

When you serve God by serving as an acolyte, you are doing more than carrying a flame to the altar candles. You are symbolically bringing the light of Christ's spirit into the worship service. I hope that by serving as an acolyte, you will be filled with a sense of spiritual meaning and fulfillment. You will make new friends, have fun, and through your commitment grow in service to our church. I hope this manual will provide a quick reference for you as you begin your journey as an acolyte. If you have any questions, please do not hesitate to contact our acolyte coordinator, Jill Ingram @ 650-8607 or [jill@clevelandumc.com](mailto:jill@clevelandumc.com).

You have made an important promise to First United Methodist Church by agreeing to serve as an acolyte. I welcome you and thank you for helping in this very significant position.

### Background

An acolyte is a person who assists in the worship service. Normally, the acolyte serves by lighting and extinguishing the candles on the altar table and by carrying in the cross. Occasionally, an acolyte also may assist in other portions of the worship service.

It is the custom in our church for acolytes to be young boys and girls who are in about the third through seventh grades. However, teens and adults also may serve as acolytes.

### **DID YOU KNOW?**

The acolyte ministry originated from Old Testament times. The Scriptures tell us of the prophet Samuel assisting Eli the priest, and of Elijah being assisted by Elisha. The word "acolyte" comes from the Greek word "akolouthos," which means a servant or attendant who waits on another.

# When You Are An Acolyte

## Looking Good!

- ⌚ Boys should wear slacks with dark socks and dress shoes. (No running shoes, athletic shoes, sandals, shorts or jeans.)
- ⌚ Girls also should wear appropriate shoes with skirts/dresses or slacks. (No flip flops, spike heels, jeans or shorts.)
- ⌚ Hair should be neatly combed, regardless of length or style.

## Arriving and Robing:

- ⌚ On the mornings you are scheduled to serve as an acolyte, please be sure to arrive no later than 20 minutes prior to the service. If you have not arrived 15 minutes before the service is scheduled to begin, another acolyte will be asked to take your place.
- ⌚ Pick up a bulletin from an usher.
- ⌚ Report to the choir room and select a robe that comes to mid-calf. (Any longer and you will have to pull it up in order to walk—that's a problem when you need your hands to hold the torch!
- ⌚ Also select a collar (the white part that goes over it) There should be sizes posted in case you forget what size you wear.
- ⌚ Pick up your candlelighter. The cross sits outside the sanctuary door in the narthex.

## Remember the Three P's Please:

- ⌚ **Punctuality** is important. When you arrive on time, everything flows more smoothly.
- ⌚ **Pay attention.** It helps to take a few minutes before the service to familiarize yourself with the order of worship found in the bulletin. This will help you stay on top of things and know where you are in the service so that you will be prepared—and it will help you anticipate any last-minute changes.
- ⌚ **Participate.** You will soon find that by being prompt and alert, you will have few problems. Most importantly, don't forget to worship God. That's why we are here!

## Lighting and Extinguishing the Candles

- ⌚ Check your candle wicks and caps, making sure they are secure and in proper working order.
- ⌚ Two acolytes lead the procession into the church during the prelude from the back center door of the sanctuary. An usher will light the candlelighter for you and a minister will let you know when it is time to begin processing. Once you've entered the sanctuary, walk slowly toward the altar table. This makes it easier for the ministers to process to their seats, as they walk behind you. The acolyte holding the cross goes first, then the candle second. Try to keep your torch at the same height and hold the cross up high and steady. The pace of the procession should be slow, steady and dignified, taking about one normal-sized step per second. Try to walk in a steady and controlled manner.
- ⌚ Upon reaching the altar, the acolytes should light the right candle first, then the left one last. You will need to hold the flame to the candle for a little while, as the candles can take awhile to light. If your flame burns out during the processional, don't worry, just ask the pastor to help you relight it. The person carrying the cross will walk behind the stand and GENTLY place the stick in the hole. Wait patiently if one finishes before the other. Both acolytes should go up and leave at the same time.
- ⌚ Once both candles are lit, an acolyte will snuff out the flame on the torch then immediately push the wick back out to ensure that the wick does not melt inside its brass holder and become inoperative. Acolytes will then take a seat on the front center pew on their respective sides of the center aisle, and quietly place the torch underneath the pew for the duration of the service. When it is time to take up the offering, one acolyte (decide who ahead of time) will walk up and take the offering plates from Pastor and give them to ushers. During the Doxology, they will stand back up and take them from ushers and hand them to Pastor.
- ⌚ As the congregation begins to sing the final hymn, prepare for the recessional by picking up the candlelighter. As the congregation begins singing the second verse, (Ms. Pat will be there to tell you when) both acolytes will walk directly to the center of the altar. Again, please try to time your walking so that you both arrive at the same time. At this point, you will first light your wick, then extinguish the left candle first, then the right candle. The person carrying the cross will gently pick the cross back up. You will carry them both out of the sanctuary when the pastors are ready.
- ⌚ Please return to the robe closet and neatly hang up your robe and vestment, and place the cross back in the stand. The candlelighters are stored in the closet and are hung on the wall.

# A Few Reminders

- 🕒 If you are unable to serve as scheduled, please make sure you call and switch with someone else and let Ms Jill or the church office know
- 🕒 Arrive at least 20 minutes before the service begins.
- 🕒 Make sure you are properly robed.
- 🕒 Before the service, pick up a copy of the bulletin and place it on your pew.
- 🕒 Be aware of what is going on during the service at all times.
- 🕒 At the conclusion of the service, make sure the robes and candlelighters are returned to their places.
- 🕒 **HAVE FUN AND ENJOY YOURSELF!**