

Welcome

When you serve God by serving as an acolyte, you are doing more than carrying a flame to the altar candles. You are symbolically bringing the light of Christ's spirit into the worship service. I hope that by serving as an acolyte, you will be filled with a sense of spiritual meaning and fulfillment. You will make new friends, have fun, and through your commitment grow in service to our church.

I hope this manual will provide a quick reference for you as you begin your journey as an acolyte. If you have any questions, please do not hesitate to contact our acolyte coordinator, Sally Bacon, at 281-362-8693 or email baconbits@sbcglobal.net. She is ready and eager to assist you.

You have made an important promise to The Woodlands United Methodist Church by agreeing to serve as an acolyte. I welcome you and thank you for helping in this very significant position.

In Christ,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Ed Robb". The letters are cursive and slightly slanted to the right.

Dr. Edmund W. Robb III

Background

An acolyte is a person who assists in the worship service. Normally, the acolyte serves by lighting and extinguishing the candles on the altar table. Occasionally, an acolyte also may assist in other portions of the worship service.

It is the custom in our church for acolytes to be young boys and girls who are in about the third through fifth grades. However, adults also may serve as acolytes.

DID YOU KNOW?

The acolyte ministry originated from Old Testament times. The Scriptures tell us of the prophet Samuel assisting Eli the priest, and of Elijah being assisted by Elisha. The word "acolyte" comes from the Greek word "akolouthos," which means a servant or attendant who waits on another.

When You Are An Acolyte

Looking Good!

- ✓ Boys should wear slacks with dark socks and dress shoes. (No running shoes, athletic shoes, sandals, shorts or jeans.)
- ✓ Girls also should wear appropriate shoes with skirts/dresses or slacks. (No flip flops, spike heels, jeans or shorts.)
- ✓ Hair should be neatly combed, regardless of length or style.

Arriving and Robing:

- ✓ On the mornings you are scheduled to serve as an acolyte, please be sure to arrive no later than 20 minutes prior to the service. If you have not arrived 15 minutes before the service is scheduled to begin, another acolyte will be asked to take your place.
- ✓ Pick up a bulletin from an usher.
- ✓ Report to the choir room and select a robe that comes to mid-calf. (Any longer and you will have to pull it up in order to walk—that's a problem when you need your hands to hold the torch!
- ✓ Also select a collar (the long end hangs down your back) and cross.
- ✓ Pick up your candlelighter.

Remember the Three P's Please:

- ✓ **Punctuality** is important. When you arrive on time, everything flows more smoothly.
- ✓ **Pay attention.** It helps to take a few minutes before the service to familiarize yourself with the order of worship found in the bulletin. This will help you stay on top of things and know where you are in the service so that you will be prepared—and it will help you anticipate any last-minute changes.
- ✓ **Participate.** You will soon find that by being prompt and alert, you will have few problems. Most importantly, don't forget to worship God. That's why we are here!

Lighting and Extinguishing the Candles

- ✓ Check your candle wicks and caps, making sure they are secure and in proper working order. Check with your parents to make sure they are seated on the appropriate front-row pew and that they have a pack of matches in case you need a back-up flame. (Parents, we could use your help with bringing in books of matches to the Sacristy and in helping remember to keep a book with you during the Sundays your child is serving as an acolyte.)
- ✓ Two acolytes lead the procession into the church during the prelude, one from each side of the altar. A minister will let you know when it is time to begin processing. Once you've entered the sanctuary, walk slowly toward the altar in front of the railing. This makes it easier for the ministers to process to their seats, as they walk behind the railing. Try to keep your torch at the same height and arrive at the altar at the same time. The pace of the procession should be slow, steady and dignified, taking about one normal-sized step per second. Try to walk in a steady and controlled manner.
- ✓ Upon reaching the altar, the acolytes should light the candles at the same time. You will need to hold the flame to the candle for a little while, as the candles can take awhile to light. If your flame burns out during the processional, the other acolyte will light his or her candle then light your wick so that you may light your candle. If both flames burn out before you reach the altar, one acolyte will remain standing at the altar and the other will walk calmly to the parents' pew and have them re-light the wick.
- ✓ Once both candles are lit, an acolyte will snuff out the flame on the torch then immediately push the wick back out to ensure that the wick does not melt inside its brass holder and become inoperative. Acolytes will then take a seat on the front center pew on their respective sides of the center aisle, and quietly place the torches underneath the pew for the duration of the service.
- ✓ As the congregation begins to sing the final hymn, prepare for the recessional by picking up the candlelighter. Make eye contact with the other acolyte. As the congregation begins singing the second verse, both acolytes will walk directly to the center of the altar toward the appropriate candle. Again, please try to time your walking so that you both arrive at the same time. At this point, you will first light your wick, then extinguish the candle. Please try to do these things in unison. For example, even if you have extinguished the flame on your candle, continue to hold the snuffer over your candle until the other acolyte has put out his or her flame.
- ✓ Turn to face the congregation and stand beside the altar until the hymn is completed and also until any new members are introduced. (Remember to stand tall and smile! This is not the time to twirl your hair or bite your nails or turn your head around to look at the large screens on the wall.) Listen for the pastor to say, "It's time to sing our benediction." As soon as

you hear the first organ note of the benediction (before any singing begins), swiftly walk up the aisle toward the back of the church. Your flame most likely will be blown out at this time, but don't worry about it.

- ✓ Please return to the Sacristy and neatly hang up your robe and vestment, and place the cross in the drawer. The candlelighters are stored in the closet.

A Few Reminders

- ✝ If you are unable to serve as scheduled, please make sure you call Sally Bacon, and she will find a replacement.
- ✝ Arrive at least 20 minutes before the service begins. You may extinguish the candles on the altar if they are still burning from the prior worship service.
- ✝ Make sure you are properly robed.
- ✝ Before the service, pick up a copy of the bulletin and place it on your pew.
- ✝ Assist in retrieving the lighters and matches from the Sacristy.
- ✝ Be aware of what is going on during the service at all times.
- ✝ At the conclusion of the service, make sure the robes and candlelighters are returned to their places.
- ✝ HAVE FUN AND ENJOY YOURSELF!