

Acolyte Ministry Customary

St. Matthias Episcopal Church, Monument

Thank you for volunteering to be an acolyte at St. Matthias. Your part of the service is a very important part of our worship in the Episcopal tradition. The directions below may seem like a lot – but in truth it is easy. You’ll see – no sweat.

Your service as an acolyte is three-fold:

- To the people of St. Matthias
- To the Celebrant (normally Fr. Scott)
- To the Lord Jesus whom we worship

Remembering this will help you serve with appropriate reverence and help the congregation know how they are to participate in the service. God bless you.

General Instructions

- Arrive no later than 15 minutes before the service and robe in the sacristy
- 5 minutes before the start of the service, please be in the sacristy to join in prayer with others who are serving that morning
- Make sure you have a bulletin (or Book of Common Prayer and Hymnal) at your seat or with you
- Whenever you approach, leave, or cross the sanctuary middle in front of the altar, please “reverence” the altar (a slight bow)
- The first acolyte robed should light the candles. It is customary to light the right one (Epistle side) first, then the left one (Gospel)
- Don’t worry about doing everything “right”. If you have a question, please ask Fr. Scott, another acolyte, or Mr. Clewe (who is usually sitting in the first pew). The important thing is to worship the Lord.

The Two Acolyte Roles

There are two main acolyte roles: Crucifer and Server. We may also have, on occasion, acolytes with special roles, especially if new acolytes are training or we have very young who want to help.

Crucifer

The main job of the Crucifer is to carry the Processional Cross, leading the rest of the servers and congregation into worship and out of the sanctuary.

- Just before the service starts – when the priest is welcoming the congregation, retrieve the cross from its holder near the office door and stand under the aisle light just behind the last pew (at the back of the church)
- Processional Hymn – as the congregation begins singing the Processional Hymn, slowly walk up the aisle toward the altar. Hold the cross high and keep it stable
- At the altar turn right and walk to the cross holder outside of the Rector’s office door and put the cross in the holder and move to your seat (next to the Processional Cross). Do not bow or reverence the altar when you are carrying the Processional Cross.

- Follow the service, reading, singing, sitting, standing, and kneeling as appropriate. Please follow the instructions in the bulletin, as the congregation will follow what you do.
- At the Gospel Hymn, get the Processional Cross and stand on the top step facing the altar, centered on the altar.
- When the person reading the Gospel (normally the Celebrant/priest) indicates, turn and lead him/her to the second pew. Turn around and face the altar and hold the cross during the reading of the Gospel. When he/she is finished reading the Gospel, they will step out of your way so you can lead back to your seat. Return the cross to its holder and sit for the sermon.
- Confession of sin: kneel on the altar step for the Confession and Absolution
- Offering: Help the Server with the offering and baskets of food. Take the offering plates, baskets of food, and other items brought forward at the Offertory to the priest to bless and then put them in the sacristy.
- Close the Altar Rail gates: After the congregation sings the Doxology “Praise God from whom all blessings flow...”, close the altar rail. There is a latch that fixes one gate to the floor, and then one latch that fixes the gates together. The Usher may help you by moving the cushions into place.
- Return to the same side of the altar on which you have been standing and join with the Chalice Bearers and Celebrant near to and facing the altar for the prayer of consecration and to receive Holy Communion. When you have received Communion, you may be seated.
- After the last person receives Communion, please open the altar rail, re-stack the cushions, and return to your seat and stand for the Post Communion Prayer.
- Sit for the announcements and blessings.
- Recessional: as the Recessional Hymn begins, get the cross and stand facing the altar, centered on the altar, on the 2nd step.
- When the Celebrant tells you to (usually after the 2nd verse of the hymn), turn around and lead the procession to the back of the church.
- Return the cross to its holder by the office door and finish singing the hymn.
- That’s it. Good job!

A note on pace for Procession and Recession: it should be dignified rather than either rushed or lazy. Walk at a comfortable pace, erring on the side of slower. You can ask Mr. Clewe or Fr. Scott what they thought of your pace if you are unsure.

