

EPIPHANY † PARISH

of Seattle

The Acolytes' Handbook



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Introduction

The purpose of this *handbook* is to help you understand about being an acolyte at Epiphany. Acolytes play an important role in the worship service.

If you have questions PLEASE ASK! We may even change the *handbook* to make it clearer.

The idea is for this *handbook* to be easy to understand and to help in your training as an acolyte – AND to be a **reminder** to the experienced acolytes.

The Role of the Acolyte

The Acolyte's role is to serve – to help in the presentation of the worship service. An acolyte is a **leader** and a **helper** – *not* a slave.

(Kind of like a great assistant – the job doesn't really get done without them.)

Therefore, the **acolyte must learn his/her part** in the service and pay attention.

(Like a terrific waitress or waiter, an acolyte should always be on their toes.)

A good acolyte also **anticipates** the next step in the service. So you're "at the ready" when it's time for the next thing to happen in the worship service.

(Just like the waiter or waitress who knows just when to clear the table...)

And, for heaven's sake, don't worry about making a mistake. It will get corrected – and besides, there is no one *right* way to do things. Be comfortable in your role as a leader and a helper. But use the opportunity to pay attention and to learn...

As Doyt says,

"We serve for the Glory of God. We pay attention to honor God. And if we miss a step or turn the wrong way God loves us anyway."

Schedule, Promptness, Dress Code

Schedule -- All acolytes will receive a schedule of services for the coming season via email. The schedule is made up after talking to everyone to determine the most sensible schedule – based on availability – as best we can. A list of acolytes (and their contact information) is also printed on the schedule. Reminders are sent out on Tuesday. Please reply confirming that you can serve. This helps in planning and having the bulletins correct. **If there is a schedule problem or if plans change (things do come up) please let Diane know. The best way is by email: carlised@comcast.net or verger@epiphanyseattle.org**

Promptness -- As an Acolyte, you are expected to arrive at the church in time to be in the Vesting Room no less than **20 minutes before** the service is scheduled to begin. This will give you time to get vested, check equipment (torches and cross) and to check on any special requirements. *For example:* Is there anything else unusual about the service? You may be asked to answer questions if there is a visiting Priest.

Dress Code -- There is no specific dress code for Acolytes at Epiphany. However, you are expected to be **neat** in appearance. Appropriate dark closed toe shoes (for everyone) and pants for the guys are desired. Those who have showered seem to be more awake in the morning. Please make sure your hair is combed.

One other thing: You're never completely dressed without a SMILE.

Acolyte Prayer

Lord, you love me deeply and in ways I can never really understand; give me grace to serve You during worship so I can actually worship You while I serve and not worry too much about what I am supposed to do; I ask this prayer in Jesus' name. Amen.



Some General Knowledge...

Parts of the Church:

Ambo- large elevated lectern from where the lessons and sermon are read

Ambry- cupboard in the Sanctuary where the reserve Sacrament is kept

Chancel -the area “outside” the communion rail where the organ and choir is.

Epistle Side of the Church – The side of the church the choir is on.

Eucharist Candles – The big Candles the candles on the reredos behind the altar.

The Gospel Candle is the one on the right as you are looking at them.

Gospel Side of the Church – the side that the organ is on

Narthex - the “lobby” just inside the front doors to the church

Nave - large main area where all the pews are located

Office Candles – the six smaller candles on the reredos

Reredos – the painted area behind the altar

Sanctuary – The area “inside” the communion rail

Sedelia – the chairs in the sanctuary that are attached to each other and the wall

Vesting Room - room where vestments are kept and you get ready for the service

Things Used in the Service:

Alms basin - the big brass plates for the offering

Ciborium -silver “bread tin” that hold the wafers

Chalice- the fancy cup that holds the wine

Credence table -the “server’s table”

Cruets - clearvessels that hold the wine and water

LEV Kit -the brown box for taking communion to people outside

Pascal candle large ornate candle – On the floor by the old baptismal font (not always lit)

Paten-the silver bread plates

Vestments:

Alb – white robe that acolytes and other ministers wear

Cincture- the rope tied around your waist

Cassock- black robe worn by the Verger and other servers when communion is not being celebrated

Surplice- white garment worn over the cassock



The best way to stand as an Acolyte

Stand straight. Please don't slouch or lean against a pew. Hands folded at waist (belly button level) or hands at your sides.

