

✠ ACOLYTE HANDBOOK ✠  
Sola Fide Lutheran Church



*Speak, LORD, for your servant  
is listening.*

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## **The Acolyte Program's Purpose**

The main purpose of the Sola Fide Acolyte program is to strengthen the faith of young men in how Christ has and continues to serve us. The perfect life lived in our placed and the innocent death taken on our behalf is the central message that is preached to those in the acolyte program. As this purpose is carried out the acolyte will also learn to serve the Lord in the Sunday service and throughout life.

The opportunity to serve as an acolyte will also improve the knowledge of the purpose of the time a congregation spends together at the Divine Service. The acolyte will earn about the different parts of the service, the different furnishings of the church building and many other things that have to do with Sunday morning. This is all in an effort to strengthen the acolyte's faith in Christ, for all these things exist to point to the Savior.

The work done in this program is done in the Name of Jesus.





## Vestments

A vestment is the type of clothing that people wear when serving at a church service. The pastor often wears a white robe, or an alb. Over that white robe he wears a stole that has a color that fits with the season of the church year. These are called vestments. There are many other vestments that pastors can wear. An acolyte wears certain vestments when serving at a church service.

A cassock is a black robe. This reminds us that we are sinful.

A surplice is a white cover that goes over the cassock. This reminds us that Jesus has covered all our sins. We are perfect because Jesus removed our sins and covered us in a robe of righteousness.



A white monastic style cassock will be worn by the crucifer. The crucifer carries in the cross. The focus of the cross is only the love of God. So the crucifer is covered in white. He is wearing a white robe reminding us of the robe of righteousness that we get from the death of Christ on the cross.



## Proper Decorum

Proper decorum is a way to talk about how we present ourselves in certain situations. When you are at a baseball game



the proper decorum is to be comfortable. Even dropping peanut shells on the ground is proper decorum at a ball game. When you are at school the proper decorum is to sit up straight and raise your hand when you want to speak. The proper decorum matches with where you are. When serving as an acolyte at the service there is a proper decorum to show how we feel about what we are doing.

- † Be reverent. This is God's house.
- † Don't be afraid to smile. This is God's house.
- † Walk, don't run.
- † Stand up straight.
- † Keep the candle-lighter still as you are walking (no swinging it around).
- † If your hands are free while serving keep your hands folded palm to palm. This is a sign of being content, or happy with where you are. It also reminds you not to pick your nose.
- † When you are sitting during the service sit up straight and listen well. The service always has an important message for you. It is also important to listen carefully so you know when your next acolyte duty is coming.

### **Our Church Building**

It is important to learn about our church building because this is where you will be serving as an acolyte.

- |                          |                  |
|--------------------------|------------------|
| 1. Altar                 | 7. Chancel steps |
| 2. Pulpit                | 8. Nave          |
| 3. Font                  | 9. Balcony       |
| 4. Processional Crucifix | 10. Stairs       |

