
ST. PAUL'S LUTHERAN CHURCH



Acolyte Training Manual
July 2018 onward

Forward

The term ‘acolyte’ comes from ancient times and means “helper” or “server”. Throughout history, acolytes have served very important functions in both the Service and in other works of the Church. Acolytes once served as those who visited the sick and brought the Lord’s Supper to homes with shut-in Christians and to those in prison. But their most important role was their work in the Service itself.

Acolytes have always served as the candle lighters of the church and were always apart of the opening processions and recessions of the clergy and other assistants.

But their work in the Service didn’t end with lighting candles. They also carried the processional crucifix or cross, they assisted with the Lord’s Supper, with collecting the alms and offerings, and several other things.

This training manual will prepare acolytes of both young and old for the work of serving in the Divine Service. And while modern day acolytes aren’t expected to take communion to the sick or imprisoned, acolytes still have many important tasks to do and are expected to be well-prepared for this ancient and reverent service in the Church.

Because every church is different in layout, size, and in how the Service is carried out, this manual is meant for St. Paul’s Lutheran Church of Milaca, Minnesota. Other churches or pastors may choose to use this manual as a guide for their own manual, but the rubrics and procedures should not be followed verbatim but careful thought should be put into modifying this manual for each particular situation.

This manual covers four important responsibilities of the Acolyte, as well as proper etiquette, reverence, and other logistical matters. Each acolyte should guard this manual and refer to it often.

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The Candle Lighter

As the Candle Lighter, it is your job to assure that all the appropriate candles are lit and extinguished during the Service, and at the right time. While you may think lighting candles is easy, the processes and details in this task are of utmost importance.

Terms

Advent Wreath: The large round stand with five candles which is lit during the Advent season.

Candlelighter: The device used to light and extinguish the candles during the Service, consisting of the Taper and the Snuffer. Tapers may be wax-coated lengths of wick or oil-filled basins with a wick.

Candles: St. Paul's has 2 sets of Retable candle stands, each holding 3 oil-filled candles. These candles are always lit for the Service, except for certain church celebrations. They are lit in a particular order and extinguished in a particular order.

St. Paul's has 2 Altar candle stands, each holding 1 oil-filled candle. The altar candles are lit only on Sundays where Holy Communion is served.

St. Paul's has a, oil-filled Paschal Candle which is lit on only certain Sundays of the year.

St. Paul's has an Advent Wreath which has 4 colored candles and one white candle. These candles are lit on certain Sundays during Advent.

St. Paul's has one Sanctuary candle (or candle of the presence) which is electric. It should be on all the time, but certainly turned on long before the Service begins.

There may be other candles used throughout the year.

Christ Candle: This is one of the 5 candles on the Advent Wreath, the center candle, and is lit on Christmas Eve and Christmas Day.

Hope Candle: The first candle lit during Advent. This is a blue candle.

Joy Candle: The third candle lit during Advent. This is a pink candle.

Love Candle: The second candle lit during Advent. This is a blue candle.

Peace Candle: The fourth candle lit during Advent. This is a blue candle.

Paschal Candle: The tall and ornate candle lit on either Easter Vigil or Easter Sunrise. It is lit during each Sunday of Easter. It is also lit for Baptisms. This candle is processed in during Easter Vigil or Easter Sunrise. It may be placed near the Baptismal Font or in a predominant location when used and moved behind the Pulpit for the rest of the year, unlit.

Retable: The shelf behind the Altar where the candle stands rest which protrudes upward with a picture of Jesus in the center.

Sanctuary Candle: The red-globed candle mounted on the wall behind the pulpit. This candle should be left on at all times, but minimally for the services. It is turned on by a switch in the Sacristy.

Snuffer: The bell-shaped device on the Candlelighter which extinguishes or "snuffs out" the candles.

Taper: The part of the Candlelighter which provides a flame so to light the candles.

ACOLYTES



Before the Service

Arrive at the church AT LEAST 15 minutes before the Service begins.

Upon arriving, check in with the Pastor and see if there's any special circumstances regarding the Service.

Find and put on your Acolyte gown. This may consist of a Cassock and Surplice (see general definitions at the end of this manual), an Alb, or some other robe.

