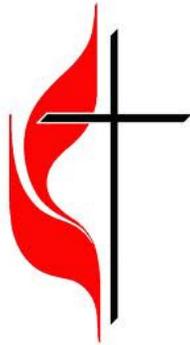


ACOLYTE HANDBOOK



Madison First United Methodist Church



ACOLYTE 101

Welcome

Greetings to all who have dedicated themselves to serving their Lord and their church. Your ministry is important because you will be helping everybody else in church to worship God. You are also becoming part of a very long tradition that is more than 1700 years old! Since ancient times light and fire have reminded people that God is here with us. When you, as an acolyte, bring the light into the Sanctuary and light the candles, you are reminding the congregation of God's presence with us and the words of Jesus: "I am the light of the world."

Modern day acolytes are best known for lighting candles on the communion table. This practice started around 800 A.D. when large candlesticks were carried by the acolytes and placed on or near the communion table.

Soon the candlesticks began to appear on the communion table itself. Because of the added height, a candle lighter was developed to reach the top of the candles. The candle lighter provided a safe and decorative container for the tapers carried in the processional.

Many people like to think of the two candles on the communion table as reminders that Jesus is both human and divine. At the end of the service as you carry the lighted candles out of the sanctuary, you are reminding the worshippers that God is with us in all places at all times.



Spring 2011 Acolyte Class

This manual will provide reference for you as you begin your journey as an acolyte. If you have any questions, please contact our acolyte coordinators:

Sissy White (scheduling/training) at 706-338-3546 or email georgiagrad98@yahoo.com
Amy Carter (11am coordinator) at or email amyhcarter@att.net
Julie Benkoski (11am coordinator) at or email benkoski@msn.com

Materials

Acolytes often wear special *robes*, or vestments, such as an alb or a cassock and cotta. Cassock means "Long Coat". An alb is a long white robe, sometimes tied around the waist with a rope

called a cincture. Albs were everyday clothing in the time of the early Christians, and they remind us of all the other Christians who have worshiped through the ages.



Ministers and other leaders of worship often wear albs.

A cassock is a long dark robe, over which a short white cotta can be worn.

A *candlelighter* is used to light and extinguish candles. Inside of it is a long wick called a taper, which can be pushed farther out as it burns down and with which the candles are lighted. It also includes a bell for snuffing out candles.



Care of the candlelighter is very important. Not only are they expensive but they must be in good working order. If the wax tapers are not inserted correctly they can jam inside the barrel. Check your wick every time to make sure it works. It should be at least 4" long for the service. After service replace the candlelighter onto the cloth so the metal hook doesn't scratch the protective coating.

Before the Worship Service:

What do you wear?

1. Boys should wear slacks with dark socks and dress shoes. (No running shoes, athletic shoes, sandals, shorts or jeans)
2. Girls should wear appropriate shoes with skirts/dresses or slacks. (No flip flops, spike heels, jeans or shorts) Sandals are appropriate for girls if they are nice and have heel straps.
3. Hair should be neatly combed, regardless of length or style, NEVER CHEW GUM and no candy.

Arriving and Robing

4. On the morning you are scheduled to serve, please be sure to arrive 15 minutes before service. If you have not arrived 10 minutes prior, a coordinator will try to find another acolyte to take your place. We do not want any stress before worship. Now is a good time to go to the bathroom, you won't have a chance to for over an hour.
5. Pick up a bulletin from an usher for you and your partner and place it on your front pew be sure to review it for any special services. You should have a hymnal and Bible also.
6. Report to the Sacristy and select a robe that comes to mid-calf. (Any longer and you will have to pull it up to step up to the altar-that's a problem when you need your hands to hold the candle-lighter! Any shorter and it doesn't look good. Check your robe for tears or stains and let a coordinator know so they can fix it. Your robe size is listed on the closet door.
7. Pick up your candlelighter and make sure it works with a proper 4" or longer wick.
8. Report to the ushers in the back of the sanctuary. You should be back there by 10:50am when the pastor begins the announcement part prior to service.

Remember the 3 P's Please

Punctuality is important. When you arrive on time, everything flows more smoothly and if there are any problems we have time to fix them without affecting the worship service.

Pay Attention. It helps to take a few minutes before the service to check the bulletin for anything special in the worship service. The pastor may need to see you to give special directions.

Participate. You will soon find that by being on time and paying attention you will have few problems. Most importantly, don't forget to worship God. That's why we are here!

During the Worship Service

Bringing the Light of Christ into Worship

1. An usher will light your candle lighter for you. One Acolyte should be at the top of each aisle ready. Hold the candle lighter with the bell facing toward you and the wick away from you. Keep your finger on the pin that controls the flame, you will need to adjust the length while you're walking so the flame doesn't go out. When the music begins go down the aisle in a dignified, unhurried fashion. Watch each other out of the

corner of your eyes so that you are in step together. Continue down the aisle toward the chancel area.

