging on the cross on it.

Eucharist – is a Greek word meaning “thanksgiving.” It is another word for Holy Communion or the Lord’s Supper.

Ewer – is the pitcher of water used to fill the Baptismal font; pronounced “you-er”

Font – is the bowl or basin from which water is taken during the sacrament of Baptism.

Intinction – is the dipping of the bread into the wine at Holy Communion.

Narthex – is the gathering/entrance area outside of the sanctuary.

Nave – is the section of the church where the congregation sits.

Offering – is taken at a time in the service when the members of a church offer their gifts to God. Historically, it was a time when people would bring the communion elements forward to the altar and also food and goods to later be distributed to the needy and the Pastor.

Paschal Candle – is a large white candle symbolizing the risen Christ. It is lit from the Easter Vigil service through Pentecost Sunday. After that it is only lit when there is a Baptism or a Funeral.

Postlude – is the music played at the end of the worship service.

Prelude – is the music played before the worship service begins. During this music, the acolyte will light the candles.

Reverence the Cross – bowing while saying a short prayer or pausing momentarily in respect for the Cross of Christ. This can be done in many places throughout the service but is always done when approaching and leaving the chancel/altar area.

Sacraments – are the means by which we receive God’s grace. These sacraments use earthly elements and God’s Word to bring His forgiveness and blessing. The Lutheran sacraments are Baptism (water) and Holy Communion (wine and bread). They were directed by Christ for us to “Go, Baptize” and “Do this in remembrance of me.”

Sacristy – is the room where the participants in the service prepare and get robed up.

Taper – is the long stem or wick in a candle lighter, which the acolyte uses to light the candles.

Vestments – is the general name for clothing worn by those who participate in the worship service.