Pick up the Candlelighter and make sure the Taper is long enough to stay lit for lighting the candles. If it needs to be replaced, speak to an Elder or the Pastor right away.

Grab a bulletin from the information table. If you have time, bring it up to the chancel and place it on your chair. Otherwise neatly carry it with you as you process to light the candles.

You will most likely be lighting the candles with another Acolyte. Both of you should be ready to process in, with Tapers lit, by the first stanza of the Opening Hymn. An Usher or Elder will assist you with lighting the Tapers.

When the Service Begins

Just before the last stanza of the Opening Hymn begins, the Pastor will stand and ask the congregation to stand. At this moment, begin walking into the nave. Both Acolytes should walk the same pace (not rushed, but not too slow) and approach the Chancel. Once you reach the Chancel, stop and bow reverently while facing the altar and the cross on the Retable.

Enter the chancel. The Acolyte on the left should walk toward the left side of the altar, and the Acolyte on the right should walk toward the right side of the altar.

If there is Communion, both Acolytes stand on each side of the altar and light the Altar Candles in sync.

Walk back to the Retable. Light the candles from INSIDE to OUTSIDE.

Note: during the Easter season, the Paschal Candle will need to be lit BEFORE the Service. The same holds true for Baptisms. See the "Special Circumstances" section near the end of this Section for assistance with the Paschal Candle.

Once the necessary candles are lit, extinguish the Candlelighter Taper by pulling the Taper slide all the way down. Return to the step below the Altar, face the Altar, and bow together. Go to the chancel chair nearest your location (left or right side of Altar) and place the Candlelighter in its holder. Remain standing and have the bulletin and/or hymnal out.

From this point forward, each Acolyte is expected to be respectful, reverent, and participating in the Service.

At the Close of the Service

During the Closing Hymn, remove the Candlelighter from the holder. The Pastor generally wants to exit the sanctuary on the last stanza of the hymn. If the stanzas are long, proceed to extinguish the candles during the last stanza. If the stanzas are short, you may need to begin extinguishing during the second or third to last stanza. The Pastor should assist you with this and prompt you when it's time to begin.

Approach the center of the Altar, step below. Bow and then head to the Retable.



Starting with the Retable candles, extinguish from OUTSIDE to INSIDE. If there is Communion, stand on each side of the Altar and extinguish the Altar Candles.

Walk to the floor-level just outside the chancel and turn to face the Altar. Bow, and recess out of the Sanctuary. The Pastor will follow you.

Special Circumstances

When to Light the Paschal Candle

You will light the Paschal Candle for the following seasons and events:



- On Easter Vigil or the Easter Sunrise Service
- Every Sunday of Easter (extinguish the Paschal Candle during the service on Pentecost Sunday)
- The Paschal candle is lit and positioned near the Baptismal Font for baptisms
- The Paschal candle is lit and positioned near the head of the casket for Funeral services.

It is acceptable to light the Paschal candle before the Service begins rather than during the procession. You may also leave it lit until after the Service concludes. This is at the discretion of the Pastor.

The Advent Wreath and Candles

The Advent Wreath is brought into the Sanctuary and prepared for the First Sunday in Advent (around the first Sunday of December). It is adorned with FIVE candles: three blue, one pink, and the center candle called the “Christ Candle”. These candles are lit in a particular order throughout Advent, and the Christ Candle lit only on Christmas Eve night or Christmas Morning.



Minimally, the Christ Candle remains lit throughout the Season of Christmas. The other candles are either removed or they are also lit.

The four colored candles are lit as follows:

1. First Sunday of Advent: Blue
2. Second Sunday of Advent: Blue, Blue
3. Third Sunday of Advent: Blue, Blue, Pink
4. Fourth Sunday of Advent: Blue, Blue, Pink, Blue



There is generally never more than four Sundays in Advent, though Christmas may fall on the fourth Sunday of Advent every so often. In these cases the Pastor will decide the procedure.

The same candles will also be lit on the Wednesday evening Advent Service which follows the Sunday.

When lighting the candles for the Service, the Advent Wreath should be lit first, and may be lit before the Service and extinguished after the Service concludes.