(If your arms are straight and hands grasped below your waist, it kind of looks like you're defending a direct kick on goal in soccer...)

The best way to sit as an Acolyte

Sit up straight. Don't cross your legs. The congregation can see everything you do, so don't call attention to yourself!

When to Stand, Sit and Kneel

Stand during Procession Hymn and Opening Collect, then sit down.

Sit through the readings up to the Gospel Hymn.

Stand for the Gospel reading

Sit for the sermon (when everyone else does)

Stand after the sermon, for the Nicene Creed turn to face cross and Prayers of the People.

Sit for the announcements and offertory anthem.

Stand for the offertory hymn

Stand during the Great Thanksgiving (consecration of sacraments).

Stand for the Exit Procession Hymn.

Relax. Be comfortable during the Service. (There are many ways to conduct the service.)

Kneel Usually we will sit when the congregation kneels.

Don't let variations bother you.

One book I read on the subject says it is best to *look dignified* and *feel relaxed*...



Acolyte's Prayer

*Be present, Lord Jesus, that I may faithfully and loyally
serve you in love and through my service proclaim,*

"The Lord is my Light."

Amen

Know Your Jobs!

Service of the Holy Eucharist (Eucharist means Thanksgiving...)

Lead Crucifer:

Lights candles before the Service – in order (open the curtains)
Carries cross during Entrance Procession – leads the procession.
Not Too Fast !!
Collects communion elements from the ushers at the Offertory
Stands at the bottom of the chancel stairs by the piano to aid parishioners up the steps.

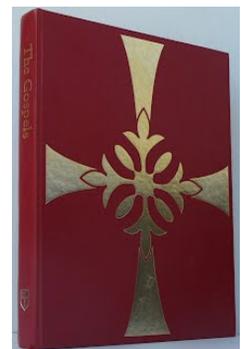
2nd Crucifer:

Leads the ministers in the entrance and exit processions.



Gospel Bearer:

Lights candles before the Service – in order (open the curtains)
Carries the Gospel during the Entrance Procession.-Forward (not like a rain hat)
(just behind the torches)
Leads the Gospel Procession.
Holds the Gospel during the proclamation of the Word.
Leads the Gospel procession back to the sanctuary.
Collects communion elements from the ushers at the Offertory
Carries the Gospel in the Exit Procession-after the torches
Stands at the bottom of the chancel stairs by the harpsichord to aid parishioners up the steps. Gets more wafers and/or wine if needed from the credence table.
Puts out the altar candles at the conclusion of the Service



Torch Bearers:

Makes sure the torches are ready to go
Carries torch during the Entrance Procession (follow the Crucifers)
Carries torch for the reading of the Gospel (1 and 2 only)
Carries the torch during the Exit Procession
Stands at the bottom of the stairs by the sanctuary during communion to aid parishioners down the stairs (1 and 2 only)
Checks to make sure the other Torch is doing the same thing.



Different Parts of the Worship Service (Training Outline)

The Processional

How to walk; Where to stand –
Where to sit

Gospel Reading

When to move in the Gospel Hymn
Gospel Bearer always leads on signal from Verger
Where to Stand in the Nave – Fourth to fifth row
When to move back to the Chancel – Gospel Bearer always leads!

Offertory

When to move to Pick Up the elements – *When the Offertory hymn begins!!*
When to turn
When to Bow

During Communion

When to move to the ends of the altar
When to go to your communion station
When to return to seat
When to receive communion

Concluding the Worship Service

Exit Procession
When to move – When the music begins

At the End of the Service

Be relaxed; move with dignity
Put the Cross back in its holder
Put out the altar candles
Torches returned to stands
Vestments returned to closet and hung up – *Neatly*

That's it! After the service go into to the world to serve the Lord... Sounds a little corny, but one way you can do this is when someone asks you about being an acolyte, you can explain it to them. Or, if you know a person who wants to be an acolyte, you can encourage and help them to learn. That's one good way to serve the Lord. Not so uncool.

General Instructions

1. One who serves at the altar, whether as Acolyte, Eucharistic Minister, Verger, or Priest, must always keep in mind that the attention of the congregation is not to be on those ministering but on the liturgy. Therefore, always move discreetly and quietly – and above all with reverence.

2. Posture:

When *standing*, stand up straight, and if you are carrying a candle or the processional cross make sure that it is straight.

When *kneeling* – put all of your weight on your knees and kneel upright. Do no squat or slouch. It looks terrible!

