

ACOLYTE HANDBOOK
Suncreek United Methodist Church



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Welcome

Thanks to all of you for dedicating yourself to serving God and your church. Your ministry is important because you will be helping everyone else in church worship God. You are becoming part of a tradition that is hundreds of years old! Acolyte is derived from the Greek word, akolothos, which means attendant. Crucifer, comes from the Latin crux (cross) and ferre (to bear, or to carry) and this means Cross-Bearer. The Acolyte carries in the taper, lights and extinguishes the candles. Since ancient times, light and fire have reminded people that God is here with us, so in essences, the lighting of the candles is important to worship because it represents the Holy Spirit coming into the presence of the worship community.

When you bring the flame 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."

When you carry the flame out of the sanctuary at the end of the service, you are reminding the worshippers that God remains with us in all places at all times. We take God's light with us as we leave the church, and it stays with us during the week ahead. Both the Acolyte and Cross-Bearer may be called to assist the ministers during worship service.

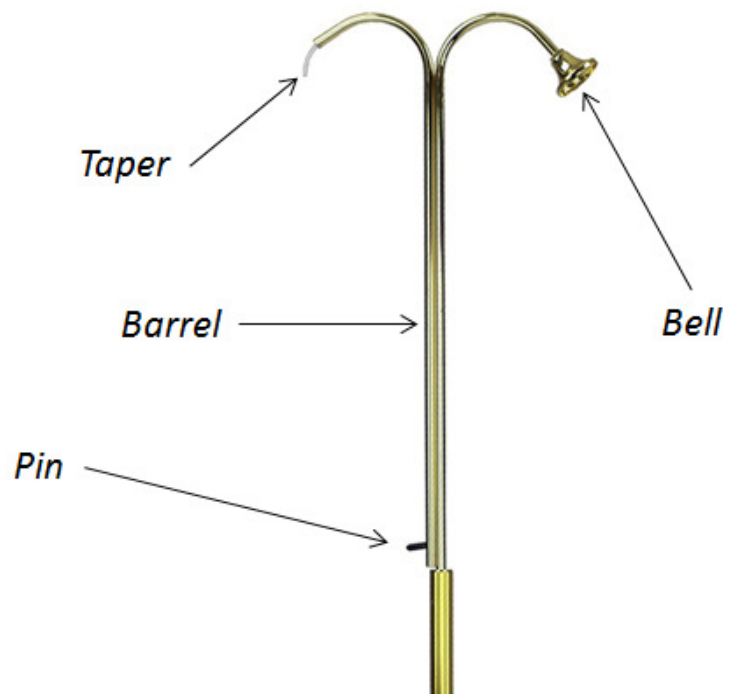
Equipment for Acolytes

A **candle lighter** is used to light and extinguish the candles on the altar. Inside of it is a long wick called a **taper**. The length of the taper is controlled by the **pin**. The candle lighter also includes a **bell** for snuffing out the candles.

Care of the candle lighters is very important. Not only are they expensive, but they must be in good working order. If the tapers are not inserted correctly or if wax has melted down inside the **barrel**, they will jam. Check your candle lighter frequently to make sure the taper moves up and down smoothly. The taper should be at least 4" long for the service.

Acolytes wear **robes**, except during the summer months.

The general rule is that if the choir is wearing robes, the acolytes also wear robes. Please remember to dress appropriately for church if you will not be wearing a robe.



Before the Worship Service

On the morning you are scheduled to acolyte, please be sure to arrive *15 minutes* before the service begins.

Report to the choir storeroom. If you will be wearing a robe, select one from the closet that is approximately mid-calf length. We will size you and put a number on each robe, so you should be able to make your selection quickly. Go to the Narthex and select your candle lighter and make sure it works properly with a taper that is at least 4" long. Get a bulletin from an usher. and place it on your pew.

Bringing the Light of Christ into Worship

As the music of the prelude begins, the acolyte coordinator will light your candle lighter for you. Hold the candle lighter to with both hands. It should be at about waist height, with the front end angled upward. The Cross Bearer will follow the Acolytes in and out of the Sanctuary. The "pretty side" of the cross always faces the parking lot. The Cross holder is to the right of the Pulpit when looking from the Narthex. Walk at a normal pace, staying together, the Cross Bearer will try to keep two pews distance between you.

As you and your partner walk down the center aisle, keep your thumb on the pin that controls the length of the candle lighter's taper and an eye on the height of the flame. *If the flame starts to get too low or looks like it is going out, do one or more of the following:*

1. Slow down a little bit. If you are walking too fast, the wind you generate can blow the flame out. Acolyte partners should try to walk at the same pace, so pay attention to what your partner is doing.
2. Slowly push the pin on your candle lighter forward. This will increase the length of the taper and give the flame more room to burn.

