

# YOUTH ACOLYTE HANDBOOK



# ST. GEORGE'S EPISCOPAL CHURCH

# Thank you!

Thank you for serving with the acolyte ministry at St. George's, and thank you also to parents and family members who are an important part of our acolyte community!

The role of acolyte or altar server has a long history going all the way back to the early church, and has always been important in helping the clergy and the congregation in worship and in the celebration of the Eucharist. The word "acolyte" comes from a Greek word that means "attendant", a person who accompanies another person in order to help and assist. Our acolytes assist with the details and logistics of worship, and also begin our time together each Sunday by leading us all into the service. Their contribution to the liturgy, carrying the symbols of cross and torches in procession, inspires the whole congregation to enter into worship and set this time aside for God.

We hope that serving will inspire each acolyte to deepen his or her faith and relationship with God, to learn more about the worship service and the traditions of the church, and to become a leader in worship. We also hope that the acolyte family will provide a community of friends and peers in faith that can support each acolyte on his or her journey.

Welcome!

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## Goals for youth acolytes:

- ❖ Learn the flow of the worship service and develop an understanding of what happens when, and why
- ❖ Be able to ask informed questions about the order of worship, or anything else relating to our worship tradition
- ❖ Progress in experience and knowledge from torchbearer to crucifer to server
- ❖ Serve the congregation and the clergy well; be helpful and efficient; and serve God by assisting in worship
- ❖ Take on a leadership role with age and experience, assisting younger acolytes
- ❖ Be responsible and take ownership over signing up, finding substitutes, being on time, and preparing to serve
- ❖ Grow in the love of God and in faith and reverence through participation in acolyte ministry

## General rules for youth acolytes:

- ❖ Model reverent behavior
- ❖ Respect your vestments
- ❖ Do not play with fire
- ❖ Do not run or hurry (unless something is on fire)
- ❖ Be helpful
- ❖ Remember why you are serving (to assist the congregation and to celebrate the love of God)

# **Know your cues: A shorthand guide to the service**

(a much more complete guide appears in the following pages)

## **When:**

- Priest arrives at the back of the church
- Singing (not just organ) begins

## **Then:**

- Cross and torches are lifted
- Process up the aisle

- 
- Organ begins playing gradual hymn (for the Gospel procession)
  - Priest starts coming down with the Gospel book
  - The crucifer arrives in the center of the Nave
  - Priest lowers the Gospel book and steps aside

- Pick up cross and torches and line up at center altar
- Turn and process out into the aisle
- Turn to face the priest
- Process back up to the altar

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- Ushers bring the gifts (bread and wine) to the altar

- Get collection plates to hand to ushers

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- The offertory (collection and bringing up the contributions) is going on
  - Priest puts tray to the side or holds it out
  - The celebrant invites people to communion and says “the gifts of God for the people of God” (or similar)

- Server (if there is one) brings tray from the credence table to the altar
- Server takes the tray back to the credence table
- Server brings the bowl and additional chalices from the credence table to the altar
- Torchbearers close altar rails and pull kneeler cushions into place at the center and Gospel side (before the choir come to the rail).
- Crucifer (if not server) crosses to epistle side
- Crucifer or server closes the remaining altar rail and moves the kneeler cushion
- Receive communion at the rail; crucifer returns to Gospel side
- Stand by the steps and be prepared to help individuals get up or down the stairs
- Open the communion rails and move the cushions back

- Intercessors finish receiving and move to the small Sacristy
- The choir (or first group kneeling at the rail) comes to receive communion
- Acolytes have taken communion
- Communion is finished

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- Organ begins playing recessional hymn
  - Singing (not just organ) begins
  - Choir begins to leave the choir area

- Pick up cross and torches and line up at center altar
- Cross and torches are lifted
- Turn and process out

# Before you serve:

## Scheduling:

Acolytes for the 10:30 service are scheduled on a rotation to ensure as much fairness as possible. The schedule will be emailed out by the acolyte coordinator, ideally before the beginning of each quarter, and will be entered by the acolyte coordinator onto the St. George's worship ministries page on Sign-Up Genius: <http://www.signupgenius.com/>. Sign-Up Genius will send a notification that the acolyte has been scheduled, and will also send a reminder the week of the scheduled service.

