

ACOLYTE GUIDE

Saint Timothy's Episcopal Church
Revised 1/6/08

Saint Timothy's Episcopal Church

Acolyte Guide

Being an Acolyte

Being an acolyte requires more than just wearing vestments, lighting candles and leading processions. Acolytes perform a variety of duties, actively assisting the celebrant in the worship of God. This is an important ministry and should be approached with dignity, humility and care. Sloppiness is to be avoided; stiff or artificial movement is to be avoided; careless or unseemly behavior is to be avoided. In all things, the server must be aware that the purpose in assisting at the altar is "that God may be glorified".

Acolyte Positions at St. Timothy's

Position:	Acolyte
Role in service:	Torchbearer
Requirements:	Successfully complete acolyte training 4 th grade or above Physically large and strong enough to carry torches upright and steady Able to maintain a reverent posture throughout a service
Position:	Master Acolyte
Role in service:	Torchbearer or Crucifer
Requirements:	Meets all requirements for the position of Acolyte Successfully complete crucifer training Physically large and strong enough to carry the processional cross upright and steady Willing and able to coach and mentor torchbearers Willing and able to act as the leader for the torchbearers serving with him/her in a worship service
Position:	Acolyte Master/Leader and Assistant Acolyte Master
Role:	Adult responsible for recruiting new acolytes, training and encouraging them, scheduling them for worship services and supervising the result.
Requirements:	Familiarity with the roles of torchbearers and crucifers Familiarity with the worship service at St. Timothy's Desire to help others pursue a ministry of serving at the altar

Acolyte Expectations and Hints

General expectations for acolytes are:

When scheduled to serve, you should arrive 15 to 20 minutes before a service. This allows you to vest without rushing and to review any changes in the service before it begins.

Make sure your vestments are neat and clean and are the proper length (about 4-6 inches off the floor, when on).

Always check your equipment as soon as you are vested. Examples are the tapers in the candle lighters are long enough, the torches are in the sacristy and the candles in the torches have wicks long enough for easy lighting, the processional cross is in the sacristy, the stands for the torches are in place in the sanctuary and the miniature church that is used during the milestones portion of the service is under the pulpit. Knowing that things are as they should be prevents potential problems during the service.

Before each service, the crucifer should check with the celebrant to see if there are any changes or special requirements and the torchbearers should check with the crucifer to see if there are any changes or special requirements. Know what is expected of you before the service. Ask questions if you're not sure.

It is preferred that you wear black or dark shoes. If you do not have dark shoes, wear shoes that are plain and clean. As acolytes we do our best to move through the service with as little distraction to worshipers as possible. Shoes with neon colors or blinking lights or sandals that slap against your feet (like flip flops) call attention to the wearer.

Wear plain and preferably light colored clothing. Bright or multi colored clothing and clothing with slogans or logos are likely to be visible through the cloth of your alb and be a distraction.

Mistakes and accidents happen to everyone. The important lesson is to know your job well enough to be able to recognize when a mistake is made and then to respond to yours and others mistakes with grace and to learn from them and to try not to make the same mistake twice.

If you can't serve when scheduled, you are still responsible for seeing that your place is filled. Try to find a replacement and if you can't find someone willing to serve for you, call the acolyte master for assistance, letting him/her know which acolytes you have already contacted.

If all acolytes are not present, before the service, the crucifer should talk to the celebrant about proceeding without torchbearers or not and if necessary seek out replacements for missing acolytes.

After the service hang up your alb neatly on a hanger. If your alb is soiled put it in the laundry bag in the vestment closet.

Reverent attitude:

When not in use, your hands should be folded at or slightly above waist level.

When sitting, sit with your hands in your lap and your knees and legs together. It is ok to cross your legs at the ankle, but not any higher.

Stand and sit up straight and pay attention and participate in the service. Don't slouch or daydream during the service.

Move at a smooth, even pace. Rushing draws attention to you.

Avoid actions that can possibly distract from the service, such as yawning without covering your mouth, chewing gum, scratching sensitive parts of your body, leaning against the altar or standing with your hands behind your back.

Treat your duties with reverence and respect and remember at all times that it is God whom you serve.

Serving:

Candles are generally lit 10-15 minutes before the beginning of the service. This is a time of meditation and preparation for worshipers. Light the altar candles first and then the candelabras against the wall. Light the candles in the candelabras from the inside out. Extinguish them from the outside in. If the Paschal candle is being used, light it first and extinguish it last.

The crucifer should look at the celebrant for a signal to start the procession.

The basic method for carrying the processional cross is to carry it high in the air with two hands, putting one hand at waist level and the top hand just under the bridge of the nose (so that you can see over it). Pull the staff in against the body for stability.