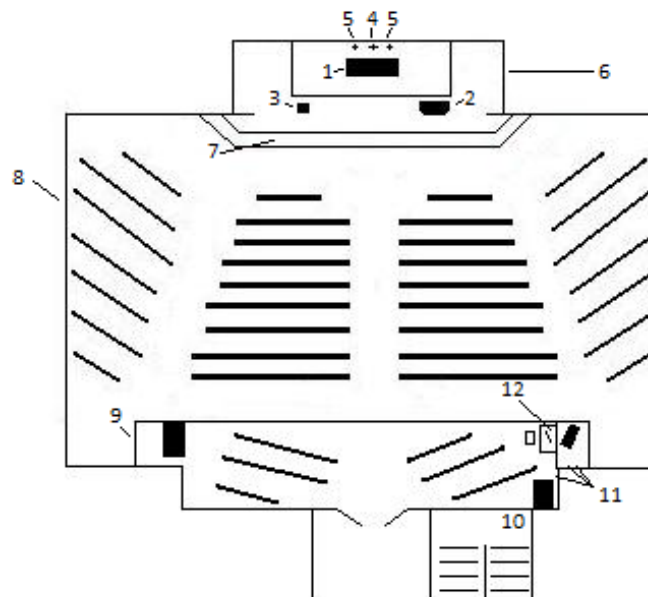


- 5. Torches
- 6. Chancel
- 1. Altar

- 11. Light switches
- 12. Computer

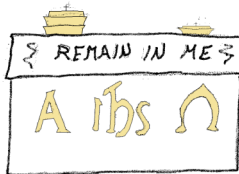
The altar is a symbol of Jesus' sacrifice for our sins. His sacrifice was his death on the cross. Since he died we are set free from our sins. The altar is a symbol of that sacrifice. So it is an important part of our church. It is a good custom to bow when passing the altar. This shows respect for the sacrifice of Christ, which the altar symbolizes.

#### Gospel Horn Epistle Horn





The letters on the front of our altar all remind us of Jesus. The alpha (A) and omega (W) are the first and last letters of the Greek alphabet. This reminds us that Jesus is the first and the last. He is the beginning and the end. The iota (i) eta (h) sigma (s) in the middle are the first three Greek letters for Jesus (Ihsous). This is a way of abbreviating Jesus' name that has been used by Christians for a long time.

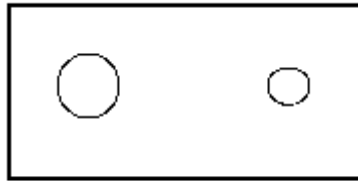


The right side of the altar is called the *Epistle Horn* of the altar. The epistle (letter) reading is a reading from the New Testament. The left side of the altar is the *Gospel Horn* of the altar. The Gospel reading is read from this side.

On top of the altar the communion ware is arranged as shown above. The smaller tray that sits alone will hold the bread for the Lord's Supper. In the Lord's Supper that bread is also the body of Christ, given into death for the sins of the world.



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Supper  
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also the blood of Christ given to people for the forgiveness of their sins.

## 2. Pulpit

The word of God is spoken from the pulpit. In a sermon the pastor will make sure that he is not speaking his own ideas, but speaking what God has had written down in the Bible.

## 3. Font

The font is the place for Baptism. Our font has a cross on top of it. This is a wonderful symbol that relates well to baptism. When children are baptized they are baptized into Christ's death. They die with Christ as all their sins are drowned in that water. And they also rise to live a new life just as Christ rose from the dead.

## 4. Processional Crucifix

The processional cross turns our minds again to the sacrifice of Christ. It is a good thing to remember Christ on the cross. This is a joyful thing, because by dying on the cross Jesus has removed all our sin.

## 5. Torches

The torches remind us that Jesus is the light of the world. Darkness in the Bible is often used to talk about sin and





death. But Christ is the light that gets rid of the darkness of sin and death.

#### 6. Chancel

The Chancel is the area in the front of church, where the pulpit, altar and font are found.

#### 7. Chancel steps

The chancel steps connect the nave to the chancel. They connect where the people are to where the means of grace are.

#### 8. Nave

The nave is the area of the church where all the people sit. When you hear the word Navy you think of ships, because the Navy keeps our country safe on the seas. The nave is like a boat. It is where all the people of the church are safe. When we come to church God lets us know that we are safe from sin and death because Jesus died on the cross for us.

#### 9. Balcony

The balcony is where the organist sits and where the choir sings from.

#### 10. Stairs

The stairs take you from the church area up to the balcony where you may need to work with the lights or the computer to toll the bells.

#### 11. Light switches

The light switches are located on four panels. The first two are behind the sound cabinet. There are eight switches that control the main lights. The next two panels are by the piano. There



are three switches that control the lights over the chancel. Then there is a group of buttons. To turn these on press the top button. To turn these off press the bottom button.

#### 12. Computer

The computer in the balcony will be set up before each service. There will be an i-tunes window open. The bells track will be selected. When the organist gives you the signal the only thing you will have to do with the computer is press play. This will be explained also in the next section on Acolyte Duties.

### **Acolyte Duties**

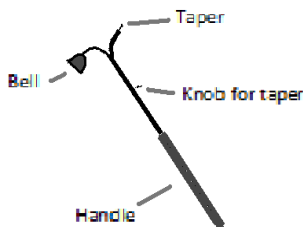
An acolyte serves as a helper for the pastor or pastors during the Divine Service. There are many duties that an acolyte can carry out but on a normal Sunday there will only be a couple.

