

SAINT MARK'S
EPISCOPAL CHURCH



Acolyte Manual
RITE II



Advent, 2012







St. Mark's Episcopal Church

Acolyte Manual Lent, 2009

Acolytes play an important role in the life of St. Mark's. They are a critical part in our worship services, the central aspect in our weekly parish life together. It is a chance for you to provide leadership to the parish as members of the ministers of the chancel at each St. Mark's service. Your commitment and dedication to this important ministry is important to the whole St. Mark's family, who support you with their prayers.

I. Acolyte Training and Guidance

In order to assist you in your ministry, St. Mark's provides training and support to our acolytes. This set of instructions summarizes your responsibilities when serving and provides guidance as to how best to carry out your role in worship. From time to time, as new acolytes join you, we will review these instructions with all acolytes in a training session at St. Mark's. Through these sessions you can become confident in your roles and practice each of the aspects of your service.

The Acolyte Master and Vergers of St. Mark's

A Verger is assigned each Sunday to guide the service. The Verger is always available to answer questions at the service and to assist you in your ministry. To help resolve any questions that may arise during services through out the year, you can always reach out to any of our clergy or Vergers to answer any questions you have about the service or your role in it.

St. Mark's has an Acolyte Master who is responsible for the training and direction of the acolytes and adult **Crucifers**. Head Verger Don McConnell (457-7929) currently is serving as the Acolyte Master for St. Marks.

We are proud of your commitment to service to St. Mark's and committed to help make it as rewarding for you as it can be!

II. Roles of the Acolytes

At St. Mark's, we have five different roles for acolytes. Typically, these roles act together to lead the procession of the choir and clergy into the church, lead the Gospel procession and the procession of gifts at the offertory, assist with the preparation for the Eucharist, and lead the choir and clergy out after the service.

Not all roles are used at each service, and one acolyte may be called upon to perform more than one role.

The five roles can be described as follows.

- **Crucifer:** The **Crucifer** carries the processional cross (the tall brass cross kept at the rear of the nave) at the head of the procession of the choir and clergy. Because the cross can be



heavy to carry, the role of **Crucifer** is typically assigned to one of the senior acolytes, and will assist and guide the other acolytes at the service as necessary.

The **Crucifer** is also processes with the Verger when the gifts are brought to the altar at the start of the Eucharist and is also the acolyte who is responsible for bringing the elements from the credence table to the ministers at the altar at the request of the Verger. At the end of the service, the **Crucifer** is responsible for extinguishing the candles on the altar and for carrying the processional cross in the final procession to the back of the church.

- **Clergy Cross Bearer:** This acolyte carries the smaller of the two processional crosses. This cross is carried immediately in front of the chalice assistants and clergy. During the Gospel procession, this acolyte holds the Gospel book for the clergy during the reading of the Gospel. At the Gospel procession, he or she follows the **Crucifer**, with folded hands, and then holds the Gospel book while the clergy reads. At communion, at the direction of the Verger, this acolyte assists the **Crucifer** in serving the altar. Both the **Crucifer** and the Clergy Cross Bearer should remain attentive during communion for instructions from the Verger.
- **Torchbearers:** **Torchbearers** carry the torches that accompany the processional cross whenever it is processed. The **Torchbearers** make sure that the candles in the torches are lit and process side-by-side following one row behind the **Crucifer** in the processions of the service: at the start of service, the Gospel, the presentation of the gifts and in the final exit procession.
- **Thurifer:** On special church occasions and high holidays, the Thurifer carries the thurible, or incense burner. Though we don't use incense very often, when we do, the Thurifer processes just behind the Verger, followed by the **Crucifer** and **Torchbearers**. The **Thurifer** also plays a role in the service when the gifts are brought to the altar.
- **Bishop's Acolyte:** Occasionally, when the Bishop visits and the Deacon is unavailable, one acolyte may be designated to assist the Bishop during the procession and at other points of the service. Typically the Bishop's acolyte assists by holding the Bishop's staff.

III. Preparing to Serve

Arrival: *When you are scheduled to serve, please arrive at least 20 minutes prior to the start of the service.* This gives you time to vest and get ready to serve. Please report in to the Verger immediately upon arrival. It also provides an opportunity for the Verger to instruct you as to any special events or changes to the order of the service.

Appropriate Dress: Please dress appropriately for a significant social event. Even though you wear a robe during service, you should be neatly dressed and wearing dress shoes if at all possible.

Vesting: Twenty minutes prior to service, you need to vest in the robe you will wear for the service. These are kept in the Vesting Room in the education wing. You should wear a robe that fits well, coming down to just above your ankles. The robes are numbered, so once you have found one that fits, you can always easily find it again in the acolyte's lockers to your right when you enter the vesting room.



You will need to tie a cincture (rope) around your waist, making sure that the ends do not trail on the floor and will not trip you as you process. The Vergers and the Chalice Bearers can assist you if you need help tying the cincture.