Torchbearers should carry torches upright and perpendicular to the floor (tilting them can lead to hot wax on the floor or torchbearer). Carry the torches with two hands, putting one hand at waist level and the top hand just under the bridge of the nose (so that you can see over it). Pull the torch staff in against the body for stability.

The crucifer and torchbearers should process and recess in a row; i.e. shoulder to shoulder. Maintain an even, steady pace. Walk with torches at about the same height.

When crossing in front of the altar, reverence the cross (either bow from the waist or genuflect). The exception to this rule is when you are carrying something, such as a torch or processional cross.

Follow the celebrant's example of when to cross yourself or bow.

When it is time for the gospel reading, watch the deacon, assisting priest or priest for a signal to get up (usually when he/she stands up), retrieve your torches (torchbearers) and meet the crucifer at the front of the sanctuary.

When serving as a crucifer and holding the book during the gospel reading, brace your elbows against your rib cage, with the book resting on your outstretched forearms.

The torchbearer on the left side of the sanctuary holds the miniature church during the celebration of milestones.

The torchbearer on the right side of the sanctuary helps with the Eucharist and stands behind the lay eucharistic ministers and holds the extra communion bread.

Use of incense at worship services

Incense was historically used for burnt offerings in temple worship, and in rituals involving animal sacrifice. Now it is used to represent prayers going up to God. The traditional use of incense is at the entrance, during a solemn procession, at the Gospel and at the Offertory.

Incense is used at St. Timothy's for the Pentecost, Welcome Home, Easter Vigil, 10:30 Christmas eve and Epiphany services.

Use of incense requires two additional acolytes, the thurifer and the boat bearer. The thurifer carries the thurible, which is a bowl on a chain that contains burning coals and in which the incense is added when needed. The boat bearer carries the boat, which is a bowl with extra incense and a spoon to transfer the incense from the boat to the thurible.

Location of the thurible and boat:

When not in use the thurible, boat and incense are kept in the Altar Guild's closet in the vestry.

Before the service the Altar Guild hangs the thurible on a holder next to the torches in the vestry. The boat is on the table with incense in it. There should also be extra coals, tongs for picking up coals and a lighter to light the coals with.

During the service, for services in the church, the thurible and its hanger should be moved outside the door to the right of the sanctuary. Extra coals and a pair of tongs to pick up the coal should also be placed next to the hanger. For outside services the thurible and its hanger should be moved to the patio behind of and to the right of the altar.

Pre service responsibilities:

The thurifer and boat person should move the thurible, thurible hanger, extra coals and thongs to their location for during the service (see above).

At least 15 minutes before the start of the service the thurifer should place one or two coals in the thurible and light them.

During the service:

Procession

The thurifer walks in front of the crucifer and leads the procession. The thurifer should walk with the lid of the thurible lifted so that maximum air gets to the burning coals.

The boat bearer walks behind the thurifer.

When the thurifer reaches the sanctuary he/she walks to the right side of the sanctuary and stands at the opening in the railing. The boat bearer takes a seat on the end of the front row of pews in the right side transept. Sit on the end closest to the outside door. The boat bearer should keep the boat with them.

The celebrant will come over to the thurifer and get the thurible so he/she can incense the altar and then will return the thurible to the thurifer. The thurifer will then take the thurible and go out the door and hang the thurible on the hanger that was placed there before the service began and take a seat next to the boat bearer.

Gospel

At the beginning of the Gospel hymn the thurifer should get the thurible and stand at the railing opening on the right side of the sanctuary. The boat bearer should stand to the right of the thurifer.

The celebrant will come over and put more incense in the thurible.

When the deacon starts to move, the thurifer goes to the middle and stands behind the crucifer, so he/she can lead the Gospel procession.

The boat bearer returns to his/her seat and remains standing.

When the thurifer gets to the second row, move to the right and let the crucifer and torchbearers pass.

The deacon will take the thurible and incense the Gospel book and return the thurible to the thurifer.

The thurifer should stand for the reading of the Gospel.

At the conclusion of the Gospel reading, the thurifer leads the procession back up the aisle and goes to the right and takes the thurible outside and then returns to his/her seat next to the boat bearer.

Sermon

At the end of the sermon the thurifer should check the coals and add one. It is important to do this at this time so all the coals are hot for the offertory.

Offertory

As the deacon prepares the table, the thurifer should get the thurible from outside and stand at the railing opening on the right side of the sanctuary. The boat bearer should stand to the right of the thurifer.

