



# **Saint Paul's Episcopal Church**

## **Acolyte Guild Manual**

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### **A Prayer for Acolytes:**

O God, our gracious Father:

Bless the Servers of your church that they may so serve before your earthly altar in reverence and holiness, that they may attain, with all your saints and angels, the joy of serving you and worshipping you before your Heavenly Altar, through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

### **Mission Statement of Saint Paul's Church Acolyte Guild**

We assist the priests at God's Table and the congregation throughout the service. Leading by our example of dignity and reverence; thereby proclaiming the Good News of our Lord Jesus Christ's Love.

An acolyte serves God through his service in the church. Acolyte means "one who serves". The acolytes are instrumental in helping the services to run smoothly. Acolytes also aid in *the worship of the other Congregation members*. Acolytes are leaders in the church through the examples they set at the altar.

Thank you for using your talents to serve Christ and the Church.

*"Each one should use whatever gift he has received to serve others, faithfully administering God's grace in its various forms."*

*1 Peter 4:10 (NIV)*

(Note: For brevity, "He" is used for "he or she" throughout this manual.)

### **COMMITMENT:**

Acolytes understand and agree that they are expected to perform the duties of this ministry faithfully as a personal commitment of their time and talent in the service of the Lord. This includes not only serving on the day they are scheduled but also learning about being an acolyte through reading and training.

### **Vesting:**

On your appointed Sunday, please wear appropriate clothing. An appropriately dressed and vested acolyte *looks so much more reverent and dignified. The main part of your personal clothing showing is your shoes*. Please wear black closed toe shoes. Young women should wear flats if possible.

***Arrival time: It is essential that the acolytes arrive by 15 minutes before the service. At 10 minutes before the service, all final decisions on assignments are made. After that time, it is too late to reassign.***

When vesting, find the alb (robe) that fits you the best. The alb should fall between mid-calf and your ankle. The albs are numbered according to their size. Try to remember the number of the alb that fits and wear that one each time you serve. Try to keep the robes from dragging on the floor as you dress.

The cincture should be at your waist and the knot should be at your left side. Select the correct cross for your position: Torchbearers wear the wooden crosses; Crucifers wear the Celtic crosses; the Server wears the large silver cross.

The Server wears gloves.

On special occasions, all acolytes will wear gloves.

### **Reverence:**

Nothing is more important to emphasize than the need for reverence. This is a service to worship the Lord. It is to be solemn and dignified. The acolyte is helping lead in that worship. Any distraction is noticed by the congregation and disturbs their worship. A wrong turn or wrong action is not nearly so significant as a yawn, a laugh, a scratch, or a slumped posture. (Imagine how distracting it is to the priest reading the communion words, if in his peripheral vision, he sees or hears acolytes whispering.)

Hands can best be controlled by folding them in the lap. Necessary yawns should always be covered with the hand.

The torches and the crosses must always be carried properly, even before and after the service. There are hundreds of “no-nos” (twirling the cincture, yawning, hand gestures, fidgeting), but it should be put in positive terms: ***participate reverently in the service.***

### **Scheduling**

The general goal is that each acolyte serves about one time per month. After receiving the dates that the Acolytes are available to serve the monthly scheduling of the acolytes is completed by the Acolyte Master, and is posted in *The Marker*. The Acolyte Master will also contact each acolyte sometime during the preceding week by email or phone to confirm that the acolyte will be present. If for some reason an acolyte cannot be present to serve on his assigned Sunday it is his responsibility to find a replacement. Emergencies happen and in that case the Acolyte Master should be contacted as soon as possible.

### **Flexibility of Assignments**

Whenever an acolyte fails to arrive on time, it is necessary to make assignment changes at the last minute before the service. This may mean that an acolyte must serve in a different capacity than he is usually assigned. **NO one is ever demoted!**

### **Training**

The Acolyte Master will train new acolytes on a special training Saturday or personal basis, usually on a Sunday morning during Christian Education hour. Other times can be arranged. There is also a Kick Off meeting of all acolytes in September of each year. Any acolyte with any question or problem should feel free to contact the Acolyte Master.