Tenebrae Candles

The Tenebrae service, or Service of Darkness, is typically done on Good Friday (the Friday before Easter). The Pastor may choose to follow a traditional Tenebrae liturgy and readings.

There are typically either seven candles or fifteen candles mounted on a candelabra which sits either on the floor or on the altar. These candles are extinguished, one by one, throughout the course of the Service. The centermost or topmost candle, called the Christ Candle (and may be the same Christ Candle used for the Christmas season) remains lit but is taken out of the Sanctuary near the end of the Service.

Other occasions requiring candles

During Baptisms, the newly baptized receives a Baptismal Candle which is lit from the Paschal Candle. You may assist with this if an Elder is not available.

On Christmas Eve the pastor may choose to offer a Candlelight Service. You will assist in lighting the candles held by the congregation at the appropriate time.

On Easter Sunrise, the Pastor may choose to do a candlelight processional. You will assist in lighting the candles held by the congregation and other participants.

Caring for the Candlelighters

The two 48" Candlelighters require special care or they will quickly wear out, become tarnished, or break. The Pastor may ask acolytes to wear white cotton gloves when acolyting, especially when noticeable wear and tarnish is showing up on the candlelighters.



NEVER lay the candlelighters on the floor! Always use the custom-built holders which are placed in the Chancel to hold the candlelighters during the Service. Store the candlelighters in the proper place after the Service concludes, either in the back of the church in the assistant cloak area or in the Sacristy.

Do not lean the candlelighters against the wall. Do not rest the candlelighters on the floor and lean on them. Do not extend the taper out of the candlelighter except when replacing.

If you EVER see a problem with your candlelighter, report it immediately to the Pastor or to an Elder for repair.

Finally, NEVER use the candlelighters as weapons!

The Crucifer

As the Crucifer, your job is to carry the Processional Cross into and out of the Sanctuary for services where it is required. You may also have other tasks to perform during the service.

Terms

Base – the device which sits on the floor in which the Processional Cross is mounted once inside the Sanctuary.

Corpus – the body of Christ Jesus mounted to the Processional Cross or other crosses in the church. The use of the Corpus goes back to ancient times.

Crucifer – the Acolyte who processed in and recessed with the Processional Cross

Crucifix – a type of Processional Cross which includes the “corpus” of Christ.

Ends of the Bars – each end of the Vertical and Horizontal bars represents one of the four Evangelists: Matthew, Mark, Luke and John

INRI – The letters at the top of the Vertical Bar which resemble the sign Pilate had nailed above Jesus’ head at His crucifixion.

Processional Cross – the tall wooden or metal device, with a cross atop, which is carried in by the Crucifer before the service and carried out after the service.

Shaft – the “stick” or “pole”, made of wood or metal, which holds the cross

Vertical and Horizontal Bars – the two “bars” which make up the cross

Before the Service



Since the Processional Cross is not used for every Divine Service, the Acolytes must know their schedule. If you are scheduled to be the Crucifer, arrive at the church AT LEAST 15 minutes before the Service begins. Your fellow acolytes should also be there and preparing.

Speak to the Pastor regarding the Service and discover if there are any special instructions to follow regarding the procession, recession, the placement of the processional cross, etc.

Go to the front of the Sanctuary and remove the Processional Cross from the base and bring it back with you to where you robe and prepare. At the same time, bring a Service Bulletin up to where you sit.

For processions, the Pastor will begin with the Acolytes in the Narthex. He will guide the acolytes and others serving so that everyone is standing there they are supposed to and in the right order. The Crucifer generally goes in first.

When the Service Begins

At the beginning of the FIRST STANZA of the Opening Hymn enter the back of the sanctuary (Nave) so that the processional cross clears the door frame. Raise the processional cross so that you are grasping the shaft near the bottom with one hand and near the middle with the other.

At the Pastor's word, begin processing in. Don't walk too fast or too slow.

When you reach the entrance to the Chancel, stop, look at the altar and the cross, and reverently bow. Enter the Chancel and turn toward the congregation. Remain there throughout the rest of the Opening Hymn. Near the end of the hymn, or when the processional concludes, walk to the base. Insert the Processional Cross into the base. The cross should be facing the Congregation. If there is a Corpus, it should be facing the Congregation.