Acolytes and families may use Sign-Up Genius (1) as requested by the acolyte coordinator to volunteer for special extra services, such as Holy Week or Christmas, or (2) in the case of a switch or substitute (see below). A sign-up page will look like this for each date:

Date	Service	Time	Role	Status		
10/6/2013 (Sun)	8 AM Sunday Eucharist	8:00AM - 9:00AM	Celebrant	✓ shearon williams		
			Preacher	✓ Rev. John Shelito		
			Acolyte	✓ John Charchman		
			Eucharistic Minister	✓ Norma Kazen		
			Lector	✓ George DePippi		
			Intercessor (2)	1 of 2 slots filled ✓ George DePippi Sign Up		
			Ushers	Sign Up		
			Alter Guild Saturday (2)	All slots filled ✓ Thereso Stark ✓ Ann Gray		
			Alter Guild Sunday Eam Clean 10:30 Setup (2)	1 of 2 slots filled ✓ John Charchman Sign Up		
			10:30 am Eucharist	10:30AM - 12:00AM	Celebrant	✓ shearon williams
					Preacher	✓ Rev. John Shelito
					Acolytes - Torchbearers (2)	Sign Up
					Acolyte - Crucifer	Sign Up
					Eucharistic Ministers (2)	1 of 2 slots filled ✓ Lea Peak Sign Up
Lector First Reading	✓ Toby Walter					
Lector Second Reading	✓ Michael Woods					
Intercessors (2)	All slots filled ✓ Dennis Fish ✓ Grace King					
Ushers (4)	1 of 4 slots filled ✓ Donald Steery Sign Up					
Kids Gospel Time - Adult Lead	✓ Carrie Thomas					
Kids Gospel Time - Assistant	✓ Maddie Boerckel					
Coffee Hour Hosts	✓ Carrie Thomas					
Alter Guild 10:30 Clean	All slots filled					

**Torchbearers** will be signed up in the spots for Torchbearers, and those who serve as **crucifer** will sign up in that slot, for the 10:30 am Eucharist. You may register with the site, in which case Sign-Up Genius

will remember your name, or you may sign up without registering by re-entering your information each time.

**Switching and substitutions:**

If an acolyte cannot make a date for which he or she is scheduled on the rotation, please arrange a substitute ahead of time and tell the acolyte coordinator (you may also make the change on Sign-Up Genius if you wish). Typically, a change must be made by Thursday morning in order to be reflected on the service leaflet for that week. We encourage *switching* dates with another acolyte (rather than just asking them to cover your date) to ensure everyone is still serving roughly the same number of times, and no one bears more of the burden than others. Please do your best to ensure that a substitute is lined up and will be present to serve (don't just tell the group you can't make it and leave it there).

**Emergencies happen.** If you wake up sick on Sunday morning or have an emergency, just do your best to alert someone that a substitute will be needed.

## Serving on Sunday:

Note: There are usually three acolytes scheduled at the 10:30 service – a **crucifer**, who carries the processional cross and may also act as **server**, helping the clergy and lay Eucharistic ministers with setting the altar for communion, and two **torchbearers** who carry the torches, light the altar candles, hand down the offering plates, move the kneelers and altar rail into position, and provide a helping hand at the stairs during communion.

### Before the service:

1. **Arrive at least 15-20 minutes before the service begins.**
2. Check to make sure there is a hymnal, prayer book, and service leaflet at your place in the acolytes' chairs on the left (Gospel) side of the altar.
3. Assemble in the sacristy to put on your vestments. The **crucifer** should check to make sure all acolytes are present and find substitutes if necessary (or alert the acolyte coordinator or the priest). Once all acolytes are dressed, the crucifer should gather them together and ensure everyone is focused.
4. One **torchbearer** goes to light the tall candles on the altar. The candle on the left (Gospel candle) isn't supposed to stand alone, so the acolyte lights the candle on the right (Epistle side) first, and then the candle on the left. The torches may also be lit at this time, but should be left in place. Younger torchbearers should ensure an adult is present with them at the altar before using matches.
5. **Acolytes** gather with the choir and the rest of the altar party in the big sacristy with clergy and choir at 10:20 for prayer and final instructions.
6. After prayer, the altar party will move to the back of the church. **Acolytes** will collect the processional cross and torches from the front, then carry them quietly and reverently down the side aisle. Stand back from the main doors to allow people to enter the church.
7. During the silence after the priest's greeting, **crucifer and torchbearers** move into position at the end of the aisle, with the **crucifer** in the center and a **torchbearer** on each side.