### **Other Notes and Procedures**

After the offertory, all acolytes and LEMs stand. They remain standing until communion is given.

Always bow or acknowledge the cross when passing in front of it. This is another act of reverence. The full body bow is to be used by the acolytes (when not holding a cross or torch).

At St. Paul's Church, acolytes are often requested for funerals and weddings. They may be requested, as well, for very special occasions such as ordinations.

*The Acolyte Master on a rotating basis schedules acolytes for weddings. This is done in cooperation with the Wedding Guild and Clergy.*

### **Part 2--The Positions**

#### **Torchbearers**

Usually the first duty assigned to an acolyte is that of Torchbearer. This assignment is no less important than any other assignment. (However, as always, the Acolyte-master may have to assign any of the acolytes as a Torchbearer.)

There are two Torchbearers during each service. The torches are not lit until the procession gathers in the Narthex. The Verger usually assists in the lighting.

Processional: The Verger takes his position at the entrance of the nave. The two Torchbearers line up on either side of the First Crucifer (gold cross). The torches are held at the same height, even if the Torchbearers differ in height. The Torchbearers process to the altar with the First Crucifer. They pause at the altar until the Verger releases them with a nod. At that time, the torchbearers turn (to their left), and place the torches in the two torch holders. When each sees that the other's torch has been placed, he turns, moves, and meets in front of the altar rail. They acknowledge the cross (full bow), and proceed to their respective chairs, nearest the rail, on either side of the altar.

Gospel Procession: At the reading of the Gospel (the hymn begins), the Verger moves from the sanctuary and stands facing the altar (leaving room for the other procession members) to begin forming the Gospel Procession. The First Crucifer moves from the Sanctuary and takes the Silver Cross to stand directly in front of the Verger facing the Altar. The Torchbearers then follow, retrieve the torches and line up immediately in front of the Altar rail facing the Altar, leaving a space for the Server, who carries the Gospel. (Notice the lineup is different from the procession at the beginning of the service, when the Crucifer was between the Torchbearers.) When the deacon turns to face the congregation or when the Verger signals the group, the Torchbearers turn to the left and process to the steps. The Server and Torchbearers go around the First Crucifer (who has stopped), and take a place facing the altar on the top step. The Torchbearers turn to face each other during the reading. After the reading, the Torchbearers follow the Verger back to the altar, remaining on either side of the Server. They then turn, place their torches, bow, and take their seats.

Communion: At communion, the Torchbearers receive communion and then proceed out (turning left and stepping back over the cushions) into the congregation to usher the congregation members out of the pews for communion. Usually (when there are two Crucifers) the two Torchbearers go to the outside aisles. In this case, the Torchbearers follow the Crucifers' lead in the decision to release the rows. When there is only one Crucifer serving (i.e. summer months) the Torchbearers go to the center aisle to usher the congregation. They then control the releasing of the rows. It is important that there be no gaps at the communion rail. The line should extend, at least to the bottom of the steps. After the entire congregation has received communion, the acolytes who ushered the congregation process back to the altar.

Exit Procession: During the final hymn, the Verger will step from the sanctuary to begin forming up the procession out. He faces the Altar. The two Torchbearers then retrieve their torches, and stand facing the altar, in front of the Verger, leaving a space for the First Crucifer between them. When the Verger signals, all turn left and begin the procession out. (When there is not a choir, and only one Crucifer, the procedure is somewhat different. The entire procession---LEM's, deacons, priests---will depart at the same time.)

When reaching the back of the nave, the procession turns to face the congregation, and remains in place until the blessing. The acolytes then promptly walk back to the vesting area, holding the crosses and torches straight.

Vestments are not removed until reaching the vesting area. Care should be taken to prevent albs from dragging.

### **First Crucifer**

Before the service the First Crucifer along with the Server lights the Altar candles. At that time make sure the "pig's ears" are up on the large wooden holder that holds the Gold Cross during the service.

