

ACOLYTE HANDBOOK

Fall 2020


CHAPELWOOD
† Embodying grace.

Welcome

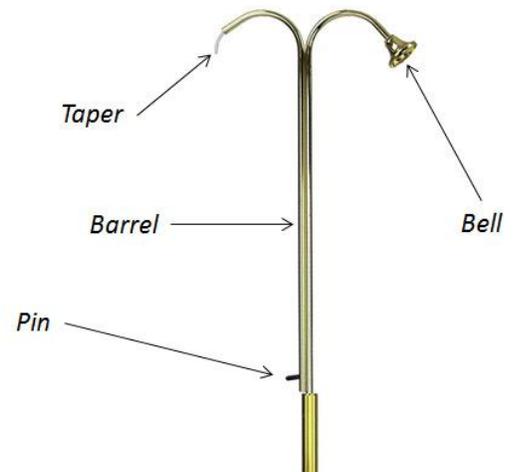
Thanks to all of you for dedicating yourself to serving God and your church. Your ministry is important because you will be helping everyone else in church worship God.

You are also becoming part of a tradition that is hundreds of years old!

Since ancient times, light and fire have reminded people that God is here with us. When you bring the flame into the sanctuary and light the candles, you are reminding the congregation of God's presence with us and the words of Jesus: "I am the light of the world." When you carry the flame out of the sanctuary at the end of the service, you are reminding the worshippers that the light of Christ does not stay in the Church; it travels out into the world. As followers of Christ, we take that light out into the world so others can see that Christ lives in us.

Equipment for Acolytes

A **candlelighter** is used to light and extinguish the candles on the altar. Inside of it is a long wick called a **taper**. The length of the taper is controlled by the **pin**. The candlelighter also includes a **bell** for snuffing out the candles. Care of the candlelighters is very important. If the tapers are not inserted correctly or if wax has melted down inside the **barrel**, they will jam. Check your candlelighter frequently to make sure the taper moves up and down smoothly. The taper should be at least 4" long for the service.



Acolytes wear **robes** with a **cincture** (a rope belt). The cincture color follows the liturgical colors used in the sanctuary. There is a sign in the sacristy to tell you which color to wear and there is a calendar with all the dates for when the color changes. Double check the color with the calendar as sometimes the sign doesn't get changed. Your robe should be long enough to cover your knees but not your ankles. Remember the size of your robe (A-F) so you can easily grab it when you arrive. The hangar and the robe are both labeled, please keep the hangar with the correct size robe.

Acolytes also wear a **cross**. You will be given a cross once you have been trained that yours to keep and wear every time you come to acolyte. Each year you will receive an additional cord to indicate your years of service as an acolyte:

- 1st year serving: green cord
- 2nd year: purple cord
- 3rd year: blue cord
- 4th year: red cord



Before the Worship Service

On the morning you are scheduled to acolyte, please be sure to arrive **25 minutes** before the service begins. If you are running late or have to cancel last minute, PLEASE text the acolyte coordinator to let them know: **Betsy Humphrey 713-822-8409**

For the 8:25 service, arrive at 8:00 a.m.; 11:10 service, arrive at 10:45 a.m.

Report to the Sacristy, use the door from the back behind the altar and choir loft.

If the door is locked, here is the combination: 1949. You can find this number on the portrait of Grady Hardin located in the hallway closest to the sacristy door. 1949 is the year Chapelwood was established and that year is on the plaque on the portrait.

Your acolyte robe should be a few inches above your ankles. Remove any jackets/sweaters you are wearing so tht your robe will fit comfortably. Give any items you have brought with you (bible, purse) to a parent or you may leave them on the floor under the acolyte robes.

Check the color sign and the calendar to determine which color cincture to wear. Wear your cross necklace (or the one provided). Select your candlelighter and make sure it works properly with a taper that is at least 4" long. When you are robed and ready to go, walk into the sanctuary from the Choir loft door and around the edge of the seating to the side aisle to get to the back. Say, "Hello" to an usher and wait on the wooden bench.

