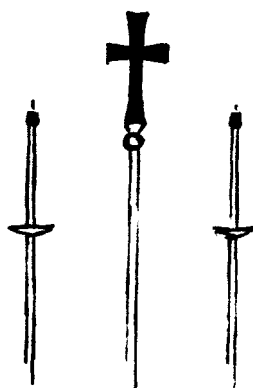


The Acolyte's Handbook  
Christ Episcopal Church  
Corning, New York



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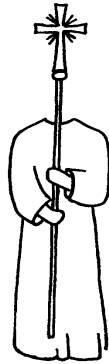
# The Acolyte's Handbook

## Introduction

The purpose of this *handbook* is to help you understand about being an acolyte at Christ Episcopal Church. 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

**Role of an Acolyte in the Service** -- 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 'em.)

Therefore, the **acolyte must learn his/her part** in the service and pay attention. If something goes amiss, the Priest might ask you to do something a little different. For example, if the Priest forgets their glasses they may ask you to retrieve them... (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 its 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...

## Schedule, Promptness, Dress Code

**Schedule** -- All acolytes will receive a schedule of services for the coming season. 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 phone numbers) is also printed on the schedule. **If there is a schedule problem or if plans change (things do come up) the assigned acolytes are responsible for finding a substitute.**

Emergency?? call Karen Reed (home: 796-5467); or  
Howard Farnsworth (home: 583-4923)

**Promptness** -- As an Acolyte, you are expected to arrive at the church in time to be in the Sacristy **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 the Communion Kit to be used? 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 Christ Episcopal Church. However, you are expected to be neat in appearance. Appropriate closed toe shoes. 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!”

## Some General Knowledge...

### Parts of the Church:

Ambry	cupboard in the Chancel where the reserve Sacrament is kept
Chancel	the area "inside" the communion rail
Narthex	the "lobby" just inside the front doors to the church
Nave	large main area where all the pews are located
Ambo/Pulpit	large elevated lectern from where the lessons are read
Sacristy	room where vestments are kept and you get ready for the service

### Things Used in the Service:

Altar Candles	the candles on the Altar - front of table light right first then left (extinguish opposite)
Alms basin	the big brass plates for the offering
Ciborium	the small silver "bread tin" that hold the wafers
Chalice	the fancy cup that holds the wine
Communion Kit	the brown box for taking communion to people outside
Credence table	the "server's table"
Crosier	Bishop's staff – has the "crook" at the top
Cruets	vessels that hold the wine and water
Pascal candle	large ornate candle - left side of the Chancel (not always lit)
Paten	the silver bread plates



CHALICE



CRUET

### Vestments:

Cassock	robe that acolytes wear
Cincture	the rope tied around your waist



## PRIMARY STATIONS

At Christ Church the “Primary Station” for the **Crucifer** when holding the cross in the Chancel is “On the Step” facing the congregation. You occupy this station three (3) times during the Service: During the **Entrance Procession** when the choir enters the stalls; at the **Beginning** of the **Gradual (Gospel) Hymn**; and when the music for the **Exit Procession** begins. From your primary station, the Crucifer has good eye contact with the Priest and can wait for the signal to move.

The “Primary Station” for the **Torch Bearer** is next to the Torch when it is mounted in its stand. Torch Bearers remain at their primary station while the choir processes and then they follow the choir to be seated. Move to Primary Station at the beginning of the **Gradual (Gospel) Hymn** and be prepared to follow the Crucifer carrying the Cross. Same thing at the time of the **Exit Procession**.

### 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. Or you could slide your hands into the sleeves (opposite arm) of your cassock.

(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...)



### When to Stand, Sit and Kneel...

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

**Sit** through the *Gloria*, Collect for the day and readings up to the Gradual Hymn.

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

**Sit** for the announcements and offertory anthem.

**Stand** for the offertory hymn (Praise God from whom all blessings flow...)

**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.) Don't let variations bother you

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

## Know Your Jobs!

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

### Lead Crucifer/Server jobs:

Lights candles before the Service – in order

Carries cross during Entrance Procession – leads the procession... Not Too Fast !!