The main duty is the lighting and extinguishing of the candles. Your tool for this job is a candle lighter. Remember the names of the different parts of the candle-lighter as shown in the following diagram.



Since the acolyte is helping with the service the first thing the acolyte needs to do is be on time. On time means **Fifteen minutes before the service**. This will give the acolyte enough time to change and take care of his duties that need to be done before the service begins. Here is a checklist for pre-service.

- † Before leaving for church make sure that you have black or dark shoes and pants on, and a black or white dress shirt on.
- † **Fifteen minutes before the service** be at church and look for a pastor or an appointed usher to see if there have been any changes for that day's duties.
- † After changes where surplices change. checking for go to the closet the cassocks and are stored and
- † Five minutes before the service the organ usually begins the pre-service music. When you hear the music begin get the candle-lighter and have that day's usher light it for you.
- † With the candle-lighter lit walk reverently up the center aisle.
- † Ascend the first two chancel steps carefully.
- † Stop at the next step and bow slowly and reverently toward the altar.





- † Ascend the next step and move around the Epistle Horn of the altar to the first torch.
- † Light the two torches and move back around the Gospel Horn of the altar.
- † Stop in the same place you stopped before and again bow slowly and reverently toward the altar.
- † Turn and return down the center aisle, remembering to always walk with dignity.
- † Give the candle-lighter to the usher or return it to its place yourself.
- † Move up the stairs to the balcony.
- † When the organist gives you the signal toll the bells by pressing play on the i-tunes window on the computer.
- † Sit with your family unless there is a special service where you will be serving at other points within the Divine Service.

Here is a checklist for the end of the service.

- † When the pastor begins the final prayer go to the back of the church to get the candle-lighter.
- † If there are three or more stanzas begin going to the altar during the second to last stanza. The usher on duty will help you with this.
- † If there are less than three stanzas begin going to the altar as soon as the singing begins.
- † When you reach the step in front of the altar bow slowly and reverently toward the altar.
- † Ascend the step and move around the Epistle Horn of the altar to the first torch.
- † Extinguish the first torch and then the second torch.
- † Move back in front of the altar by going around the Gospel Horn of the altar.



- † Bow slowly and reverently toward the altar.
- † Return by the center aisle.
- † Place the candle-lighter back in its place.
- † Go to the closet where the cassocks and surplices are stored and return your cassock and surplice.

#### **Lighting and Extinguishing the Candles**

When lighting and extinguishing the candles there are some important things to remember.

- † First remember to light the candles before the service. This means if you are on duty you need to be early.
- † If you are right handed hold the candle-lighter with the handle in your right hand. Place your left hand near the knob that controls the length of the taper.
- † Hold the candle lighter in front of you at an angle with the flame pointing up.
- † Light the candle on the Epistle side of the altar first, then the candle on the Gospel side of the altar.
- † If there are other candles like the Advent wreath light those after lighting the candles behind the altar.
- † Remember not to swing the candle-lighter around. Keep it still as you are walking.
- † Be mindful of where the top of the candle-lighter is. Especially when you are behind the altar. When ever you are turning or moving behind the altar make sure the candle-lighter will not hit anything.
- † When lighting the candles of the Advent wreath be aware of what Sunday in Advent it is. The following will explain the Advent wreath and which candles are lit when.



There are four Sundays in the season of Advent. The advent wreath has five candles. Each Sunday another candle is lit in anticipation of the celebration of Christmas. When Christmas comes all four candles outside and the Christ candle in the center are lit. The four on the outside are lit in the following order.

### **Processions**

When a procession is used in a service the following order will be used.

Crucifer

Torch bearer Torch bearer

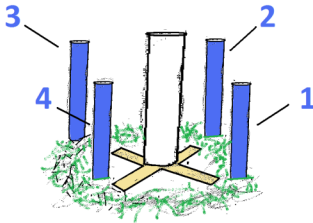
Preacher

Celebrant

Everyone in the procession should be walking at the same speed. Do not walk too fast so that you catch up with someone in front of you or too slow so that someone behind you also has to slow down. The crucifer will be taught a good speed for processions. Everyone else will follow his lead.