Bringing the Light of Christ into Worship

When the service begins the usher will let you know it is time to stand at the door to be ready for the procession. During the organ prelude or welcome and congregational greeting, you will stand between the large wooden doors to be ready to go. As the first hymn begins, the usher will light the taper on your candlelighter. When the singing starts, the usher will signal you to walk down the aisle.

Hold the candlelighter with both hands and support it against your side. It should be at about waist height, with the front end angled upward. For safety purposes, the candlelighter should be carried so that it is closest to the center of the aisle and far from people in the pews. If you have a partner, you should each have your candlelighters on your side towards the center of the aisle. Acolyting partners should try to walk at the same pace, so pay attention to what your partner is doing. As you walk down the center aisle, keep an eye on the height of the flame.

If the flame starts to get too low or looks like it is going out, do one or more of the following:

1. Slow down. If you are walking too fast, the wind you generate can blow the flame out. You have plenty of time, so there is no need to hurry.
2. Slowly push the pin on your candlelighter forward. This will increase the length of the taper and give the flame more room to burn.

Lighting the Altar Candles

When you reach the end of the aisle, walk up to the altar through the opening in the prayer rail. On communion Sundays and other special days, the prayer rail may be closed, so you will walk around the side by the angel and enter there. Stand in front of the altar and raise your candlelighter to light the candles. Light the inside candles closest to the center (closest to the cross) first and then light the outside candles. Hold the candlelighter up so that the flame touches the candle's wick. Keep the flame on the wick until you are sure that the candle is lit.

When both candles are lit, snuff out the flame by pulling the pin on the candlelighter and then pushing it out. Turn towards the angel statue and walk down from the altar. Place your candlelighter in the holder and sit in the pew on the first or second row at the side.

During the Service

Please remember that you are in God's house and are serving as an aid to the congregation during worship. Because you are in a robe, people will notice you during the service. You should not chew gum or have any food or drink when you are wearing your robe. You should participate in the service without distractions such as electronics, books, or friends. Be on your best behavior and be careful not to distract other worshipers with noise or movement.

Taking the Light of Christ out into the World

When the music for the closing hymn begins, go get your candlelighter from the stand, and walk up to the altar. Light the taper on your candlelighter off one of the candles, then slowly flip the candlelighter over and put the bell over the candle to snuff it out. The outer candles should be extinguished first, followed by the inner candles (closest to the cross).

The bell should not touch the candle top, it just needs to hover over to cut off the oxygen and put out the flame. If you mash the top of the candle, the wick can be damaged. Leave the bell in place for a couple of seconds, until you are sure that the candle has been extinguished. You may see a little bit of smoke come out from under the bell.

When you and your partner have extinguished the candles, turn toward the congregation. Walk back through (or around) the rail and down the aisle with the lit candlelighter while the hymn continues. When you reach the back of the church, pull the pin on the candlelighter to snuff out the flame. Proceed outside or around the perimeter of the sanctuary and return to the Sacristy.

As you take off your robe, carefully rehang it and try to return it to the same spot on the rack so the robes stay in size order. Place your cincture in the box below and candlelighter securely on the rack. If you borrowed a cross to wear, return that as well.

The Crucifer-Bringing in the Cross

For some services, there will be a crucifer, the person who carries in the large brass cross as part of the opening hymn procession. This will usually be done by a member of the choir or a 2nd or 3rd year acolyte. The crucifer will process a few steps in front of the acolytes.

The crucifer follows the same arrival times and robing guidelines as the acolytes. Instead of carrying the candlelighter, the crucifer will carry the cross which is kept in the sanctuary in a stand near the acolyte stand and the altar angel. The crucifer must get the cross from the holder before going to the back of the sanctuary for the procession.

When the opening hymn starts, the Crucifer lines up, cross in hand, with the acolytes and begins the procession when the usher releases them. The cross should be carried with both hands, and be straight up/down, about 6"-12" off the ground. The acolytes will follow when they are released by the usher as well.