Processional: The First Crucifer carries the Gold Cross. In the procession, the First Crucifer takes his place behind the verger and between the two Torchbearers. The First Crucifer must always remember to "lift high the cross". The cross is a major focal point for the congregation during the service, so the cross should be high enough to be clearly seen over the procession. The Verger will stop at the Altar rail. At this time, the cross may be brought to rest on the ground, until the Verger indicates to put the cross away. The cross is placed in the large wooden holder on the right side of the chancel (requiring care for safety). When placing the cross in the block, the cross faces the opposite cross, parallel to the choir stall, so that the congregation's focus is on the Altar Cross. After bowing, the First Crucifer takes his seat in the middle chair on the right side of the altar.

Gospel Procession: For the reading of the Gospel (the hymn begins), the Verger moves from the sanctuary and stands facing the altar (leaving room for the other procession members) to begin forming the Gospel Procession. The First Crucifer follows the Verger and the Torchbearers and retrieves the silver gospel cross. Then the First Crucifer takes his position in front of the Verger (facing the altar). When the deacon

(the reader) turns to the congregation (or when the vergers signal), the procession turns and processes towards the steps. The First Crucifer stops at the end of the carpet, lowers the cross, and remains there through the reading. Following the reading, the Verger will pass back by and the First crucifer turns to follow the Verger. At the altar, the procession breaks and the First Crucifer returns the cross to its block, bows, and returns to his seat.

Communion: At communion, both crucifers receive communion and, following the Torchbearers, then proceed out (turning left and stepping back over the cushions) into the congregation to usher the congregation members out of the pews for communion. Usually (when there are two Crucifers) they go to the inside aisle. In this case, the crucifers make the decisions for releasing each row. When there is only one Crucifer serving (i.e. summer months), he does not participate in the ushering at all. The Torchbearers then go to the center aisle to usher the congregation. It is important that there be no gaps at the communion rail. The line should extend, at least to the top of the steps, and it is acceptable to have it extend down the steps. After the entire congregation has received communion, the acolytes who ushered the congregation process back to the altar.

Exit Procession: During the final hymn, the Verger will step from the sanctuary to begin forming the procession out. He faces the altar leaving a space for the First Crucifer. The First crucifer then retrieves his gold cross, and takes his position in front of the Verger, facing the altar. After the Torchbearers are in place on either side, the Verger signals all turn left and begin the procession out. (When there is not a choir, and only one Crucifer, the procedure is somewhat different. The entire procession—Elm's, deacons, priests—will depart at the same time.)

When reaching the back of the nave, the procession turns to face the congregation, and remains in place until the blessing. The acolytes then promptly walk back to the vesting area, holding the crosses and torches straight. Vestments are not removed until reaching the vesting area. Care should be taken to prevent albs from dragging.

### **Second Crucifer**

Processional: The Second Crucifer carries the silver cross. In the processional, the Second Crucifer follows the choir. When the Second Crucifer approaches the altar rail, he acknowledges the altar and then puts the cross in its block on the left-hand side of the chancel. When placing the cross in the block, the cross faces the opposite cross, parallel to the choir stall, so that the congregation only sees the cross when at the rail. The Second Crucifer then bows and takes his seat at the left side of the altar.

Offertory: The Second Crucifer assists in the offertory. (When there is not a choir, generally in the summer months, there will be only one crucifer. He will take this offertory responsibility.) At this time, he retrieves the four small plates at the side of the altar. He then proceeds to the bottom of the stairs and gives a plate to each of the ushers. He is given a slip of paper by one of the ushers (indicating the number of persons in the congregation.) He waits for the ushers to bow, acknowledges the

ushers with a nod of the head, and returns to the altar. He hands the slip of paper to the priest. Following the collection, the ushers, preceded by the element bearers, walk all the way up to the rail. The Second Crucifer retrieves the large plate from the left side of the altar. After the Deacon and Verger or clergy steps to the rail to accept the wine and bread from the element bearers, the Second Crucifer steps forward holding the large silver plate and receives the silver alms basins. The ushers place their plates with the offerings in the large plate and bow. The Crucifer acknowledges the ushers, with a nod of the head, and turns to the altar. He then gives the plates and offerings to the priest behind the altar.