The celebrant will come over, put more incense in the thurible and then take the thurible and incense the altar. When done the celebrant will return the thurible to the thurifer, who should take it outside and hang it on the hanger.

Post communion prayer

After the post communion prayer the thurifer should get the thurible from outside and stand at the railing opening on the right side of the sanctuary. The boat bearer should stand to the right of the thurifer.

The celebrant will come over and put more incense in the thurible.

The thurifer and boat bearer should move to the center and stand behind the crucifer, with the boat bearer in front of the thurifer and behind the crucifer.

When the crucifer turns for the retiring procession, the thurifer and boat bearer should also turn and the thurifer then leads the procession out.

Post service

The thurifer should use the tongs to take the basket and hot coals out of the thurible. Dump the hot coals and ashes into the barbeque grill.

The thurifer then brings the hanger back into the vestry and hangs the thurible on it. Bring the extra coals and tongs in and leave them on the table where they were before the service.

The boat bearer leaves the boat on the vestry table, where it was at before the service.

Thurifers should always carry the thurible by the top of the chain and never touch the bowl once coals have been lit in it. This will prevent burnt hands from touching the hot bowl. Again, when walking with the thurible raise its lid by the chain so maximum air gets to the burning coals.

Good Samaritan Acolyte Recognition

The Good Samaritan Acolyte program recognizes the acolytes who are Good Samaritans and willing to help fill in for missing acolytes at services. Details of the program are:

1. The purpose of the Good Samaritan program is to recognize those acolytes who fill in for acolytes who are unable to serve.
2. Examples of being a Good Samaritan and "filling in" are, being called by another acolyte and agreeing to fill in without swapping scheduled dates, or being called by the acolyte schedulers to fill in for another acolyte and agreeing to do so or being recruited on an emergency basis on a Sunday morning.

3. There will be recognition and a reward, for acolytes who are Good Samaritans at least five times during the calendar year, with the recognition in our weekly newsletters and the reward in early January.
4. There will be an envelope, pinned to the bulletin board on the acolyte closet door, labeled "Good Samaritan Forms". There will also be an envelope labeled "Good Samaritan Deeds".
5. When you are a Good Samaritan, fill out a blank form and leave it in the envelope labeled Good Samaritan Deeds.

Acolyte Service Recognition

St. Timothy's recognizes acolyte service by providing each acolyte with an olive wood cross with the acolyte's name and first year of service engraved on the back. In addition the crosses hang from a colored string that reflects the number of years the acolyte has served at St. Timothy's:

Years Served	String Color
Start to December of first year	Black
January to December second year	Green
January to December third year	Red
January to December fourth year	Blue
January to December fifth year	Light Purple
January to December sixth year	Burgundy
January to December seventh year	Brown
January to December eighth year	Tan
January to December ninth year	White
Tenth year and longer	Gold/White

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Service Outline

1. Before the service
 - a. Arrive 15-20 minutes before the service
 - b. Vest in alb and cincture immediately
 - c. Light the candles
 - d. Gather and ready necessary items (torches and processional cross)
 - e. Check with the celebrant
 - f. Prayer with the celebrant and other altar servers
2. Procession
 - a. Process together and reverently
3. Gospel
 - a. Assemble quickly at the front of the sanctuary
 - b. Process together to the third pew
 - c. Return together to the sanctuary
4. Celebration of milestones
 - a. Left side torchbearer assist the celebrant
5. Eucharist
 - a. Crucifer assist the celebrant with setting the communion table
 - b. Right side torchbearer assist during the communion by holding extra bread
 - c. Crucifer assist the celebrant with cleaning up the communion table
 - d. Crucifer ask the celebrant how many LEM kits will be needed and bring the needed number to the altar
6. Recessing processional
 - a. Recess together and reverently

During the Service

1. Have a good time, with a feeling of reverence and dignity.
2. When crossing the altar, pause and reverence the altar
3. Pay attention to and participate in the service

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Glossary of Terms

Ablutions

The cleansing of the chalice(s), paten, and other vessels after the administration of Communion. This may be done at the altar or at the credence, or after the dismissal.

Alb

A simple, long, loose-fitting robe with sleeves, with or without a hood. It is tied at the waist with a rope belt called a cincture.

Alms Basin

A large metal plate into which the money offerings of the congregation are placed before they are presented to the Deacon.

Altar

A stone or wooden table at which the Holy Eucharist is celebrated.

Altar or Eucharistic Candles

The two large candles on either edge of the altar.

Altar Guild

A group of women and men who prepare the church for services.

Altar Hangings

These usually include an altar cover in white linen or in the colors of the church seasons. If the cloth is in a color or fabric, other than plain white linen, it may be called a "frontal". Lectern and pulpit hangings usually match the colors and symbols on the frontal.