2. Walk around the kneeling rails and enter the chancel. When you reach the altar, pause and bow towards the cross at the same time.
3. Light the altar candle. Hold the candlelighter so that the taper is horizontal and touches the candle wick. Hold the taper on the wick until you are sure the candle is lit. Watch the other acolyte out of the corner of your eye so that neither of you gets ahead of the other. Don't try to hurry. There is no rush.
4. When both candles are lit, pull the taper into the candlelighter snuffing out the flame and bow to the cross again. Turn towards the congregation to exit. Don't turn your back towards them.
5. Walk to be seated on the front row pew on your side of the church. Place the candlelighter under your pew-quietly. Please do not slouch, sleep, write, giggle, or go to the restroom. Please refrain from mouthing words or hand gestures to each other across the sanctuary.
6. If one acolyte's candle lighter goes out continue as normal. The acolyte with the lit candlelighter will relight your wick, continue with lighting the altar candles. Do not make a big deal about the flame going out. What matters is how you handle it, stay cool, act as if everything is going exactly as you planned it. We love you and God loves you most of all.
7. Remember...you are in God's House and an aid to the congregation during those times of worship. Anything that calls undue attention to "self" in God's House is out of place. An acolyte must be careful not to distract worshipers.

The Offering

1. Listen for the cue from the pastor and walk to the altar as the ushers come forward. Take the 3 offering plates on your side and hold them while the pastor says the offertory prayer. The ushers will each take a plate from you and walk up the aisles receiving the offering. As the music plays stand at the altar straight with your head up, looking out into the congregation with a pleasant look on your face. The congregation is paying attention to your.
2. When the music stops the ushers will come forward as the congregation rises and sings the Doxology "Praise God, from Whom all blessing flow". The two ushers will hand you and your

partner each an offering plate. Turn around towards the choir area and hold the plates up in the air.

3. Exit the chancel area and take the offering behind the sanctuary in the gathering room. An usher will escort you . Wait until the choir finishes their song before entering the sanctuary. Be very quiet and discreet when entering back through the double swinging doors into the sanctuary. Return to your seat on the front pew.

Taking the Light of Christ out into the World

1. At the beginning of the last verse of the last hymn it is time to extinguish the candles, pick up the candlelighter under your pew with the bell facing up and point the taper away from you.

2. Walk to the altar in time with the other acolyte. Bow to the cross, light your taper off the Christ candle, turn the candlelighter and drop the bell over the candle to snuff it out. Bow to the cross again and turn to exit altar area.

3. Walk around the kneeling rail and up the aisle slowly with the lit candlelighter.

4. At the top of the aisle pull the taper into the barrel to put out the flame.

5. Return the candlelighter into the Sacristy on the cloth so the protective lacquer coating isn't scratched and hang your robe back in the closet as neatly as possible.

6. Ensure the candlelighter wick is able to slide back and forth and is in working condition for the next weeks service. If not, notify an acolyte coordinator

After the Service

1. After you have hung up your robe and candleholder return to the sanctuary and pick up any bulletins and/or trash that has been left on the pews. Return Bibles and Hymnals to racks and ends of the pews. Trash can and recycle bin are in the Sacristy.

2. Check your schedule for your next Sunday of service.

Special Services

Communion

1. The pastor will ask for those serving to come forward first. Come and kneel on the rail to receive the sacraments.

2. Communion service has 4 Acolytes, 1 on each side serving and 2 beside the altar to replenish full trays of juice.
3. If you are replenishing the juice trays you will need to keep watch on when the server's tray is low. Take a new tray of juice and walk it carefully over to the server. Take the empty tray and place it on the altar.
4. At the end of communion place all trays together and cover with top.
5. Walk back to your seat on the front pew.
6. After service help clean up by gathering the empty plastic cups left on the rail. Wipe the rail down of any juice spills. Continue with regular cleanup and tidiness of the sanctuary.

Advent

During the Christmas season the Advent wreath will be lit. If you are the Acolyte on the right side of the altar you will snuff out all the candles on the wreath first then go with the normal ending service.

Christmas Eve Candlelight Service

When it is time the pastor will call you up. He will light his candle off the Christ Candle then light your candle. You will go up the aisle lighting the person on the end's candle. Be careful not to spill candle wax everywhere.

Special Training sessions are held in the fall for rising 3rd graders and those who wish to become an acolyte. Refresher classes will also be held once a year. Once you have completed the acolyte training, you will be given a schedule. Please remember it is your responsibility to get a replacement if you cannot serve as scheduled. After you find a replacement, call or email the coordinators to let them know who will be serving on your assigned Sunday.