

Acolyte Procedures



Bethany Lutheran Church
Batavia, Illinois

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What is an Acolyte?

An acolyte is a young person who participates in worship in a special way by assisting the Pastor and worship leaders. Often your role is quite broad. Your primary functions are to light and extinguish the altar candles, help with the distribution of Holy Communion, and to serve in Processional and Recessionals.

Who can be an Acolyte?

Young men and women in our Junior High Ministry Program. Acolytes serve in teams of at least two and are scheduled with other members of their class. An acolyte is a youth that serves the congregation during the worship service. At Bethany, the 7th and 8th graders typically serve as acolytes. Your ministry helps our worship go smoothly and the entire church appreciates your service. The acolyte has specific duties during the service: lighting candles, participating in the processional and recessional, assisting with Communion, and extinguishing candles. An acolyte is a believer, follower, leader, helper and an overall assistant to the pastor. Thank you for your help ! This is an important job!

Procedures:

Before the service:

- ✘ Arrive **NO** later than *15 minutes before* the beginning of the service.
- ✘ Go directly to the Sacristy.
- ✘ Find a robe that fits you. There is a variety of sizes.

Why do we wear robes? In our church, everybody who participates in the worship service dresses according to his or her role. The pastor wears a robe and a stole. Choir members wear choir robes. Acolytes also wear acolyte robes. Wearing a robe reminds us of a couple of things. First, scripture calls the robes “robes of righteousness”. Because we are baptized, we are clean people who are “right” with God. Secondly, the congregation recognizes that people wearing robes during the worship service are worship leaders. The robe will be tied with a rope belt (Cincture). If you need help tying the cincture, please ask a choir member, the pastor, another acolyte, or an altar guild member.

- ✘ Please be ready *at least 5 minutes before* the service begins.

Processional and Lighting the Candles:

- ✘ The acolytes precede the Pastor, Assisting Minister, and Choir into the Sanctuary. During the entrance hymn, you will walk the cross down the middle aisle. Don't walk too fast ! Be sure to hold the cross straight. If the choir is singing that day, you will be walking just ahead of them and leading them down the aisle. Walk slowly and reverently.

- ✘ Proceed to the altar, stop, bow. Turn around and face the congregation. The choir will be walking into their seats. Stay there until all members of the choir have entered and then proceed to place the torch or Processional Cross into its stand.
- ✘ If the Christ / Paschal Candle is to be lighted, do it immediately after placing the torch in its stand. Light the candle lighter from one of the torches and then proceed to light the large Christ / Paschal Candle. Check the candle lighter prior to the service to see if there is sufficient taper (wick). Replace if 2 1/2 inches or less.
- ✘ **Note:** If you are serving during the season of *Advent*, please check with pastor regarding the lighting of the Advent Wreath.
- ✘ Prepare for worship. Since you are one of our worship leaders, we expect you to set a good example for others.
- ✘ During the service: PARTICIPATE! Stand when the congregation stands. Sing the hymns. Listen to the words. Enjoy the worship service!
- ✘ During the final hymn watch the pastor or choir director for a cue. Or, during the beginning of the second verse of the final hymn, get the cross from the stand and walk down the middle aisle towards the back of the church into the Narthex. After the service is over, return the cross to its stand. Go into the sacristy and get the candle lighter and extinguish the candles.
- ✘ Return the robe and cincture to the Sacristy closet. Make sure you have not left anything in the Sacristy or under your chair. Relax, you have finished! Great job. Give yourself a pat on the back. Thank you for being such an important part of our worship service

Assisting with the Distribution of Holy Communion:

- ✘ During the “Sharing of the Peace”, both acolytes should go to the narthex and get the Flagon (Wine Pitcher) and Host Box (containing the communion wafers).
- ✘ During the Offertory the ushers will walk up the aisle with the offering plates. At the end of the Offering, the acolytes will take the wine and wafers from the back of the church up to the pastor and the ushers will follow with the offering. The acolytes should then go into the sacristy and join the communion assistants. The entire group will walk in front of the altar to receive Communion from the pastor.
- ✘ After receiving communion, enter the Chancel to help with the distribution. You will be responsible for carrying an empty tray to receive the used individual communion glasses and will work with either the Worship Leader or a Communion Assistant. The Worship Leader will offer communicants the individual cups. You will follow close behind to receive the used glasses. When the tray of cups is filled up, the acolyte should go to the sacristy and someone will be there to give him/her an empty tray. One of the acolytes will need to follow pastor and a communion servers as they communion those unable to come to the altar to receive the used cups from these people.
- ✘ When finished return to your seats. Please remember to bow as you enter and exit the Chancel.

Festival Services:

On Festivals of the church, we very often observe these occasions with special ceremonies. On these days, there is very often a Processional and Recessional, which, in addition to involving the acolytes and worship leaders, includes also the processional cross and possibly a banner, the Bible, or the Paschal Candle. If you are privileged to serve on one of these days, please arrive 20 to 30 minutes early in order to receive special instructions regarding your participation in the worship service.

The Gospel Procession:

- ✘ On Festivals, in addition to a Processional and Recessional, there will in all probability also be a Gospel Procession. The Gospel Procession is an ancient practice that symbolizes "carrying" the Gospel out into the midst of the world by carrying it into the midst of the people. Torches were carried to enable the pastor to see while reading the text in the dark churches. Today, the carrying of the torches is simply symbolic. As with all festival processions, it is lead by the processional cross.
- ✘ The Procession will be done in the following way:
 - ✘ Wait until the lector (reader) has finished reading the second lesson.
 - ✘ When the lector is finished, proceed to the Chancel and take your torch, Bible, and Processional Cross from their respective stands.
 - ✘ Proceed to center of the Chancel, stand on the main floor, not in the Chancel, facing the altar in the following pattern.

Processional Cross
 Torch - Bible - Torch
 ----- Chancel Step -----
 Pastor
ALTAR

- ✘ At pastor's direction, turn and proceed about 1/3 of the way down the center aisle. Cross first, then torches, then Bible, then pastor. Stop and turn. The processional cross and Bible bearers face the altar. The torch bearers face each other flanking the Bible.
- ✘ After the reading, pastor and the Bible bearer will step to the side. Return to the Chancel in the following order: Cross first, then torches, then Bible, then pastor. Put everything back into it proper place and return to your seats.
- ✘ Please remember to bow as you enter and exit the Chancel.
- ✘ Since the Gospel Procession is rarely done, Pastor will go over these instruction with you prior to the service. (That's why you need to arrive early!)