### The entrance procession:

1. When the priest arrives at the back of the church after making the announcements, the **crucifer** raises the cross and **torchbearers** raise the torches into position. The brass part of the stick should be over your head, and you should adjust the torches to be at the same height, even if one torchbearer is taller. Always use two hands to support the weight of the cross or torch and keep it vertical and high. **This is the organist's cue to begin the opening hymn.**
2. The organist plays through one verse of the hymn with no singing. Don't move forward until the singing starts.
3. When the singing begins, process with dignity (not too fast, not too slow) down the center aisle. Move as if the three of you are one unit. The choir will follow.
4. When you get to the front of the church, keep going up the steps. Stop briefly at the altar rail (don't try to bow!) and then turn left. The leftmost **torchbearer** will start off to the side, and the **crucifer** and other **torchbearer** will follow.
5. The **crucifer** secures the cross in its stand by the pulpit and the **torchbearers** put the torches in their stands before moving to their seats behind the pulpit.



### During the service:

1. Follow the service and participate in the readings and singing unless you are actively doing an acolyte task. Model reverent behavior, sitting or standing **still** and **attentively**. Remember that you are “on stage” and do not let your posture, moving around, or talking distract from the service. Take your cue from the priests and other adults in the altar party.
2. When you have a job to do, move calmly and deliberately, and look like you know what you are doing (even if you aren’t sure). If something goes wrong – cover it up. If you don’t remember what to do – fake it! If there is a priest sitting on the Gospel side, you can also (quietly, and without interrupting their prayer) ask them for help.
3. The **crucifer** should pay attention to the **torchbearers** and help them when necessary, or give gentle (and quiet!) reminders about appropriate behavior.

### The Gospel procession:

1. After the second (New Testament) lesson, the gradual hymn is sung. When the organist plays the introduction, the **crucifer** and **torchbearers** pick up the torches and the cross from their stands and process with the **crucifer** in the middle to line up at the center of the altar rail, facing the altar. The cross and torches may rest on the altar step.
2. When the priest has collected the Gospel book and is coming down the altar steps toward the acolytes, acolytes turn and process down the aisle with the priest following. Everyone should turn toward their left shoulder.
3. About halfway down the aisle, the priest will stop. The **torchbearers** also stop, on or near the black tiles, and turn to face inward slightly in front of the priest, with the candles “lighting” the Gospel book. The **crucifer** moves a few steps further and then stops and turns around to face the priest.
4. When the priest raises the book to read, the torches and cross can rest on the floor.
5. At the end of the Gospel, the **torchbearers** raise their torches when the priest lowers the book. The priest steps aside to let the **crucifer** and **torchbearers** lead the procession back to the altar. All stop briefly at the altar in the same way as in the earlier procession before putting away the cross and torches and returning to their seats.

### The Offertory and Communion:

1. During the Peace, if the **crucifer** is acting as **server**, he or she moves to the Epistle side of the altar near the credence table.
2. After the Peace, when the priest invites people to make their offerings, a **torchbearer** should pick up the collection plates and be ready to give them to the ushers. Two ushers, or a group of parishioners accompanied by ushers, will carry the elements (bread and wine) up to the altar and go back down the stairs. The ushers will stand at the foot of the stairs. Hold the plates out to them, lifting the top plate slightly so the usher can easily pick it up. Move across until all four plates have been taken by an usher. (If there are fewer than four ushers, put the extra plates back where they came from.)
3. During the offertory, while the choir sings the anthem, the **server** will carry the silver tray from the credence table to the altar and either hand it to the priest or set it on the altar. *If no one is acting as server, a Eucharistic Minister will do this.*
4. When the priests have finished with the cruets on the tray, they will either push the tray to one side of the altar or hold it out to the **server**. The **server will** walk up the steps to the altar, take the tray, and replace it on the credence table.