Altar Linens

Corporal – a larger napkin (about 20 by 20 inches) that the priest places on the fair linen, under the chalice and paten, while he or she prepares the Eucharist. It generally has a cross embroidered in the center or in one corner and is folded in thirds.

Burse – a folder or pocket (about 9 by 9 inches) that holds the service linens. It may also match the altar hangings or be made of white linen.

Fair linen – the long white, rectangular linen cloth on top of the altar cover.

Pall – a small (about 7 by 7 inches) stiff white linen-covered square, placed over the chalice when it is not in use.

Purificator – a small linen napkin (about 12 by 12 inches) used to wipe the chalice after Communion. It is folded in thirds and may have a small cross embroidered on its face.

Veil – covers the chalice, paten and pall before and after Communion, while those vessels are on the altar. The veil may be white linen but is usually in colors that match the frontal and other hangings. A veil is not used if the chalice and paten are kept on the credence table.

Aumbry or Tabernacle

A small cabinet or case used to store the reserved consecrated elements. Priests or lay ministers use the reserved elements when taking Communion to those who are sick or unable to attend the service and for additional communion elements during the Eucharist. It is located on the right side of the altar above the credence table.

Baptismal Fount

A stand with a basin for holding water during a Baptism.

Blessed Sacrament

The consecrated bread and wine of the Eucharist, which are the Body and Blood of our Lord Jesus Christ.

Boat

A small container, with a lid and spoon, used to carry extra incense to be used during the service.

Bowl (Lavabo Bowl)

The metal or ceramic dish into which the water is poured by the crucifer at the lavabo.

Bread Basket

The basket in which the bread for communion is kept. This container is often times held by the acolyte (the acolyte who is on the right side as they process into church during communion to replenish the bread as needed).

Candle Lighter / Extinguisher

A light pole with a two-pronged end. One side is a tube into which is inserted a taper; a knob is used to raise or lower the taper for lighting of candles. The other side is a bell-shaped snuffer used to extinguish the candles. The pole is held with the snuffer at the upper left part of the body.

Celebrant

The priest who is conducting the service.

Chalice

The cup used to hold the wine and water during the Eucharist. It is also called the communion cup or common cup.

Cincture

This is the long rope belt tied around the waist of an alb. Acolytes usually tie this in a simple square or slipknot on the right side with the ends hanging fairly even.

Communion

The act of receiving the consecrated bread and wine of the Eucharist, which are the Body and Blood of our Lord Jesus Christ.

Credence Table

A table to the right of the altar on which the linens, vessels and other items, for celebration of the Eucharist, are kept.

Crucifer

A person who carries the processional cross in procession and is a master acolyte.

Crucifix

A cross upon which a figure of Christ is represented, either crucified or in Eucharistic vestments that is a reminder that our faith is based on the life and resurrection of Christ.

Cruets

Glass or metal containers for the wine and water used at communion.

Deacon

An ordained assisting minister whose main functions at the service are to read the Gospel, prepare the gifts at the Offertory, assist with the administration of Communion, help with ablutions, and dismiss the people.

Dismissal

The words said or sung by the deacon at the conclusion of the service.

Elements

The bread and wine to be consecrated at communion.

Epistle

The lesson at the service preceding the Gospel taken from one of the Letters of the New Testament, the Acts of the Apostles, or the Book of Revelation.

Eucharist

The principal act of worship on Sundays and other Feast Days.

Gifts

The offerings of Bread, Wine and Alms, which are presented to the celebrant at the Offertory portion of the Eucharist.

Gospel

The final lesson in "The Word of God" taken from one of the four Gospels in the New Testament. It is normally read by a deacon or priest, and as a sign of reverence, the people and assisting ministers stand when the Gospel is proclaimed.

Gospel Book

The book of gospel readings used during the. The book is carried in the procession (at the entrance) and at the proclamation of the Gospel by the Deacon or Assisting Priest.

Gospel Procession

The movement of the Deacon with torchbearers and crucifer to the place of the proclamation of the Gospel.

Holy Communion

The second part of the Holy Eucharist, following the Word of God and beginning with the Offertory.

Incense

A mixture of perfumed spices, burned on the coals in the thurible, and used a sign of prayer, honor, and solemnity at liturgical functions.

Lavabo

The washing of the celebrant's fingers after the Offertory at the Eucharist or at other times such as when oil or Christ is used or after the imposition of ashes on Ash Wednesday.

Lay Minister I

Licensed layperson that assists the priests in administering communion.

Lay Minister II

Licensed layperson that takes communion to parishioners who cannot attend church due to illness, etc.

