



# THE ACOLYTE'S Book

## *Congratulations!*

You have chosen to become a worship leader.

An acolyte plays a very important role in worship. You are one of our worship leaders. You begin the worship service. You end the time of worship, and lead us out into the world to be the light of Christ.

There are many things you can learn and many ways for you to grow as a Christian as you serve as an acolyte.

It is our prayer that you are blessed richly by being an important part of our worship team.

Acolyte (noun, from the Greek akólouthos) - an attendant of the **Lord's Table**; an attendant, assistant or helper in worship.

First United Methodist Church  
353 Main Street, Thomson, Georgia 30824  
706 - 595 - 3936

# Worship

An important part of your job as an acolyte is to begin the worship service. In most of our worship services we will have two (2) acolytes.

Worship officially begins when our acolytes bring the light of Christ and the cross of Christ into the **sanctuary. These are symbols of Christ's presence** with us at worship: the candles remind us that Christ was human and divine. We remember **Christ's death and resurrection when we see the empty cross.**

Worship ends with a *Sending Forth*. The cross and the flame are carried out of the church, and the people follow. This symbolizes our being sent out as lights for Christ - our crucified savior - in the world.

Acolytes also assist with communion. An acolyte can give the consecrated elements (bread or wine) to the congregation with the words:

*The body of Christ or The blood of Christ.*



Holding book  
for procession  
or baptism.

Acolytes can also be very helpful to the pastor during a baptism: removing the lid from the font, holding the book for the pastor, and lighting the baptismal candle.

On special occasions, acolytes process, leading the choir and pastors into the church. Additional acolytes may carry a Bible, torches, banners or flags.



## What Do Acolytes Wear?



The acolytes, like pastors and choir, wear special robes. Younger acolytes wear a *cassock* (black or red are the usual colors) and a *cotta* (a short white over-garment). Older acolytes generally wear an *alb* which is a long white robe that is tied around the waist with a rope called a *cincture*.

Even though most of your clothing is covered by your robes, what you are wearing does matter. It is best if you wear dark trousers and dark (clean/polished) shoes. Do not wear sandals, especially NO flip flops; and girls, please, no high heels. Tops with a high neck will show, and you may be too warm.



# Candles

A *candlelighter* is used to light and extinguish (put out) the candles. Inside of it is a long wick called a *taper* which can be pushed out of the end of the lighter as it burns down.

Whenever you carry the flame, the *bell* of the lighter is on top. The picture below shows you how to hold the lighter. Practice in front of a mirror is helpful.

## Holding the Candlelighter

- Your right\* hand is near the slide.
- Your left hand is near the bottom of the lighter.
- Your elbows are close to your body.
- The lighter is pointed away from you at a 45° angle



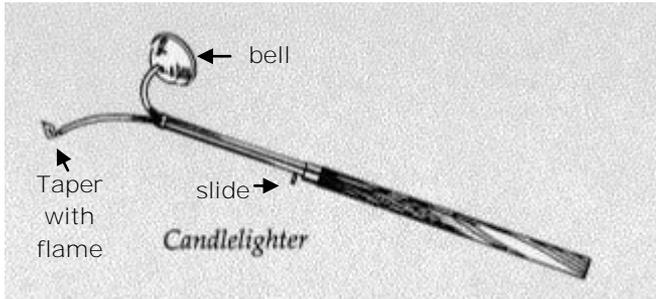
\* Reverse these directions for left-handed acolytes

## LIGHTING CANDLES

Paying attention to the taper is very important. If you always make sure that there is enough taper, **you won't have to worry about the flame going out.** There is a *slide* on the lighter that is easy to reach. You need not move it more than a little bit each time you need more wick.

Light the candle on the right first and then the **candle on the left on the Lord's Table.**

After the lighting the candles, draw the lighter toward you so that it is not over the Lord's Table, pull the taper into its metal stem, and then push it back out again.



#### EXTINGUISHING CANDLES

The candles are put out during the last hymn. Depending upon the hymn you may have more or less time for each verse. As a rule (with hymns of 4 or more verses) you should not rise to extinguish the candles until the next to the last verse of the hymn. Think ahead. Ask if you are not sure.

First, light the taper from the candle on the right side of the Lord's Table.

Second, use the bell to put out the flame - first the right and then the left. Turn the bell down for this. Turn it back on top when the flames are out.

Do not push the bell down onto the follower (the brass ring at the top of the candles). This will push the wick down. Cover the flame with the bell and count: *One Mississippi, Two Mississippi*

The candles should be out.

## Carrying the Cross

The cross bearer (crucifer) carries either the wooden or the brass cross depending upon their age and size.