Server

The main job of the server is to assist the priest in preparing the altar for Holy Communion and cleaning up afterwards. The more senior acolyte is usually the server and assists the other acolytes as needed.

- Procession: you process behind the crucifer. As you arrive at the altar, reverence (bow) and go to your chair on the left side of the altar near the Credence Table
- Help Set the Altar for Holy Communion

- At the Offertory, as the congregation sits, go to the Credence Table and wait for the Celebrant (or other person setting the altar). Take the priest, in order:
 - The bread basket, putting the Burse and Veil the Celebrant hands you on the Credence Table
 - The cruets of wine and water. Take the stoppers off and hand the cruets to the Celebrant with the handles facing toward the Celebrant. Normally the wine would be in your right hand.
 - The Celebrant will take the wine, usually not returning it to you
 - Give the Celebrant the water; he or she will add some to the wine and return it to you
- Wash the Celebrant's hands
 - When the priest is done setting up the altar, help him/her wash his/her hands by:
 - Put the small towel, called the lavabo towel, over your left wrist. Take the small silver bowl, the lavabo bowl, in your left hand and the water cruet in your right (reversed if you are left-handed) and walk to the Celebrant
 - When she/he places his/her fingers over the lavabo bowl, slowly pour water over her/his fingers until she/he pulls them away. Offer the lavabo towel for them to dry their fingers. He/she will return it to your arm.
 - If there are more than one priest, or if the Bishop is present, go to each to wash their hands, also.
 - The Celebrant will thank you with a bow; bow in return and replace the items on the credence table
- A note on cruets and bringing items to the Celebrant
 - When passing the cruets, make sure you and the priest have control of them so they don't get dropped
 - As server, you are helping the Celebrant, which means you need to walk from the credence table to the altar step, rather than the Celebrant coming towards you. The Celebrant appreciates this.
- Helping at the Offering
 - You and the Crucifer will take the food and baskets, or the offering plates, from the usher and walk to the Celebrant. He/she will bless them. Take them all into the sacristy and return to your seat. Help with the altar rail if needed.
 - If there is a lot of food, the Chalice Bearers will help
- At Holy Communion
 - Stand on the side of the altar where your chair is, but with the Celebrant and Chalice Bearers during the Eucharistic Prayer.
 - Fraction Anthem: when the Celebrant breaks the bread, retrieve two items and place them on the altar:
 - The extra chalice from the credence table
 - The ciborium (silver box with wafers) from the aumbry (the little cupboard above the credence table)
 - After you receive Communion, you may return to your seat

- Cleaning up after Communion
 - The celebrant will hand you many things from the altar, they go:
 - Ciborium – back in the aumbry
 - Consecrated wine still in the cruet – in the aumbry
 - Empty cruets – on the credence table
 - Bread basket – on the credence table
 - Other items – on the credence table
- Return to your seat for the Post Communion Prayer, blessings, and announcements
- Recessional: Follow the Crucifer after he/she has left the altar. Do reverence the altar before following the Crucifer.
- After the Recessional Hymn is finished, return to the altar and help extinguish candles; first the left (Gospel) side, then the right (Epistle) side. A help in remembering is:
 - FRI (for lighting candles) – Front, Right, Inner
 - BLO (for extinguishing candles) – Back, Left, Outer

A little reminder: your first job as an acolyte is to participate in worshipping the Lord. Take time to do this. Your second job is to serve and help lead. As an acolyte, please stand for all singing (except the Psalm), stand or kneel for prayer (follow the Celebrant), and sit during readings, the sermon, and announcements. It is not appropriate to sit during prayer. As an easy rule, follow what Fr. Scott does.

If you are the only acolyte, you will do the ministry of both Crucifer and Server. It is easiest to sit by the Processional Cross except during the preparation of the altar.

That is it. Good job! If you have any questions or are not sure what to do, just ask Fr. Scott, another acolyte, or Mr. Clewe. We are here to help you, too!

Thanks for serving God at His altar.