Lectern (ambo)

The podium from which the lessons and sometimes the Gospel are read at the Eucharist and other offices.

Lector

A person who reads a lesson at the liturgy.

Lesson

The first reading from scripture at the Eucharist; usually from the Old Testament.

Little Church

The church kept on a shelf in the lectern and used at milestones for people to place their thank offerings. The acolyte who processes in on the left side of the church usually takes care of this task.

Liturgy (service)

The "work of the people." In Western usage, this term may apply to any public celebration of the Church.

Ministers

The celebrant, officiant and any others (lay persons or ordained) who assist in the celebration of the liturgy.

Offertory

The presentation, reception, preparation and offering of the gifts at the beginning of "The Holy Communion", the second part of the Eucharist.

Offertory Procession

At the Eucharist, the presentation of the bread, wine, and other gifts by members of the congregation.

Paschal Candle

A large white candle, which may be decorated with a cross, the year of blessing, A (alpha) and Ω (omega), grains of incense, and other symbols of the resurrection. It is lit at the Great Vigil of Easter and burns for all services during the Fifty Days of Easter and for baptisms, funerals and other special occasions. The Paschal candle represents the light of the risen Christ.

Paschal Candle Stand

A large metal stand in which the Paschal candle is placed. The stand rests on the floor, and is of such height that the candle is prominent.

Paten

The small plate used to hold the bread during the Eucharist. It is also called the bread plate or tray.

Post Communion Prayer

The Prayer of Thanksgiving after Holy Communion.

Prayers of the People

The Prayers of the People follow the Nicene Creed.

Processional Cross

A cross or crucifix mounted on a staff for processions. The processional cross, carried by a crucifer, generally leads the procession as a reminder that we are called to follow the cross. The entrance of the cross begins the formal worship service.

Psalm

A portion from the ancient Jewish hymnbook found in Scripture (The Book of Psalms) and in *The Book of Common Prayer*.

Purificator

A linen (or other) white cloth used for cleansing the chalice during the ablutions, or for wiping the chalice during the administration of communion.

Rope (Cincture)

A rope, usually white, worn with the robe, tied with a slipknot at the left side of the waist and allowed to hang down the left side. The ends of the rope may have knots or tassels.

Sacrament Lamp

A container with a candle that burns in front of the Aumbry and above the credence table. This candle is never extinguished when the Blessed Sacrament is present.

Sacristy

A room where the vessels and liturgical objects are kept. This room is used by Altar Guild to prepare the altar for the Eucharist.

Sanctuary

The area of the church surrounding the altar.

Sanctuary Lamp

Close to the aumbry you may find a candle or oil lamp that burns at all times throughout the year. The light reminds us that Christ is present in the consecrated elements. The only time the sanctuary light is extinguished is after the Maundy Thursday service, when the altar is stripped for Good Friday. It is relit after the Easter vigil.

Service Book

This is the prayer book used by the priest, which contains the service and instructions for the priest in print large enough to be read while conducting the service.

Simple Bow

The inclination of one's head and shoulders as a sign of respect.

Solemn Bow

An inclination from the waist as a sign of reverence.

Taper

A long narrow wax-covered wick that is put into the candle lighter; or, a small candle for use by members of the congregation at vigils and other services.

Thurible

A brass container designed to hold burning charcoal and incense. It usually has a chain attached to either the sides or a lid so that it may be safely carried in procession.

Thurifer

The thurifer is one who carries the thurible and boat when incense is used at the Eucharist or other celebrations. The traditional use of incense at the Eucharist is at the entrance, during a solemn procession, at the Gospel, and at the Offertory.

Torch or Taper

Candles mounted on a staff and generally wax or oil filled that are carried in processions or are used to light the processional cross.

Torchbearer

A person who carries a torch or a candle in processions and at other times during the service and can be either an acolyte or master acolyte

Towel (Lavabo Towel)

A piece of cloth, usually linen, presented to the celebrant by the crucifier to dry the fingers. It is hung over the crucifer's left arm.

Vestment

An article of clothing worn over street clothes by the priests and deacon during church.

Vestry

A room where the priests, deacons, lay ministers, and acolytes vest before the service.

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My Covenant

1. I will wear my hair trimmed and tidy
2. I will wear light colored and plain clothes
3. I will wear the very best or cleanest shoes I have
4. I will not daydream and will participate in the service
5. I will be prepared for the unexpected or accidental
6. I will serve with dignity and care and in the simplest way possible so as to not distract the congregation
7. I will be there when scheduled or find a replacement if I will be unable to make it

Signed --acolyte name--

Date