5. After the choir anthem is over and the offering has been brought up to the altar, the priest says the prayer of consecration. After the Lord's Prayer, the Priest holds up the bread and breaks it and the congregation sings the fraction anthem ("Christ our Passover is sacrificed for us . . ."). After the priest invites people to come to communion ("The gifts of God for the people of God"):
  - A. the **server** carries up the silver bowl and additional chalices (with purificator) from the credence table to the altar. The priest either will reach out for the bowl and chalice, or the server will just walk up the steps and place them on the edge of the altar;
  - B. the **torchbearers** close the Gospel side and center altar rails, and move the kneeling cushions into place, before the choir lines up at the rail; and
  - C. the **crucifer** (if not acting as server) crosses to the Epistle side near the credence table. If the torchbearers need help, the crucifer may assist them before crossing.
6. The intercessors will take communion inside the rail and then will exit the altar. The **crucifer** (or **server**) closes the Epistle side altar rail, and moves the kneeling cushion into place, as soon as they have exited.
7. The **acolytes** take communion at the rail in the first group, usually with the choir.
8. After they take communion, the **torchbearers** stand near each set of steps on the side opposite the handrail to help people if necessary . Always offer an arm and let the other person take it, instead of grabbing them. Look attentive and friendly, and don't slouch or lean on the lectern or pulpit.
9. After taking communion, the **crucifer/server** returns to the Gospel side and waits attentively near the aumbry in case the priest needs something. Sometimes the priest will give the **crucifer** a key and ask him/her to get more wine or communion wafers from the aumbry.
10. When the last group leaves the Gospel side communion rail, the **crucifer** quickly moves the kneeler cushions and opens the altar rail on that side.
11. The **torchbearers** watch carefully to see when everyone is finished with communion, and open the remaining altar rails (and move the cushions) as soon as everyone is finished. The clergy need to get out to take communion to those in the congregation who can't come to the altar, and will do so using the first side that is opened, so it's important to be alert.
12. While the altar is being cleared, the **crucifer** should carry the offering plates to the table under the aumbry (where they came from).

### The recessional:

1. At the beginning of the closing hymn, the **crucifer** and **torchbearers** pick up the cross and torches just like at the Gospel procession, and stand facing the altar during the introductory organ music.
2. When the singing begins, acolytes raise the cross and torches but wait a few seconds to give the choir time to catch up. When the choir has started singing and is approaching the corner of the rail, turn (just like at the Gospel procession) and start walking slowly down the aisle.
3. Wait at the back of the church through the rest of the hymn and the dismissal. The cross and torches may rest on the floor.

### After the service:

1. After the dismissal, carry the cross and torches up the left side aisle to the front and put them in their stands. Blow the torches out.
2. One **torchbearer** extinguishes the tall candles on the altar – the one on the left (Gospel side) first.
3. If you are the **crucifer** or **server**, give constructive feedback to junior members of your team as needed.
4. Take off your robes and hang them up neatly in the closet the way you found them (or nicer). Tell the acolyte coordinator if any vestments need to be cleaned or repaired.

## **The rest of the year:**

**Scheduled check-ins** are an opportunity for the acolyte community to come together to share joys and concerns, talk about upcoming challenges and events, and learn new things. Please do your best to attend – dates will be shared as far in advance as possible. Parents are welcome.

**Read your acolyte newsletter.** Parents, please read it with younger acolytes. It will contain tips, reflections, and kudos for jobs well done.

If you have questions or concerns – don't wait for the next check-in! Talk to the acolyte coordinator or the clergy anytime.

## **Important terms:**

**Acolyte:** from Greek meaning a follower or attendant – an attendant who assists at the altar.

**Aumbry:** the cupboard in the wall, near where the torches are kept, to store sacred vessels, additional communion bread, etc.

**Credence table:** the side table on the Epistle side of the altar that holds the chalices, etc.; this comes from a word meaning “belief” (same as the word “creed”).

**Crucifer:** from Latin words for “cross” and “carry”.

**Epistle:** Greek for “letter”; refers to the many New Testament readings which are letters to the early churches.

**Gradual hymn:** from the Latin for “step;” the hymn sung during the Gospel procession (i.e., while stepping).

**Intercessors:** people who pray with and on behalf of others; at St. George's, people who pray with the laying on of hands in the small sacristy during communion.

**Nave:** the main area of the church used by the congregation (this actually comes from the Latin word for “ship” because someone thought the shape was similar to the shape of a ship!).

**Sacristy:** area where vestments and other articles are kept; at St. George's, the “small sacristy” is right off the church on the Epistle side, while the “large sacristy” is the room where vestments are kept.