



ACOLYTE GUIDE

ST. NICHOLAS

EPISCOPAL CHURCH

DARNESTOWN, MARYLAND

Acolytes have an important role in the worship of the Episcopal Church. They lead processions, light and carry candles, carry the Gospel Book and serve as assistants to the priest during the service. At St. Nicholas, there are no special requirements to become an acolyte, other than a desire to help worship God and have fun in a very important and special way. Generally, children may start participating when they are 10 years old (5th Grade).

Before the 5:00 Service

4:30 Arrive on time and with clean clothes, shoes, hair and body. Get dressed downstairs in an Alb (white robe) and Cincture (rope belt).

4:45 Check in with the “Verger” (the master of ceremonies) in the church Narthex (the entry area).

4:50 Light both Altar candles with the Taper (candle snuffer). Bow as you approach the Altar for the first time. Light the candle on the right first, then the candle on the left (like you are “opening a book”). Then return to the Narthex. Check to see that the Cross and Torches are nearby, and that the Torches are lit. Do not touch the shiny brass areas on any objects (it leaves fingerprints that the Altar Guild must clean).

4:55 Pray with the procession participants.

5:00 – The Service Starts

Remember: If you are unsure what you should be doing, look to the priest and he or she will help.

Procession: The Crucifer carries the cross down the aisle, through the Nave (the main seating area) and up to the Altar as the others in the procession follow. Hold the cross any way you can, as long as it is steady and vertical. For younger acolytes it is best to keep the back of your right hand against your forehead to help steady the cross. The Crucifer determines how fast the procession walks, and should walk at a slow, comfortable pace. After the Crucifer come the Torch-bearers (if available). The Torch-bearers walk side-by-side and shoulder-to-shoulder, and must keep their Torches (candles) at the same height. Then come the Gospel Book-bearer, the Chalice-bearers, the Celebrant (the priest), and the Banner-bearer (if available). The Crucifer will stop

in front of the Altar and pause (but does not bow). Then the Crucifer walks to the left around the Altar and places the cross in the stand. The Crucifer then goes and stands in the pew to the left of the Altar. The Torch-bearers go around either side of the Altar and place their torches in the stands. The Gospel Book-bearer walks up to the Altar, turns the Gospel Book around and places it in front of the Vested Chalice (the covered cup) on the Altar. The Banner bearer also places their banner in the stand. The Torchbearers, Gospel Book-bearer and Banner-bearer all stand with the Crucifer in the pews to the left of the Altar. Acolytes sit (to listen), kneel (to pray) and stand (to sing or give praise) along with the congregation during the service, unless they are assisting the celebrant.

Gospel Procession: At the start of the Gospel hymn be ready to get in place. At the start of the second verse the Crucifer will get the cross and go in front of the Altar and face the Altar. The Torch-bearers get their torches, and the Gospel Book-bearer gets ready to pick up the Gospel Book. The Crucifer turns and heads down the steps, followed by the Torch-bearers and Gospel Book-bearer. The Crucifer will stop at the third pew and turn around. The Torchbearers stop just behind the Crucifer and turn to face each other. The Gospel Book-bearer stops near the Torch-bearers, turn around and hold the book up for the priest. The priest will open the book, read and then close it. Younger acolytes may rest the book on their head with their elbows on their stomach. If there is only one acolyte then that acolyte would pick up the Gospel Book and lead the way to the third pew, then turn around. After the Gospel reading the Crucifer will walk around the others, followed by the Torch-bearers, Gospel Book-bearer, and the priest. Everyone will place their items back just as they did for the opening procession, and go to their seats.

Offertory: After the announcements an acolyte (usually the Crucifer) picks up the 2 offering plates and stands to the priest's left behind the Altar (pretending they are attached to the priest with a cord). When the ushers come to Altar with the Elements (the bread and wine), then the Crucifer passes the plates to them over the Altar (or around the Altar to the priest's left for younger acolytes).

Communion Preparation: While the ushers are collecting the offering, the acolyte then helps the priest put on the Chasuble (the fancy poncho). Then the acolyte picks up the small bowl on the Credence Table (in the back) with their left hand, and puts the small white towel over their left forearm. Next the acolyte picks up the small glass water pitcher with their right hand and turns to the priest to help the priest wash his hands (it may help to imagine that the acolyte is like a waiter during this part of the service). After the priest finishes washing his hands, the priest takes the water and then the acolyte puts the bowl and towel back on the Credence table. Now the acolyte helps bring other items from the Credence Table to the Altar, including the Intinction Cup with Purificator on top, and the small glass pitcher of wine. The acolyte places these items on the Altar to the left of the priest, then takes any items that the priest hands back to the acolyte, and sets them on the Credence Table. Stay on the priest's left (as if you are attached by a cord) until the Doxology (the "Praise God from whom all blessings flow" hymn).

Doxology: When the ushers walk forward during the Doxology hymn, get ready to take the offering plates. The priest will take the plates from the usher and pass them to the acolyte on his left. The acolyte takes the plates back to the Credence Table. Be sure to leave room on the table

for the Chalice and Elements that will also be placed there after Communion (sharing the bread and wine) is finished. Then the acolyte goes back and stands in the pew.

Communion Invitation: When the Chalicists come forward and join the priest in front of the Altar, the acolytes come forward to receive Communion, then return to their pew and sit down.

After Communion: When the ushers come forward to take Communion, the acolyte goes to their spot behind the Altar and to the priest's left. The Chalicists will give the acolyte several items to put on the Credence Table, including the Chalices (wine cups), the Paten (small bread plate), and the Corporal (the placemat). Once the Altar table is clear the acolyte goes back and stands in the pew.

Recessional: Be ready to get in place when the final hymn starts. At the second verse the acolytes get the Cross, the Torches and Gospel Book just as they did for the Gospel procession. The Crucifer should pause for a moment at the Altar (but does not bow), then turns around and walks slowly down the steps. The Crucifer should not walk too fast because the rest of the procession also has to come down the steps. All of the acolytes process to the Narthex and wait for the priest to say the dismissal ("Go in peace to love and serve the Lord").

Candles out: An acolyte goes to the Altar with the Taper to put out the Altar candles. Put out the left candle first, then the candle on the right (like you are closing a book). Then stop in front of the Altar and bow, turn around and walk back to the Narthex.

Clean-up: Put away the Cross, Torches, Taper and Gospel Book. Be sure to hang up your Alb and Cincture neatly.