Carries the cross for the reading of the Gospel

Collects plates at the Offertory

Serves in the preparation of the elements (bread and wine)

Serves in the removal of the communion vessels (after communion)

Carries the cross during the Exit Procession – again... Not Too Fast !!

Puts out the altar candles at the conclusion of the Service

### Torch Bearer jobs:

Makes sure the torches are ready to go

Carries torch during the Entrance Procession

Carries torch for the reading of the Gospel

Carries the torch during the Exit Procession

Checks to make sure the other Torch has done the same

### Second Crucifer:

Carries cross in Entrance and Exit Procession

### Gospel Carries:

the Gospel Book during Entrance Procession, Gospel Procession and Exit Procession.

### Special Services

Easter

Christmas

Baptisms

## Different Parts of the Worship Service (*Training Outline*)

### The Processional

How to walk; Where to stand – Primary Stations  
Where to sit (seating order in front of the Organ)

### Gospel Reading

When to Move in the Gradual Hymn – when the music begins! (2<sup>nd</sup> verse)  
To Primary Stations  
Crucifer always leads on signal from Priest  
Where to Stand in the Nave – First Column  
When to Move back to the Chancel – crucifer always leads!  
Where to sit (seating order in front of the Organ)

### Offertory

When to move to Pick Up the Alms Basin – ***When the Offertory hymn begins!!***  
When to go to the first step of the Platform (in front of Altar)  
Move back to the Altar and Raise Up the Alms Basin  
Place the Offering under the credence table

### Service in the Preparation of the Elements

Chalice Stack to the altar  
Wine & Water to the table  
Bread plate to the altar  
Hold Lavabo bowl and pour water over priest's hands – return to Credence Table  
Remove various items from altar as priest places them on corner  
Bread plates (Paten) to the Altar  
Get the water and wait  
Take the silver Ciborium to the credence table  
Wine & Water cruets to the credence table  
Communion Kit (if there is one) to the Altar  
Wait to be dismissed

### During Communion

Communion starts with the Priest serving the other ministers  
Server gets reserve Host (Ciborium) from Ambray; and places it on the Altar  
Server goes and stands - waiting for the conclusion of communion  
Immediately – as communion is ending (a few people remain at communion rail)  
Server goes and stands at the credence table

### Service in the Removal of the Vessels

Server “At the Ready” at the credence table  
Bread plates (paten) moved to credence table  
Return to Altar  
Wait to be dismissed  
Take Reserve Host back to Ambray (if not already done by Chalice bearer)  
Return to pew

## Concluding the Worship Service

### Exit Procession

When to move – When the music begins – Move to Primary Stations

### 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.

<< end >>

Rev.9.09

## General Instructions

1. One who serves at the altar, whether as acolyte, crucifer, or thurifer, 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 so that if your hands were out in front of you, they would almost touch your knees.

The simple bow, at the name of Jesus (optional) and on other occasions of reverence, is made with the head, inclining the shoulders slightly.

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, 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 Torchbearer**

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 in line with 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 level with your forehead, however, if your partner is of a different

height, adjustment should be made. The main point is that the candles when carried are at an equal height.

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, during a solemn procession, at the gospel procession, and at the retiring procession. The crucifer may also be expected to do some of the other assisting actions that are general responsibilities of the serves.

## SOME GENERAL PRINCIPLES:

1. The cross must always be carried with dignity. Any position that would look either stiff or sloppy must be avoided. The best way is to hold it firmly with both hands in the middle of the pole. Your elbows should be relaxed. Be sure that the symbol or figure of Christ crucified is facing out. Carry the processional cross slightly raised from the ground. 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, in which case the crucifer follows at least six feet behind the thurifer). 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 low beams, hanging advent wreaths, “invisible” electrical wires, or the like. Lower the cross whenever there is a chance that you may hit these objects.
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!