The wooden cross is decorated on only one side, and so the crucifer carries the cross so that the congregation sees the side that is decorated. That means that the decorations face the crucifer as he or she comes down the isle, and faces away from them when they go up the isle.

There will be a stand to hold the cross in the chancel area. **Because its location may change when other things are in the chancel, check on the location before the service.**

## A Walking Lesson

Did you know that the way you walk helps the congregation get ready to worship?

As an acolyte you begin the worship service by walking down the aisle. Here are some important pointers:

- Know when you are to enter and leave before the service begins.
- Take small steps and walk slowly
- Watch your acolyte teammate (out of the corner of your eye) and walk together.



# The Offering

At TFUMC, our acolytes help with our offering. The acolytes rise and take the plates from the **Lord's Table** - three (3) plates for each acolyte, and give one to each of the ushers before the offertory prayer.

You should rise and take your places to be ready for the ushers to come down the aisle to you. Do not wait to hand out the plates.

After handing the ushers the plates, bow your head for the prayer.

After the prayer move to the sides of the chancel during the offertory. Return to the middle to accept the plates from the ushers when the *Doxology* begins. (They will have consolidated the offering into two plates: one for each of you.)

**Turn to face the Lord's Table and raise the plates.** Both acolytes should raise their plates to the same level. Do not strain to raise the plates too high as you will be holding them until the *Doxology* is over.

After the *Doxology* put the plates on the table and return to your seats.

*NOTE: There are times when the acolytes cannot assist with the offering. The Head Usher or Acolyte Coordinate should be aware of these times, and let you know.*



# Paschal Candle

During the season of Easter, for funerals, and for baptisms, a candle called the Paschal candle is lit for the entire service. This candle is a symbol of the risen and living Christ.

If the candle is part of the Easter Sunrise service, an acolyte will be needed to bring this flame back to the church. If not, the candle is lit on Easter Sunday and burns every Sunday until Pentecost Sunday.

This candle is already burning when the people come in to worship, and it is not put out as part of the *Sending Forth*.

As an acolyte, you can be of great help to the pastors by making sure that this candle is already lit before the service. After you have disrobed and put everything away, you can also be of great help by returning to the sanctuary to extinguish this candle.

Many churches purchase a special candle that is very tall for their paschal candle. It has become our tradition to use the Christ candle from the Advent wreath as our paschal candle.

This candle stands near the **Lord's Table** during the Easter Season, at the head of the casket at funerals, and near the baptismal font for baptisms.

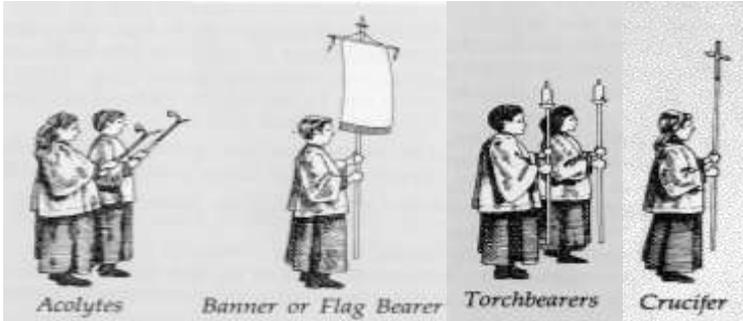


Paschal candle



# Processions

We do sometimes process for special Sundays such as the Hanging of the Greens, Palm Sunday, Easter Sunday, and at other times when it is an appropriate way to help us worship.



Acolytes would be crucifers, torchbearers, flag/banner bearers or candlelighters (called acolytes in the picture above) as well as Bible bearers. Following all these would be the choir and then the pastor.

As leaders of the procession, it is especially important that you walk slowly with small steps, and that you keep the distance from those in front of you. You will receive instruction on this spacing, and if you do not, please ask the pastor or worship coordinator.



# Notes



# Notes



## Check List

*Many acolytes become very independent and responsible, however, having adult supervision helps them build confidence and understanding of what they are doing. We encourage parents to be actively involved.*

Some things to do before, during & after the service:

- Arrive 15 minutes before the service.
- Check on the taper to make sure you have enough wick.
- Read the bulletin, and get a copy of the bulletin and put it on your seat.
- Ask the Head Usher to make sure that you know what to do especially if something is different in **the service, and if he/she doesn't know, ask the pastor.**
- Pay attention during the service so that you know when to get up for the offertory (without the pastor having to get your attention). If you are restless, talking or just messing around during the service, people will notice and be distracted.
- After the service, put out the flame on the taper in the proper way: wick in to put it out, and then back out again for storage.
- Put away the cross, candlelighter, and your robes properly. Please use the hangers for your robes and take your time putting them away so that they will not be wrinkled.
- Never be afraid to ask our coordinator or pastor a question, or to get help when you need it.