When you reach the end of the aisle, walk up the stairs to the Pulpit area. Stop at the top step and do a head bow to give God praise. Then walk toward the candles on the altar. Make sure you stand at the end of the altar table, not the front or back. Hold the candle lighter up horizontally or angled downward so that the flame touches the candle's wick. Keep the flame on the wick until you are sure that the candle is lit.

When both candles are lit, pull the pin on the candle lighter toward you to slide the taper back into the barrel of the candle lighter, which will snuff out the flame. Wait a second or two, and push the taper back out a couple of inches. This will prevent melting wax from dripping down inside the barrel and clogging the candle lighter. Turn towards the congregation, go to the candle lighter holder near the Pulpit and gently place the candle lighter there, and walk back down the center aisle to your seat.

Cross Bearer will walk to the side of the Pulpit and gently place the cross into the holder. Stay there until the candles have been lit then walk down the center aisle to

your seat. When the Acolytes go to retrieve their candlelighters, you will go and get the Cross, you will stand with by the Pulpit until the candles are extinguished, then you will follow the Acolytes to the first pew.

Notes:

your candle lighter goes out, don't panic! You will need to decide what to do, depending on where you are and whether you have a partner. Here are some examples:

Problem: You are just starting down the center aisle and the flame goes out, but your partner's is still burning.

Solution: The two of you can stop, and your partner can relight your taper.

Problem: You are close to the front of the sanctuary and the flame goes out, but your partner's is still burning.

Solution: Continue walking to the altar. Your partner can relight your taper there, and then the two of you can light the altar candles as usual.

Problem: You are just starting down the center aisle when the flame goes out, and you don't have a partner.

Solution: Turn around and calmly walk back down the aisle. The acolyte coordinator will relight your taper and you can begin again.

Problem: You are close to the front of the sanctuary when the flame goes out, and you don't have a partner.

Solution: Continue walking to the altar. The acolyte coordinator or one of the Ministers will meet you there and relight your taper.

Problem: You snuff out the candle before relighting your candle lighter, no worries, light from the other candle if you are the only Acolyte or wait until the other Acolyte is standing next to you and relight from their candle lighter.

There is no one ***“right”*** way to handle things – just use your best judgment! These things happen, so don't get upset or worry about making a “mistake.” If you act like it is no big deal, then it won't be!

During the Service

Please remember that you are in God's house and are serving as an aid to the congregation during worship. You should participate in the service without distractions such as electronics, books, or friends. Be on your best behavior and be careful not to distract other worshipers with noise or movement. You sit on first or second pew row Remember that the pastor and choir can see you as well!

Taking the Light of Christ out into the World

When the music for the Invitational Hymn (the last hymn) begins the second verse, go get your candle lighter. Walk up the center aisle to the candles on the altar. Light the taper on your candle lighter off of the candle. When you are sure that your taper is lit, slowly flip the candle lighter over and put the bell over the candle to snuff it out. Leave the bell in place for a couple of seconds, until you are sure that the candle has been extinguished. You may see a little bit of smoke come out from under the bell. Turn toward the congregation walk to the third pew if you are an Acolyte, Cross-Bearer will stop at the first pew where you will wait until any new members have been received, when the Benediction has been given and the music begins, the light will lead the cross and the Ministers out of the church. When you reach the back of the church, pull the pin on the candle lighter toward you to slide the taper back into the barrel and snuff out the flame. Wait a second or two, and push the taper back out a couple of inches. Place the cross and the candle lighters in their holder by the main Sanctuary doors and move to the side (we will give specifics on this) and wait until the parishioners have emptied the Sanctuary.

After the Service

Make sure your candle lighter is in good working condition for the next service. If not, notify the acolyte coordinator. Hang your robe back up in the closet.

Notes to Parents

We will need to rotate parents to help with the Acolytes during each service, please plan to help on the day your child Acolytes. Please go over these instructions with your child prior to arriving at church on the morning they are scheduled to acolyte. They may need a refresher, and once they are at church they tend to be more focused on getting situated with their robe and candle lighter than listening to instructions.

Please plan to sit on the first or second pew with your child, decide with the other parents which side you will be on so your child will be able to quickly join you after storing their candle lighter.

Please sign up to Acolyte at:

www.SignUpGenius.com/go/20F0548AFA72FA7FF2-acolyte1

Please contact Brandy, Julie or Ann with questions.