Communion: At communion, both crucifers receive communion and, following the Torchbearers, (turning left and stepping back over the cushions) then proceed out into the congregation to usher the congregation members out of the pews for communion. Usually (when there are two Crucifers) they go to the inside aisle. In this case, the crucifers make the decisions for releasing each row. (When there is only one Crucifer serving, during the summer months, the crucifers do not participate in the ushering at all.) It is important that there be no gaps at the communion rail. The waiting line should extend down to the bottom step. After the entire congregation has received communion, the Crucifers and the Torchbearers process back to the altar and take their positions.

Exit Procession: At the beginning of the final hymn, the Second Crucifer obtains the candle lighter and proceeds to extinguish the candles (See “Lighting and Extinguishing Candles”) on the left side of the altar (The Server will extinguish the candles on the other side.) He then retrieves the silver cross, as the Verger, Torchbearers, and First Crucifer turn to process. The Second Crucifer then stands, facing the altar, about a quarter of the way down the chancel carpet, and waits for the rest of the recessional to line up. When the clergy turns, the Second Crucifer also turns, and follows the choir to the back of the church.

When reaching the back of the nave, the procession turns to face the congregation, and remains in place until the blessing. The acolytes then promptly walk back to the vesting area, holding the crosses and torches straight. Vestments are not removed until reaching the vesting area. Care should be taken to prevent albs from dragging.

## **Server**

Processional: The position of Server is considered the senior position. At St. Paul’s Church, the server also assists with the Gospel. He wears gloves, except during the communion. Before the service, the Server must obtain the gold Gospel Book from the Altar. In the processional, the Server follows the Lay Eucharistic Ministers and leads the clergy. The Gospel Book is held with both hands on the bottom corners of the book, and held above the Server’s bowed head as if the book were leading the Server. The Server approaches the altar, places the Gospel book on the right hand corner of the altar and takes his seat next to the credence table.

Gospel Procession: At the reading of the Gospel (the hymn begins), the Verger moves from the sanctuary and stands facing the altar (leaving room for the other procession members) to begin forming the Gospel Procession. The First Crucifer then takes his position. Then the Torchbearers retrieve their torches and face the Altar leaving a space for the Server between them. At this time, the Server obtains the Gospel Book and takes his place between the Torchbearers and in front of the Verger and the First Crucifer. (Notice the lineup is different from the procession at the beginning of the service, when the Crucifer was between the Torchbearers.)

When the deacon turns to face the congregation or when the verger signals the group, all of the parties turn to the left and begin the procession. The Server and Torchbearers go around the First Crucifer (who has stopped), and take a place facing the altar on the second step. The Server opens the Gospel Book to the marked page and holds it open in order for the deacon or priest to read the Gospel. (The easiest way to hold the Gospel Book is with the hands at the bottom of the book in the middle of each side and with the top of the book resting on the Server's chest.) At the end of the reading, the Server closes the book and steps to the left to let the Verger pass. After the reading, the Server follows the Verger back to the altar, remaining between the Torchbearers. The Server then returns the Gospel Book to the altar, and takes his seat. When seated for the sermon, the server removes his gloves and tucks them over his cincture.

Communion: At the offertory, the Server helps the deacon or priest prepare for communion. The Server stands beside the credence table until the deacon or priest is ready for the objects on the credence table.

The Server takes the large plate, then the tall ciborium, and then the water and wine cruets together. He hands the cruets with the left hand and receives them back with the right hand.

After the deacon or priest has set the table, the Server takes the lavabo and water, places the towel over his left arm and waits to wash the celebrant's hands. The Server holds the lavabo with the left hand and pours water with the right. Then the Server replaces the objects on the credence table.

After the Server receives communion, he then closes the gates behind the clergy and LEM who leave to serve at the pulpit station. The Server then picks up the large wine pitcher and stands on the altar step so that he can refill the chalices. When everyone has received communion, the Server reopens the gates and helps the clergy and LEMs clear the altar, putting everything back on the credence table. After this is done, the server puts his gloves back on.

