

Wilmington Island
United Methodist Church
Acolyte Ministry

Acolyte history

The word *acolyte* comes from the Greek word *akolouthos*, meaning companion, attendant, or helper. The acolyte ministry dates back to the Old Testament of the Holy Bible, where the prophet Samuel is seen assisting Eli, the Levite priest, and Elisha is seen assisting Elijah the Prophet.

Becoming an acolyte

Thank you for your commitment to become an acolyte. Being an acolyte is not something to be taken lightly. It is a ministry, a service to God in the House of the Lord. The acolyte has an important role in leading the congregation in its worship of God. Special training sessions are held for those who wish to become an acolyte. Refresher classes will also be held about once a year. Once you have completed the acolyte training, you will be given a schedule. If you are unable to be the acolyte on your assigned Sunday, please find a replacement and call the church office at 897-2835 with the change.

What does an acolyte do?

Acolytes assist in worship by lighting and extinguishing the altar candles. Jesus said, "I am the light of the world." Lighting the two candles on the altar represents that Jesus was both a human being and God. Since ancient times, light and fire have reminded people that God is here with us. Remember your Old Testament verses such as God in the burning bush, etc. When the acolytes bring the light (fire) into the sanctuary, they are reminding people that God is with us in our worship service. When the acolytes extinguish the candles and walk out of the sanctuary with their candlelighters, they are reminding people that when we scatter out into the world, God is with us. Acolytes also help with the offering. Sometimes acolytes are asked to help with baptism. In addition, acolytes may be asked to participate in other special events during the worship service.

How should I prepare to serve as an acolyte?

Before the Service:

1. An acolyte should arrive 15 minutes before the service. Have your hair combed and hands and fingernails clean. Wear clean clothing and shoes. Do not chew gum or eat candy.
2. PLACE THE OFFERING PLATES AND A HYMNAL AT YOUR PEW ON THE FRONT ROW. YOUR PARENTS WILL NEED TO SIT BEHIND YOU DURING THE SERVICE.
3. Put on your vestments (robe and smock) found in the narthex closet.
4. Take a moment to say a simple prayer about your acolyte ministry, for example:
Dear God, please be with me as I serve as an acolyte at your altar today. Please help me to remember that I am your servant today. Amen
5. When the usher lights your candlelighter, you should hold it in front of you. It should be tipped slightly forward, with the flame pointing ahead of you and the bell pointing back toward you. Your left hand should be near the bottom and your right hand where it can adjust the knob that regulates the length of the taper.
6. With the lighted candlelighter, walk in a dignified and unhurried manner toward the altar. Take short steps. Keep your head up and your eyes straight ahead.
7. Walk down the aisle side by side with the other acolyte. When you reach the front of the church, before you step up, pause and reverently look at the cross. Gently nod before the cross.
8. Walk up the steps to the Lord's table side by side, then separate and turn until each of you is in front of the candle you are to light. Do not go between the flowers and the altar. Walk around the outside of the flowers. Watch each other out of the corner of your eyes so that your movements are in agreement. As soon as both candles are lit, extinguish the candlelighters. Turn and walk behind the altar to exit. Be seated on the front rows on both sides of the church. Place the candlelighter under your pew.
9. When there are two candles and only one acolyte, light the candle on the right first (your right) and then the one on the left. As soon as both candles are lit, extinguish the candlelighter. Turn and walk behind the altar to exit. Be seated on the front row. Place the candlelighter under your pew.
10. If there are two acolytes and one lighter goes out, the acolyte with the flame should light both candles.

During the service:

1. Sit quietly during the service. Pay attention and participate in the service as directed by those leading the worship.
2. Follow along in the bulletin so that you will be ready for the offering (after the Lord's Prayer) and the end of the service (beginning of the last verse of the recessional hymn).
3. At the end of the service when it is time to extinguish the candles, pick up the candlelighter and point the taper away from you.
4. Go behind the altar and pause in front of the cross. Gently nod before the cross.
5. Both acolytes should re-light their candlelighters. Please stay in sync with the other acolyte. Next, extinguish the candles by turning the candlelighter over and placing the bell over the flame.
6. If you are the only acolyte, re-light your candlelighter from the right hand candle. Then, extinguish the right and then the left candles by turning the candlelighter over and placing the bell over the flame.
7. After the closing hymn and the candles on the altar have been extinguished, acolytes should step down on to the floor level and wait for the benediction to be given by the pastor. After the benediction, the acolytes lead the procession out of the sanctuary.
8. When you enter the narthex, pull the taper into its metal stem and snuff out the flame.

During the offering:

1. Acolytes should carry the offering plates to the ushers following the Lord's Prayer. Stand quietly for the offertory prayer. Let the ushers take the offering plates from you.
2. Return to your seat.

After the service:

1. Put the candlelighter in the narthex closet where it is stored during the week.
2. Take off your vestments. Carefully and neatly **hang them on the hangers** in the closet.
3. Now would be a good time for saying a quick prayer to thank God for the opportunity to serve at the altar and to be involved in the ministry of this church. For example:

Dear God, thank you for being with me as I served as an acolyte today.

Help me to remember how important this is to your church. Amen.

PLEASE REMEMBER IT IS YOUR RESPONSIBILITY TO GET A REPLACEMENT FOR YOURSELF IF YOU CANNOT SERVE AS SCHEDULED. After you find a replacement, call the church office at 897-2835 to let them know who will be serving on your assigned Sunday.

8:30 a.m. Acolyte Coordinator: Catherine Barker 897-9766

11 a.m. Acolyte Coordinator: Beth Parsons 897-6359