

Acolyte Refresher Tips

2004-2005



Do You Need a Quick Refresher for Your Service as an Acolyte?

Here are the basics:

1. Try to arrive at least ten minutes before the start of the service at which you acolyte. Remember to alert your parents/driver about your important role on the day you serve. Keep in mind my encouragement to avoid distracting jewelry or behavior (like gum chewing) that is unsuitable for the service you offer.

2. Get a service folder/bulletin from one of the ushers, and check out what is happening in that service. For example, is communion part of the service? a baptism? is it a festival day with a procession (like Christmas or Easter)?

3. Go to the sacristy (small room beside the front of the church.) Choose an "alb" (robe) that fits you. For guys, especially, it works best to choose one that is nearly top-of-the-shoe-length. Young women can decide what looks best for them, probably this will be determined by whether they are wearing a skirt or slacks. Remember that guys are asked to AVOID wearing anything but full length trousers (no shorts) on days they serve as acolyte.

4. At the beginning of the organ music (prelude) before the service, it is time to light the candle-lighter, walk to the

center of the steps in front of the altar, pause for a moment of reverence, and light the candles on the altar. As you leave the altar area (sanctuary is its proper name) stop at the bottom of the steps for another moment of reverence before returning the lighter to its hanger in the sacristy. If there is a baptism, or if you are acolyting at a service in the season of Easter (the bulletin will tell you by the name of the day) also light the tall "Easter/Baptismal" candle on the stand at the right of the altar area.

5. When the candles are lit, please wait in the sacristy for the pastors. A prayer will be offered and you will follow them into the church. They go to the center of the altar area. YOU close the door, and are seated in the small pew behind the pulpit.

6. During the service you will be a participant in worship, standing and sitting and singing and speaking with the congregation as appropriate.

6.a. If there is a baptism, it happens early in the service. Please stand behind the baptism pastor to receive the pitcher when its water has been poured so you can return it to the small (credence) table, beneath the offering plates. Also, when the

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baptism with water happens, it is time for you to go to the right end of the altar, pick up a small candle that is lying there, and light it from the tall baptism candle. Shield it from the draft and bring it to the pastor who will, when the right time comes, take it from you to present to someone with the baptized person.

6.b. The offering is received shortly after the sermon (check your service folder, it says "Gathering our first and best, an offering to the Lord.") At that time you are to take the offering plates from the small table and bring them to meet the ushers at the small gate area in front of the altar area. Be seated after the plates have been given to the ushers. Usually, you will NOT have to worry about coordinating your return trip to retrieve the offering plates. The congregation (and you) will stand to sing an offering response as the users bring the plates forward. You meet them at the appointed spot, and bring the plates to the small table. As you leave the altar area, face the altar, and pause for a moment of reverence before you return to your seat behind the pulpit.

6.c. Communion services require you to take the empty silver communion tray (with holes in it for empty glasses) with you to the altar, right after the Lord's Prayer is said. At the altar you will receive communion by "intinction" (which is receiving the bread in your hand, and intincting [dipping] it into the wine or grape juice before eating bread and wine together. Your task during the distribution of bread and wine to the congregation will most often be to pick up empty communion glasses from

those who have received communion while kneeling. As your empty tray becomes full of emptied glasses, look for a subsequent tray that has been used to distribute communion glasses. There may be some wine or grape juice in glasses in the tray, but it is mostly empty and can be used to continue picking up emptied glasses. At the conclusion of the communion part of the service, return the tray in your hand to the pastor at the altar. There may be extraordinary situations that change this pattern. The pastor at the altar will instruct you if that is the situation.

6.d. On some festive occasions there are other responsibilities, such as being part of a procession, or of a Gospel procession. You will be contacted and instructed in that process in the week before that special service.

7. Extinguish candles. After the pastors have left the front of the church to greet worshipers at the door, you are to go to the sacristy, retrieve the candle lighter/snuffer, and repeat the process by which you lit the candles, except this time you extinguish them all. Please remember to pause for a moment of reverence at the bottom of the steps, when entering the altar area and when leaving it.

8. Hang up your alb on a hanger in a way that will make it look well-cared-for at its next use.

9. Accept my thanks for your good effort. I appreciate your service to God and to the community of those at worship on the day you handle this important ministry.

Dennis R. Nelson, Pastor

