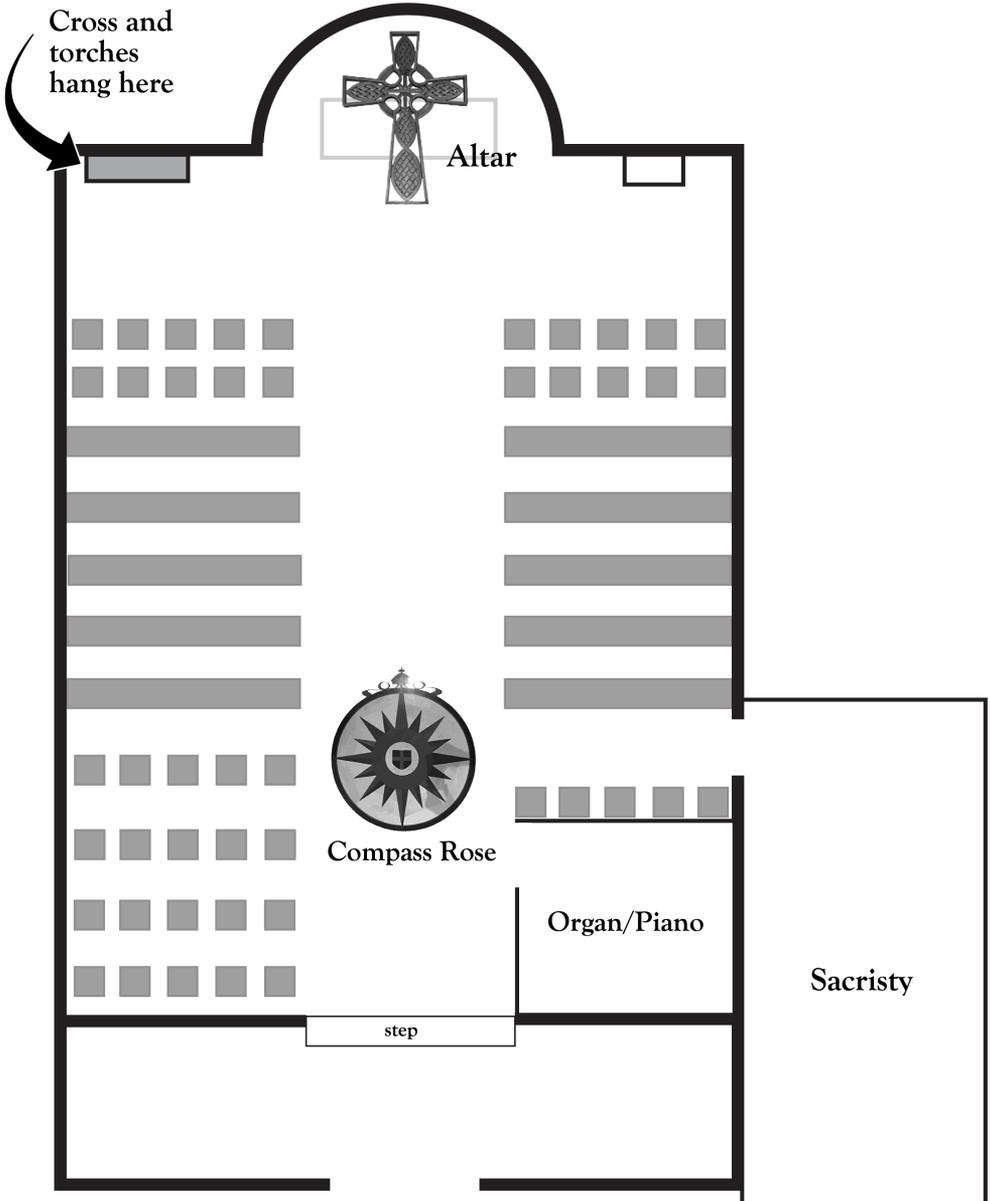


SO YOU WANT TO BE AN ACOLYTE

A Guide for the
“Liturgically Perplexed”





CHRIST EPISCOPAL CHURCH

Introduction.