When the procession reaches the chancel the crucifer goes directly to the center stand behind the altar by going around the Epistle altar. He does the altar while cifix. The will pause at the altar and their heads behind the Epistle Horn.



Horn of the not reverence holding the crucifix torch bearers the step before bow only with before moving altar around the

As the crucifer is placing the crucifix in its stand the torch bearers should be arriving at the stands for their torches. Once everyone has finished then all three can return to the front of the altar together led by the torch bearer on the Gospel horn of the altar.

They will pause together before the altar and bow slowly and reverently. All three will turn and move down the center aisle with the two torch bearers side by side behind the crucifer. If they will be serving within the service they will move to their seats rather than going down the side aisle.

### **Tolling of the Bells**

When tolling the bells make sure you wait until the organist gives you a signal. As the organist is playing the pre-service music be near the computer and within eyesight of the organist. After the organist finishes the pre-service music you will be given a signal to toll the bells. The computer will be set up



so that all you have to do is click the play button.

### **Gospel Book**

A Gospel book may be used during some of our services. On services like Christmas Eve and Easter morning there may be a Gospel procession. If you are serving at a Gospel procession the specific details of that special procession will be taught to you in preparation of that service. If you are holding the Gospel book hold it slightly above your head so that everyone can see it and you can see where you are walking. When holding the Gospel book for the Pastor to read from place the bottom of the book in your palms and allow the pastor to open the book to the proper place.

### **Torch Bearing**

When carrying torches

- † hold the torches with both hands comfortably spaced away from each other so that you can balance the torch
- † hold your hands with your knuckles facing forward
- † keep the flame of the torch just above your eyes or higher
- † make sure that as you ascend the steps the bottom of the torch will not hit the steps
- † make sure that as you ascend the steps your cassock will not get under your feet (keep your cincture tied tight and your cassock above your ankles)

### **Serving at a service with a Baptism**

When there is a Baptism

- † make sure that the pastor gives you the towel that will be used before the service. Place this towel at your seat before you light the candles.
- † Do not sit with your parents after you light the candles.





- † During the last verse of the opening hymn open the font.
- † Then with the towel on your arm the pastor will give you the folder to hold for him to read from.
- † After the Baptism the pastor will take the folder from you and speak a word of exhortation to the congregation then a prayer. While he is speaking stand facing the pastor with hands folded palm to palm.
- † During the next song you may close the font and return to sit with your family.

### **Serving as a Crucifer**

When serving as a crucifer

- † be at church **fifteen minutes before the service.**
- † check with the pastor or usher on duty to see if there are any changes
- † vest in the monastic cassock and cincture
- † retrieve the processional crucifix from behind the altar, if it is not already in the back of the church
- † make sure that the acolytes who are serving as torch bearers for the procession are ready and on time as the crucifer will be a leader for the group

### **The Divine Service**

There are different names of the Sunday morning service. We can call it 'church,' as in 'What time does church start?' It can also be called 'worship' since when we gather an important thing that we do is worship God. Another term is the one that you see at the top of the page—Divine Service. The purpose of this term is to keep our attention on what God is doing to serve us when we are at church.



What God does during the service is really the most important thing. He tells us that our sins are forgiven. He reminds us that he loves us. He gives his body and blood in the Lord's Supper. He blesses us. The best thing we can do during church is listen closely to God telling us about his love for us in Jesus. As a response to that love we also joyfully sing and praise God with our voices.

As you probably have noticed when you come to church we do pretty much the same thing every week. That is not because we have no new ideas or even because we have to do it the same way. We do a lot of the same things every week for a few reasons. One is that there are no surprises. There aren't going to be any big surprises because the main message of every service is going to be Jesus' forgiving our sins. Another reason that things stay pretty much the same is that they have been pretty much the same for almost two thousand years. If someone who lived a thousand years ago walked into our church they would know what is going on. That is really amazing that we can have that connection with so many people who went before us.