* You will not sit in the Chancel. Instead, exit the chancel using the exit behind the Pulpit. Be sure to turn and reverence the altar/cross when exiting. Then be seated in the front pew where you placed your Service Bulletin earlier.

At the End of the Service

During the FIRST STANZA of the Closing Hymn (or when the Pastor instructs you), enter the Chancel from the Pulpit side entrance. Be sure to reverently bow before entering.

Carefully lift the Processional Cross from the base. Carry it, as you did when you Processed, to the center of the chancel and face the Altar. Reverently bow, turn, and exit the Chancel. Walk slowly, but not too slowly, out of the Sanctuary to the back. Once you reach the back, lower the Processional Cross so it will fit through the door and carry it to the area where you robe and prepare.

After the Sanctuary clears, return the Processional Cross to its base in the Chancel.

Special Circumstances

When the Gospel is Read from the Nave

On occasion, the Pastor may choose to process into the midst of the congregation in the Nave to read the Holy Gospel. Should this occur, you will need to process with the Processional Cross first, followed by the Pastor and/or the Bookbearer.

After the reading, you will recess back and return the Processional Cross to its base.

Baptisms

The Processional Cross may be used for Baptisms and placed near the Baptismal Font. An Elder or the Pastor will generally take care of this before the Service.

Funerals

The Processional Cross may be used for Funerals should the family choose to do a Processional. You should be prepared to attend at least one funeral during your time as an Acolyte.

Weddings

The Processional Cross may be used for Weddings should the couple choose to do a Processional.

Sundays when You will Process

You will process on the following Sundays of the Church Year:

- Epiphany Sunday (early January)
- The Transfiguration (Sunday before Ash Wednesday)
- Palm Sunday (the Sunday before Easter)
- Easter Vigil (Saturday Night)
- Easter Sunrise
- Easter Day
- The Ascension
- Day of Pentecost
- Holy Trinity Sunday
- Reformation Sunday (end of October)
- All Saints' Day (Sunday after Reformation)



Caring for the Processional Cross

The Processional Cross is a very expensive item and must be treated as such. Damaging the Processional Cross results in a costly repair, and oftentimes results in replacement.

NEVER lay the Processional Cross on the floor. If you lean it against a wall, lean it in a corner so it doesn't fall. NEVER carry the Processional Cross upside-down. This is inappropriate and disrespectful.

Try not to touch the cross itself to minimize finger prints and smudges.

Do not loosen the cross from the shaft. If you discover that it is coming loose, give the processional cross to the Pastor or and Elder to fix.

When possible, always carry the Processional Cross with two hands. The Pastor may ask you to wear white cotton gloves when handling the processional cross.

When the Processional Cross is not in use, leave it in its base.

The Bookbearer



Though not a position which is guaranteed to be used, the Bookbearer serves an important role in the Service should the Pastor choose to use him. The Bookbearer carries the Holy Gospel (either the Lectionary or a special Bible) for special Services.

This service is ancient! Before Christ, a servant was tasked with bringing the scrolls to the rabbi during Synagogue. In the early church, this continued to be the practice. Acolytes or assistants would bring a Gospel scroll to the pastor/priest for him to read to the people.