When opening hymn procession reaches the front, the crucifer will walk up the steps and then turn to face the congregation, presenting the cross. The base of the cross can be lowered to the floor while the crucifer is standing still at the front. The acolytes continue up to the altar table to light the candles. After a brief period, the crucifer will lift the cross and walk from the altar to place the cross in its holder, next to the angel. Remain standing by the cross until the acolytes finish. When they start walking from the altar, the crucifer will walk to be seated.

The crucifer follows the same guidelines as the acolytes for behavior during the service: no chewing gum, food or drink, pay attention in the service, no electronic distractions.

As the closing hymn begins, the crucifer will stand to get the cross from the holder while the acolytes are getting their candlelighters ready. When the Acolytes walk up to the altar to extinguish the candles, the crucifer stands by the altar angel and waits. When the acolytes are done, the crucifer should move to the center aisle and begin the procession out with the acolytes following behind.

While the acolytes are able to leave when they reach the back of the sanctuary at the end of the service, the crucifer should will wait in the back until the very end when the pastor has given the benediction. When the service is completely over and people are starting to leave, the crucifer should return the cross to the holder at the front. Please be polite and respectful as you are walking back to the front. Use the side aisle and then go out on of the side doors to go back to the sacristy to change out of your robe.

Troubleshooting/Notes:

Here are some potential problems you might experience. *If the flame on your candlelighter goes out when processing in and out, don't panic!* You will need to decide what to do, depending on where you are and whether you have a partner. Here are some examples:

Problem: You are just starting down the center aisle and the flame goes out, but your partner's is still burning.

Solution: The two of you can stop, and your partner can relight your taper.

Problem: You are close to the front of the sanctuary and the flame goes out, but your partner's is still burning.

Solution: Continue walking to the altar. Your partner can relight your taper there, and then the two of you can light the altar candles as usual.

Problem: You are just starting down the center aisle when the flame goes out, and you don't have a partner.

Solution: Turn around and calmly walk back down the aisle. The usher will relight your taper and you can begin again.

Problem: You are close to the front of the sanctuary when the flame goes out, and you don't have a partner.

Solution: Continue walking to the altar. The minister will meet you and relight your taper.

Problem: Your flame goes out and you are unable to relight the wick..

Solution: Use your partners candlelighter after they have completed lighting their candles.

Problem: You are processing at the end of the service and your flame goes out.

Solution: Not really a problem, just keep processing out.

There is no one "right" way to handle things – just use your best judgment! These things happen, so don't be upset or worry about making a "mistake." If you act like it is no big deal, then it won't be!

Note to Parents

Please go over these instructions with your child prior to arriving at church on the morning they are scheduled to acolyte. They may need a refresher, and once they are at church they tend to be more focused on getting situated with their robe and candlelighter than listening to instructions. You are welcome to sit in the pew with your child, but it is not necessary. If you choose to do so, please be sure to leave space for acolyte(s) to sit together at the end of the aisle so that they can get in and out easily during the service.

How often can an acolyte serve?

Ideally one time per month is a great level of service. As acolytes have more routine experience serving in worship, they become more comfortable and confident with their role in worship.

Acolytes are needed to serve each week at the 8:25 and 11:10 services. There is a Signup.com created for selecting dates and times when your acolyte will serve. Parents, here is where you really can help: Take a moment to plan with your acolyte and select dates/times for several months in advance. If your acolyte is able to serve 5 times/semester, they will receive a special surprise! Make this a special year for your family to attend worship together with your acolyte and watch them grow in their love for serving in worship.

The Signup.com link can be found on the website: chapelwood.org/acolyte.

There is also an acolyte button in the App that will link to the webpage and the Signup.



chapelwoodchildren.org/app

SUBSPASH®

Acolyte Coordinator:

Betsy Humphrey

bhumphrey@chapelwood.org

713-827-3919 (Office, Mon-Thurs)

713-822-8409 (cell, call or text)

Any time you are running late or sick and unable to make it, please call and text the Acolyte Coordinator.