Over the next few pages we are going to look at some of those things that stay the same in the Divine Service so that we can understand better why we do what we do. The picture on the next page shows the path of worship and all the parts of the service that will be explained on the following pages.

#### *Confession and Absolution*

As we enter God's house, we remember our sins. God wants us to confess our sins to him. John wrote, "If we claim to be without sin, we deceive ourselves and the truth is not in us. If



we confess our sins, he is faithful and just and will forgive us our sins and purify us from all unrighteousness” (1 John 1:8, 9). One of the first things we do in the service is ask for God’s forgiveness.

#### *Introit*

An *introit* is an entrance verse. Sometimes in our services this entrance verse will follow the absolution. It is a verse from Scripture that ties in with the focus of that day’s service.

#### *Kyrie*

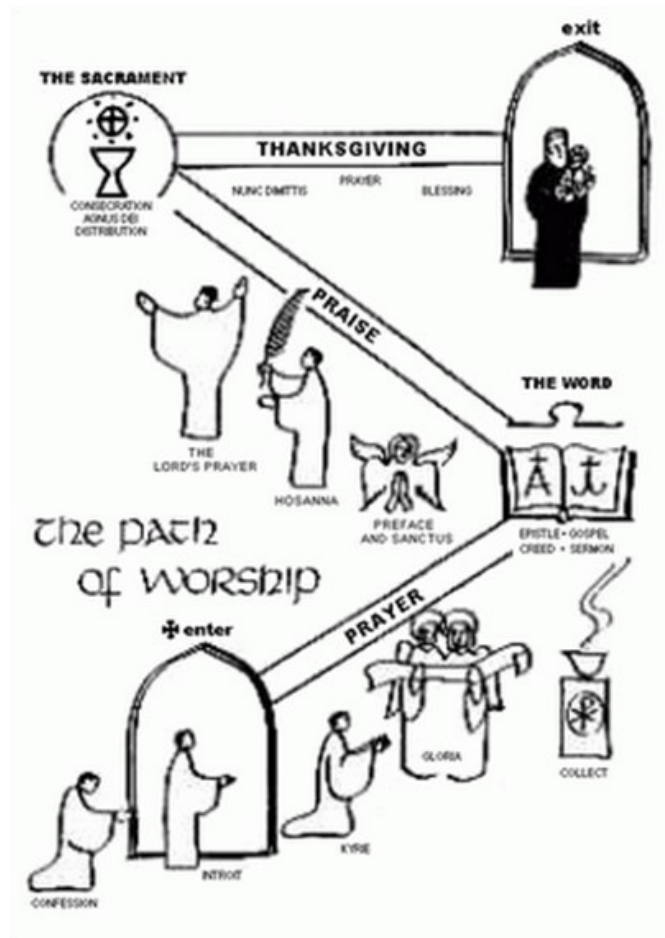
When we enter the presence of God all that we can say is Lord have mercy. The *Kyrie* (Greek for Lord) is one of the main songs of the service. In this song we ask the Lord for mercy. We ask for his mercy knowing that he is faithful and gracious and will keep his promise to forgive the sins of all people.

#### *Gloria*

Following the *Kyrie* there is a joyful song of praise. Though we fall to our knees asking for God’s mercy in the *Kyrie* we know also of the wonderful deeds God has done on our behalf. In the *Gloria* (Latin for Glory) we proclaim the great deeds God has done as we echo the words of the angel at the birth of Christ (Luke 2:8-20). Glory be to God on high and on earth peace, good will toward men.-

#### *Collect—Prayer of the Day*

Prayer is a treasured gift of the church. With it we ask for God’s blessings and also proclaim what he has done. In the prayer of the day our prayer is tied in with the theme of the day. With this prayer we ask specifically for God’s blessing





on us in connection with the day's theme.

#### *The Word*

God's Word is read in every service. The Sunday service is not just us coming to worship it is first and foremost God coming to us. One of the ways he comes to us is through his Word. There are usually readings from the Old Testament, the Epistles, and the Gospels. Our faith is based on God's Word and so is our service.

#### *The Word—Gospel*

The reading of the Gospel is the first high point of the service. The Gospel is the words and works of Jesus our Savior. The entire service revolves around Jesus. Here in the reading of the Gospel is found the focus for the day. It is proper to stand for the reading of the Gospel in honor of our Savior.