Thank you so much for volunteering to be an acolyte at Christ Episcopal Church! A good acolyte is both a *leader* and a *helper*. Acolyting can also be a fun way to serve God and learn about the liturgy of God's people. Here are a few pointers to get you started:

- Please plan to arrive at least 15 minutes before the service starts on the week that you are scheduled to serve.
- Robes are in the vesting closet (see the diagram on the opposite page if you need help finding it). Children's robes are on the right side of the closet; adult's robes are on the left.
- About 5 - 10 minutes before the service starts, light the altar candles. There is usually a lighter to the left of the altar, near where the cross and torches hang on the wall.
- If there is only one person serving as an acolyte, they serve as the crucifer.
- If there are two acolytes, one serves as the crucifer and the other serves as a torch-bearer.
- If there are three, one serves as crucifer and the other two serve as torch-bearers.
- When there are more than three acolytes serving, the additional acolytes may carry the Gospel book or other items, like an icon. Anyone who wants to be an acolyte can do so, as long as they know how.
- During the service, acolytes may be seated in the front row on the east side of the building with the other Worship ministers.

Above all, remember these two "rules":

- 1) If you're not sure — just ask someone!
- 2) If you mess up — don't worry! God won't be offended, and we won't be, either.

The Jobs.

Crucifer

The crucifer carries the cross. Because Jesus always goes before us to show us the Way, the crucifer is always the first person in line during a procession. If you are serving as the crucifer, one of the first things you'll notice is that people in the pews will bow as you walk by. That's a sign of respect for God's Son.



Torch-bearer(s)

Torch-bearers carry the large candles that usually hang at the front of the sanctuary to the left of the altar. There may be one or two torch-bearers on any given Sunday. Just like how the cross of Jesus goes ahead of us, the torch is like the light of Christ showing us the path ahead.

Book-bearer

If we're blessed with an abundance of acolytes, we might need a book-bearer. If someone has already been chosen to serve as the crucifer and we already have two torch-bearers, a fourth acolyte carries the Gospel book as we process into the sanctuary.



Procession. It's like a fancy parade for Jesus.



There are *three times* in the service that acolytes process: at the beginning of the service, at the Gospel reading, and at the end of the service.

At the beginning of the service

Procession into the church is lead by the crucifer, followed by the torch-bearers and additional acolytes, then the Eucharistic Minister and the Celebrant (see the diagram on p.6). When processing into the church, walk slowly. A good rule of thumb is to wait until the person ahead of you reaches the “compass rose” (see the diagram at the front of this booklet) before moving forward.

At the Gospel Reading

The Gospel procession is lead by the crucifer and followed by the torch-bearers, the Eucharistic Minister, and the Celebrant. This procession stops in the middle of the church, where the Gospel is read by the Celebrant or by a deacon. After the reading, the procession moves back to the front of the church in the same order (crucifer, torch-bearers, EM, and Celebrant).

At the end of the service

After the final blessing and during the recessional hymn, an acolyte puts out the candles on the altar, and then the procession out of the church begins. The procession exits the church in the same order they came in.

Helping out with the Eucharist.

Sometimes acolytes are asked to help the priest at the altar during communion. At the offertory (the hymn sung while the offering is being collected), an acolyte comes forward to serve at the altar and helps the celebrant with the following:

- Setting the altar
- Ringing the Sanctus bell
- Bringing more bread and wine to the priest and the eucharistic minister if they run out.
- Putting the altar back in order after communion.

Setting the altar

A Eucharistic Minister will usually help you determine what needs to be done to ready the altar for communion.

Ringling the Sanctus bell

The sanctus bell is rung three times: First, during the Sanctus (when the congregation sings “Holy, holy, holy Lord...”); second, after the words of institution for the bread (“Do this for the remembrance of me.”); and lastly, after the words of institution for the wine (“Do this for the remembrance of me.”).

More bread and wine

Communion wafers are kept in a small bread tin called a “ciborium,” and communion wine is kept in a bottle called a cruet. During communion, a ciborium and a cruet of wine will usually be on the back rail behind the altar. If the priest or the eucharistic minister asks for more bread or

wine, you can help by retrieving the requested items.

Re-setting the altar

A Eucharistic Minister will usually help you determine what needs to be done to clean up the altar following communion.

At the End of the Service

An acolyte uses the bell-shaped end of the candle-lighter (usually hanging in the corner by the torches) to extinguish the altar candles, then the final procession gathers and exits the church.