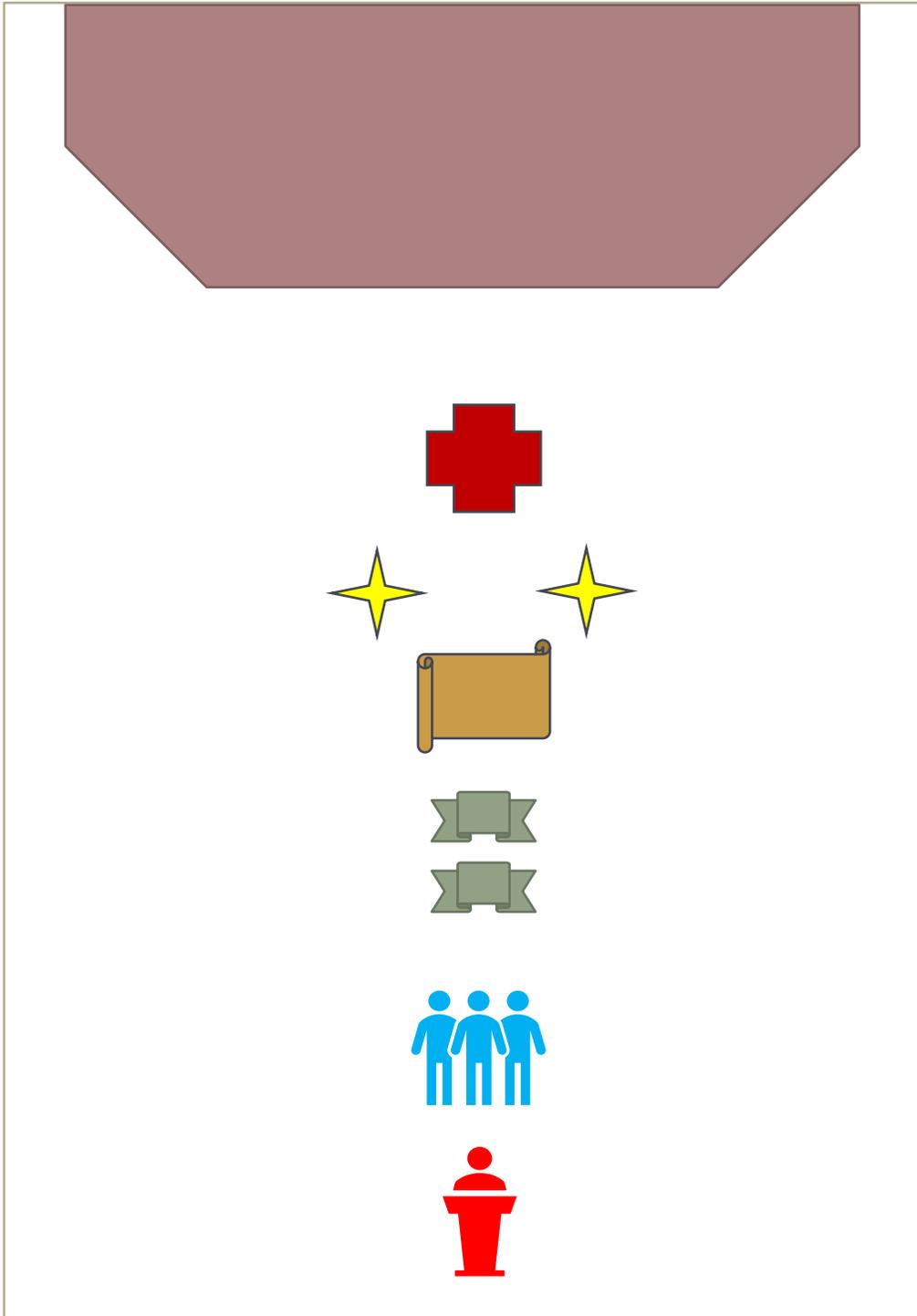
Today this practice is rarely done; the Pastor will carry the Bible himself and read the Gospel.

None the less, be prepared to fulfill this service.

Should you be called to be the Bookbearer, you will follow the Processional Cross into the Sanctuary during the Processionals, and back out again for Recessionals. You will also follow the Processional Cross for the Gospel Processions, should there be one.

For processionals, you will leave the Bible on the LEFT SIDE of the Altar and return it there after the Gospel Procession.

The Order of Procession



1. Red Cross – Crucifer
2. Yellow Stars – Acolytes
3. Brown Scroll – Bookbearer
4. Green Flags – Banner Carriers
5. Blue People – Choir/other assistants
6. Red Person – Pastors/Clergy

Additional Services of the Acolytes

Communion Assistants

The two Acolytes who are seated in the Chancel will assist with the Lord's Supper. The Pastor and Elders will work out the process and instruct you as needed.

Offering Collection

The two Acolytes who are seated in the Chancel may assist with the collection of the Offerings. The Pastor and Elders will work out the process and instruct you as needed.