#### *The Word—Creed*

A creed is a statement of belief. When we confess the creed we are saying that what is in the creed is what we believe in our hearts. This is a very important part of our service. We are often tempted to avoid saying what we believe. In the service we always say what we believe together.

#### *The Word—Sermon*

The sermon is a proclamation of Law and Gospel. The sermon is always based on a section of the Bible. So what is said in the sermon must be in line with what is in that portion of the Bible. In the sermon we are told the truth about us and God. We are helpless without him and he provides all the help that we need in the person of his Son, Jesus Christ.



### *Preface*

The words of the preface have been used in the church from earliest times. When we say “The Lord be with you” “And also with you” we trust that the Lord is really with us, always watching over us. When we say “Lift up your hearts” we really “lift them up to the Lord” as we put all our trust in him. As we “Give thanks to the Lord our God” we know that “It is good and right so to do.”

### *Sanctus—Hosanna*

On Palm Sunday the people put palm branches down in front of Jesus and shouted “Hosanna in the highest! Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord!” We join those people in this song as we know that Jesus is present with us and will be present in the Lord’s Supper coming soon in the service.

### *Lord’s Prayer*

This is a uniquely Christian prayer. We call God Father. We can only do that because we have been made his children in the waters of Baptism. The Father gave his Son into death so that we can call on him as our own Father. When we pray this every Sunday it is not just because it is something everybody knows. We pray this prayer because in it we ask for all the things that God wants us to ask for.

### *Consecration*

When Jesus said “This is my body” and “This is my blood” he was speaking the truth. He really gave his body and blood for the forgiveness of all sins. When we hear the pastor speaking those words we can be sure that what people receive is really Jesus’ body and blood for the forgiveness of their sins.



### *Agnus Dei*

The Agnus Dei, which means Lamb of God, reminds us of the sacrifice Jesus made to forgive our sins. We ask confidently for mercy and peace from Jesus and we know that he always gives it to us.

### *Distribution*

The distribution of Jesus' body and blood is very important. As you wait for the time when you too can receive this gift it is good to think about the wonderful gift that people are receiving now and to thank God that they are receiving it.

### *Nunc Dimittis*

God once promised a man named Simeon that he would see the Savior of the world. After Jesus was born his parents took him to the Temple where Simeon held Jesus' in his arms and spoke the words that we now call the *Nunc Dimittis*. *Nunc Dimittis* means *now depart*. It is a good song for us to sing at the end of the service. Now that we have seen our salvation in Jesus we are ready to depart.

### *Prayer*

The final prayer of the service usually thanks God for what he has done for us during the service and asks God to continue to watch over us day after day.

### *Blessing*

Just as Jesus raised his nail-scarred hands and blessed his disciples before ascending into heaven, at the close of the service the Pastor raises his hands and announces the blessing of God. The blessing is not powered by the person who is doing it, but by God whose name is used in the blessing. Be-



cause it is the Lord's blessing we can be completely certain that it is true.

### **The Acolyte's Prayers**

#### *Before vesting*

In the name of the Father and of the + Son and of the Holy Spirit. Purify me, O Lord, and cleanse my heart; that, being made clean in the blood of the Lamb, I may come to eternal joy. Amen.

Heavenly Father, you have given me the privilege of serving in your house. Give me reverence and respect for this place. Keep me faithful and attentive to my duties. And strengthen my faith as I hear of how Jesus has served me in life and death. In Jesus' name. Amen

Lord God, I thank you for this day when I can serve in your holy house. Guide my hands that they may be steady in their work. Guard my mind from all distracting thoughts. And open my ears to be attentive to your Word, through Jesus Christ, my Savior. Amen.

#### *After the Service*

O Almighty God, I thank you for the sacrifice of Jesus. You have once again told me that you have forgiven my sin.





Grant me grace that the love I have been shown today may shine through me in the world. In the name of Jesus. Amen.

Merciful Father, you sent your Son to serve me in life and death. Thank you for allowing me to serve today in your house and let me serve my neighbor as I leave this place through Jesus Christ. Amen.

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