When *bowing* – There are two types of bows: the solemn and the simple. The solemn bow is used when reverencing the altar, and at other times as directed. The head and shoulders are bent so that if your hands were out in front of you, they would almost touch your knees. We do not use the simple bow at Epiphany.

When *sitting* – sit up straight in the chair, knees together, feet together.

3. What do I do with my hands?

Unless you are carrying something, your hands should always be folded and held above the waist. They should never hang down at your sides or hang folded below the waist.

When sitting, either fold your hands in your lap or place them straight out on your knees with palms down. They are not meant to support your head!

4. The Sign of the Cross (optional)

The sign of the cross should always be made reverently and in a dignified manner. Remember, you are signing yourself with the Cross of Christ and this act of devotion should convey that meaning. With your right hand, fingers together, touch your forehead first, then your chest, then your left shoulder, and finally your right shoulder. Keep the hand motions unobtrusive.

The use of the sign of the cross by those serving at the altar is determined by the custom of the parish and the direction of the priest. A good general rule is that when the celebrant makes the sign of the cross, you make the sign of the cross; when the celebrant doesn't, you don't.

5. Responses

One of your responsibilities is to lead the people in prayers and responses. Therefore, make sure you know them, and say (or sing) them audibly and reverently; don't rush and don't lag behind! Keep the pace set by the celebrant or the congregation.

6. Walking

Always walk slowly and with dignity when serving at the altar. Your movement should never appear rushed or hurried. But at the same time, stiffness must be avoided. Military steps, precise square corners, and quick turns are all out of place.

7. What do I do with my eyes?

When one is serving, eyes should always be focused on the action at the altar, on the reader, or on the preacher. It is very distracting to have a server staring into the congregation or at the ceiling. If you don't know where to look, the best thing is to keep your eyes lowered and look at the floor.

The Torchbearers

The acolyte, torchbearer, or candle bearer is a server who carries a candle or a torch. These are always carried in pairs, never singly. If there is a crucifer, the acolytes walk with lighted candles on either side just behind the crucifer.

SOME GENERAL PRINCIPLES

1. Carry the candle so that it is even with the other acolyte's candle. Ideally the light should be high and in line with the other torch.
2. Carrying the torches:
Grasp the pole firmly with both hands in such a way that the torch will be balanced and you will not tip it and drop oil all over the place, or on yourself! Be careful of stairs. Remember to raise the pole slightly, so that it doesn't catch on a step. When standing still and holding a torch, you may rest it on the floor to keep it balanced.
3. *Never bow or genuflect when holding a torch or candle.* Always be reverent and dignified, but be careful of spilling oil!
4. Always carry a package of matches with you in case a candle should go out during the service. If it does go out, light it discreetly and don't make a fuss.

The Crucifer

The primary function of the crucifer is to carry the processional cross at the entrance, and at the retiring procession.

SOME GENERAL PRINCIPLES:

1. The cross must always be carried with dignity. Any position that would look either stiff or sloppy must be avoided. Find a comfortable position for your hands and always do it the same. Your elbows should be relaxed. Be sure that the symbol is facing out. Carry the processional as high as you can. Be careful when clearing the balcony. This all depends on your height – but in all cases make sure that it is held firmly and that the position looks relaxed and dignified.
2. The crucifer leads the procession at the entrance (unless incense is used or there is a vergier, in which case the crucifer follows at least six feet behind the thurifer or vergier). The cross is placed in its holder and secured. The crucifer goes to the place assigned.
3. When carrying the processional cross, never bow or genuflect.
4. Be careful of steps. Raise the pole slightly higher when approaching them. Also, be careful of the balcony.

5. Carry the cross straight, not tilting forward or backward. This takes practice and be sure you know what you are doing before you have to do it!

The Gospel Bearer

The primary responsibility of the Gospel Bearer is to carry the Gospel during processions and hold the Gospel while the priest or deacon is reading it.

SOME GENERAL PRINCIPLES

1. During the entrance and exit processions the Gospel follows the first and second torchbearers.
2. The Gospel Bearer leads the Gospel procession to the nave and returning from the nave.
3. The Gospel should be carried high and slightly forward (not like a rain hat)
4. When in the sanctuary the Gospel is placed lying on the altar on the Epistle side. Don't put it on top of the Eucharistic Prayer.
5. When carrying the Gospel book never bow, or genuflect.