Exit Procession: At the beginning of the final hymn, the Server obtains the candle lighter and proceeds to extinguish (See "Lighting and Extinguishing Candles") the candles on the right side of the altar. (The First Crucifer will extinguish the candles on the other side.) In the exit procession, the Server, with the Gospel book, follows the LEMs. Who follow the Second Crucifer when he faces the altar about a quarter of the distance up the sanctuary as the choir begins to process out. The formation turns when the clergy turns, and processes to the back of the church following the choir. (When there is not a

choir, and only one Crucifer, the procedure is somewhat different. The entire procession---LEM's, deacons, priests---will depart at the same time.)

When reaching the back of the nave, the procession turns to face the congregation, and remains in place until the blessing. The acolytes then promptly walk back to the vesting area, holding the crosses and torches straight. Vestments are not removed until reaching the vesting area. Care should be taken to prevent albs from dragging. After the service, the Server returns the Gospel Book to the altar.

### **Flag Bearers/Banner**

Flags/banners are used only on special occasions, such as Easter and All Saints Day. For reasons of balance, two flags (the American flag and the church flag) are used. (They are heavy, and must be held at 45 degrees, so only the stronger acolytes can handle them). The banner may be used as well. In the procession, the flag bearers follow directly behind the First Crucifer and Torchbearers. The American flag processes first, followed by the Church flag. The banner, when used, processes after the choir. When the flag bearers reach the top of the steps, the American flag bearer goes to the right, and the church flag bearer goes to the left. The flag bearers remain to the sides of the stairs until the choir passes. The banner bearer will pause for the flags to cross to the opposite sides of the church, (the American flag in front) and place the flags in their respective holders. The banner is then placed in its holder on the left hand side of the church. The bearers sit in the seats by the holders.

At the offertory, the flag bearers approach the altar with the LEMs. They remain there, standing until communion. At communion, two of the flag bearers usher the congregation out from the rows, for communion. When the entire congregation has been served, the flag bearers return to their seats by the flags.

In the exit procession, the bearers retrieve the flags and wait for the appropriate time in the procession to join. They process to the back of the church and move to the sides to wait for the service to end. After the service, the flags are returned to their holders.

### **Acolyte Leaders**

Each year, the Acolytemaster appoints Acolyte Leaders. Acolyte Leaders are Servers who help to organize their fellow acolytes on any given Sunday, in addition to their duties as a Server. Acolyte Leaders will also make sure things run smoothly, if for some reason the Acolyte Master cannot be present on Sunday. Acolyte Leaders help in training, and are available if there are any questions.

### Processional Order

	Verger	
Torch Bearer	First Crucifer	Torch Bearer
	American Flag	
	Church Flag	
	Choir	
	Banner	
	Second Crucifer	
	Lay Eucharistic Ministers (LEMs)	
	Server	
	Clergy	

### Lighting and Extinguishing the Candles

The Acolyte Master or Verger may ask any two of the vested acolytes to light the candles, shortly before the service begins. (When it is the season for the Paschal candle—Easter Vigil to end of Pentecost-- it is lit first and all other candles are lit from its flame. The candles on the altar are lit first and then the candles in the candelabras, starting with the candle closest to the cross (so that the lighting is from the highest to the lowest.).

When extinguishing the candles, the lowest candles are put out first moving up the candelabras and finishing with the candles on the altar.

During Advent, the appropriate Advent candle(s) is lit on each Sunday.

When extinguishing the candles, the purpose is to cut off the oxygen. The snuffer should not actually touch the wick or wax.

### Baptisms

On Baptism Sundays, at the appointed point in the service, the Verger will process out with the First Crucifer and the two Torchbearers. This group processes to the back of the church and stands in formation until the baptism is complete. The acolytes follow the Verger back to the altar.

*“Those who have served well gain an excellent standing and great assurance in their faith in Christ Jesus”*

*1 Timothy 3:13 (NIV)*

(Kristine Merriman, Acolyte Leader 2003/4 was the primary contributor to this manual. The original editor was Bob Rollins, former Acolyte Master.)

*Margaret Lester Jordan, Acolyte Master 2006-present*