

You are very special! You have been asked to serve as an acolyte. This handbook has been prepared for you to help you learn more about an acolyte’s responsibilities in assisting the ministers as they lead the congregation in the worship of God.

Acolytes at First Presbyterian Church are a very important part of our worship experience. We want you to know how much you are appreciated and loved.

By participating in this training, you will become a member of the Acolyte Team who have been selected and trained as worship leaders to participate in the 11:00 worship service.

Specifically, as light bearers, acolytes symbolically bring the *light of Christ* into the worship service at the beginning of worship and at the end of worship take Christ’s light out into the world. This act frames all we do in our worship services, which is why the Acolyte Team is so special.

What is an Acolyte?

The word *acolyte* means helper or attendant. Some say the history of acolytes dates back to the Old Testament, when Samuel assisted Eli in the temple. Acolytes are needed to do a special ministry for each service.

Acolytes are much more than just candle-lighters, they are worship leaders. Acolytes serve God in worship. To be the best examples they can be for God, acolytes will:

* Act so that people notice God – not them.
* Not scratch, yawn, slouch, chew gum, sleep or fidget.
* Lead others in worship by participating in all aspects of the service (singing, praying, reading etc.).

What is the Liturgy?

The liturgy is our worship of God. For Christians, nothing is more important than the time we spend at worship, and God does not want any of us to face a week without it. Jesus set the example by worshipping regularly.

Before Jesus was born, the people worshiped in the temple or synagogue, where the emphasis was on hearing the word of God and on prayer. The birth, ministry, death, and resurrection of Jesus changed forever the worship life of the people of God. Our worship is based on WORD and SACRAMENT. The WORD is the word of God. The Sacrament is Communion or The Lord’s Supper.

\*\*\* See Bulletin

Where does the Liturgy Happen?

Through the centuries, Christians have made some decisions about their places of worship – how they should be designed and furnished. While no two church buildings in the world are exactly alike, most are very similar in room design and furnishings.

**Sanctuary**

The Sanctuary of the church is not like an auditorium where people gather to watch and listen. All believers are expected to be fully involved in worship. Worship is something we *do.* It is an action.

**Narthex**

This is the area that serves as the entranceway into the worship space. For our church it includes the hallways in the back of the Sanctuary where the acolytes and ministers will line up for the procession.

**Chancel**

This is an area in the worship space, usually located at the front of the Sanctuary. It includes furnishings such as the pulpit, lectern, candles, cross, baptismal font and the Lord’s Table.

**Pulpit and Lectern**

The pulpit and lectern are the places where the scriptures are read and the sermons are preached. In our church, the pulpit is

the larger stand where the preachers preach their sermons. The lectern is the smaller stand where others read from the Bible or lead the congregation in worship.

**Baptismal Font**

This stand with a bowl of water is used for the Sacrament of Baptism.

**Candles**

The Candles remind us that Jesus is the Light of the World.

**Candle-lighter and Extinguishers**

This is the basic tool for all acolytes. It is a long staff with two prongs. One prong contains the wick to be used in lighting candles. The other prong has a bell-shaped snuffer to extinguish the candles.

What Do Acolytes Do?

The Procession

At the beginning of our worship, during the *opening voluntaries* (music played by the organist) there is a procession of acolytes, ministers and sometimes the Elders of our church. *It is the job of the acolyte lead this procession from the narthex, down the center aisle to the Chancel.*

ORDER: Acolyte, Choir, Pastor

The Candles

An important part of your job as an acolyte is to light and extinguish (put out) the candles on the Lord’s Table in the Chancel. We call it the Lord’s Table because it is the Lord Jesus Christ’s table. We are the family of Christ. We gather as a family at God's table for Communion, the Lord’s Supper. When you as an acolyte approach the Lord’s Table reverently, you are reminding everyone to be reverent.

There is a large cross on the table that reminds us that Jesus died on a cross, but has been raised from the dead and is with us here and now. Since ancient times, light and fire have reminded people that God is here with us. When you bring the light (fire) into the place where people are gathering to worship and you light the candles, you are reminding the people that God is with us at home, at school, and at work, as well as in the worship service. When people look at the lighted candles, they more easily think about God and feel God’s presence.

Near the end of the service, during the final hymn, the acolytes will put down their hymnals and take up their candle-lighters. They will then begin to extinguish the candles on their side of the table, remembering to relight their candle-lighter before extinguishing the last candle. You will then walk out down the center aisle. By walking out reverently with your lighted candle-lighter, you remind the people that when we scatter out into the world, God will be there with us. You also remind us that as Christians, we are to take Christ’s light with us into the world so that others can see God's light in us.

**QUICK REVIEW FOR**

**YOUR DAY TO ACOLYTE**

* Be robed and ready to light candles 15 minutes before the service begins. Gather where the pastor are gathered to process in.
* Check the taper in the candle-lighter to be sure it is long enough.
* Extend the taper at least an inch, then after being lit, walk slowly to the chancel. As you walk in a dignified and unhurried manner, keep your eye on the taper. If the flame goes out, get a light from your partner or the pastors.
* After you are sure the candles are lit, extinguish the taper by drawing it into the candle-lighter and hang the candle- lighter on the hook by your seat.
* During the next to last verse of the final hymn, use your candle-lighter to extinguish the candles and walk up the center aisle of the church following the cross to the Narthex. Put your candle-lighter away outside the closet

and HANG UP YOUR ROBE neatly on a hanger down in the robe closet in choir room.

\* edited 7/26/2021

Acolyte Director: Bill Cobham

\*\*\*Schedule!