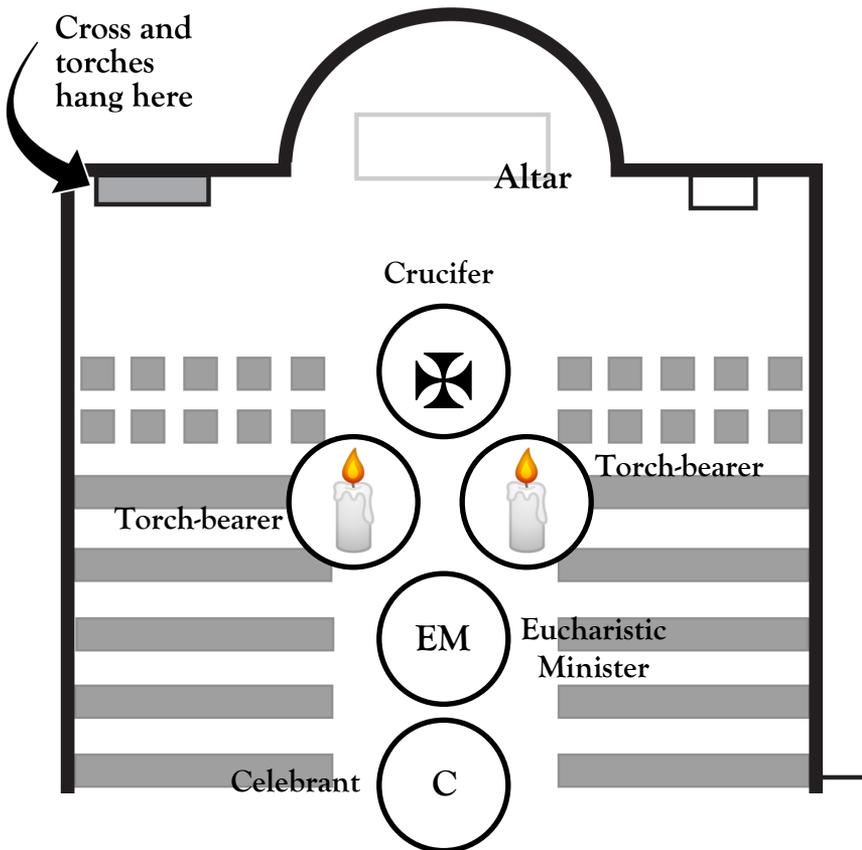
Above all, though, remember these two rules:

- If you need help, just ask someone!
- If you mess up, don't worry! We all make mistakes. God still loves you, and so do we.



HOW TO PROCESS INTO THE CHURCH

Remember: Walk slowly, standing up straight. Wait near the back door of the church until the person in front of you reaches the compass rose, then you can move forward.



HOW TO TIE A CINCTURE

Below is a diagram illustrating how to tie a cincture rope after you have put on your alb. You might want to practice in front of a mirror at home.



Fold cincture in half



Wrap around waist with knots on your right side



Grab end of loop made by the fold and overlap as shown



Using right hand, slip loop over left hand, keeping hold of cincture



Grab knotted end with your right hand



Slip knotted ends through loop (where left hand is making sure that single loop is on top of double cincture.) Feed knotted ends through loop from top to bottom



Drop loop and then tighten around waist



Knot is on left hip

Glossary.

Alb

A long, white robe worn by the priest, worship leaders, and acolytes. It is fastened up the front and often is tied with a rope around the waist called a cincture.

Altar Guild

Church volunteers who serve God by preparing the chancel for worship, preparing for the sacraments, and caring for the liturgical worship items and supplies.

Book-bearer

The person who carries the large Gospel book into, and out of, the sanctuary.

Celebrant

The person leading, or “celebrating” the worship service.

Chalice

A large cup from which the wine (“the blood of Christ”) is distributed. Most often it is made of silver; however, it may also be made from glass or clay.

Chancel

The altar-area of the church sanctuary, extending from the altar rail to the altar of the church. This area is the host place for the Holy Communion.

Crucifer

The person who carries the processional Cross into, and out of, the sanctuary at the beginning and end of the worship service. This person is vested in a cassock.

Eucharistic Minister

A layperson from the congregation who works with the pastor in leading the worship life of the congregation.

Narthex

The narthex is the lobby area, before entering the nave, located at the opposite end of the church's main altar. (See Nave, next line below.)

Nave

This is the part of the church where the congregation sits.

Paten

A plate from which the bread or wafers ("the body of Christ") is distributed.

Procession/Recession

The procession or parade of persons entering the church sanctuary at the beginning of worship service. The order of movement is: (1) the crucifer, (2) the Bible bearer, (3) the acolyte(s), (4) the lay worship assistant(s), and (5) the pastor(s).

Sacristy

The worship supplies for the church are stored and prepared in this area of the church by the members of the Altar Guild.

Torch-bearer

The torch-bearer carries the torches. These are large candles that hang in the sanctuary to the left of the chancel (see the diagram at the front of this booklet).

Verger

The large lighted candles that follow the processional Cross into and out of the sanctuary at worship services.

Vestments

The clothing worn by those who lead and assist in worship services.



**CHRIST
EPISCOPAL
CHURCH**

Cape Girardeau, Missouri

*"A community forgiven and loved by God,
joyfully called to the work of reconciliation."*

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