Taking your position Once you are vested, please join the rest of the ministers of the chancel at the back of the church near the chapel. Ministers of the chancel include the Verger, the acolytes, the chalice bearers and the members of the clergy. We gather near the chapel area where the processional cross and torches are stored in their mounts on the wall.

If you are serving as a **Torchbearer**, please take your torch and light it. If you are serving as **Crucifer**, or **Clergy Cross Bearer** take the cross you are assigned. *Always hold the cross upright and do not "spin" the cross on its pole.*

Please remember to be quiet so people as they arrive can come into the presence of God and collect their thoughts before service.

All the acolytes should stand together, ready for the Verger to call you forward. Please keep your voices low as people coming to service will be preparing for prayer in the nave.

Before each service the clergy will call together all of the ministers of the chancel for a prayer before the procession. Join the circle and pay attention for any last minute instructions.

IV. The Order of Service

The sequence of events during the service is known as the order of service. Described below is a typical Sunday Eucharist service, such as St. Mark's celebrates each Sunday. St. Marks utilizes Rite I (found in the Book of Common Prayer (BCP) starting at Page 323) at the 8 o'clock service and Rite II (BCP Page 355) at the 10 o'clock service.



Rite II (10am)

The sequence of events during the service is known as the order of service. Described below is a typical Sunday Eucharist service, such as St. Mark's celebrates each Sunday at 10 o'clock.

These are the main elements of the order of service on a typical Sunday at 10 o'clock where the acolytes have a duty to perform:

- i. **Positioning for the Procession**
- ii. **Entrance Procession**
- iii. **The Gospel procession**
- iv. **Processing the gifts**
- v. **Setting the Altar for the Eucharist**
- vi. **At Communion**
- vii. **Clearing the Altar after communion**
- viii. **Processing out after the service**



Your roles in each element of the order of service are described below.

i. Taking your Position for the Procession

Once you are vested, please join the rest of the ministers of the chancel at the back of the church (1). Ministers of the chancel include the Verger, the acolytes, the chalice bearers and the members of the clergy.

Gather near the chapel area where the processional cross and torches are stored in their mounts on the wall.

If you are serving as a **Torchbearer**, please take your torch and light it, making sure to hold it straight up (tilting it will cause the melted wax to run off onto your hands). If you are serving as Crucifer, take the processional cross, always holding it upright with the embossed face facing forward.

All the acolytes should stand together, ready for the Verger to call you forward Please remember to be quiet so people of the congregation as they arrive can come into the presence of God and collect their thoughts before service.

Before each service the clergy will call together all of the ministers of the chancel for a prayer before the procession. Join the circle and pay attention for any last minute instructions.

After the prayer at the back of the *nave*, follow the Verger to the end of the main aisle of the church and take your positions for the entrance procession.

ii. Entrance Procession

The processional cross bearer follows the Verger in procession, and then come both Torchbearers, walking about two paces (about one row of pews) behind the Crucifer walking abreast of each other, making sure to stay along the outer edge of the aisle on their side.

The choir will follow immediately behind the Torchbearers, also about two paces behind the torches.

The clergy cross processes after the choir and just in front of the deacon, the chalice assistants and clergy, as shown below.

St. Mark's Entrance Procession

Verger

Crucifer

Torch Torch

Choir

Clergy Cross

Chalice Bearer Chalice Bearer

Deacon

Clergy (Gospeler)

Clergy (Celebrant)

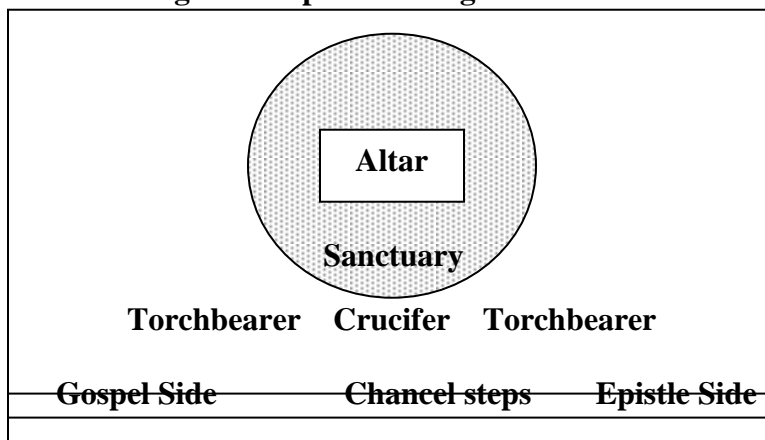


Typically, the organist will play once through the hymn, and then the choir and the people in the pews will start to sing on the second play through.

The pace will be slow, steady, and stately, about the pace of a slow walk.

Follow the Verger up the *chancel* steps and proceed forward to the edge of the *sanctuary*, the carpeted circle in which the altar is located. The Crucifer and the two Torchbearers will come together in a single line just in front of the sanctuary step (3), as shown below in Figure 2.

Figure 2: Upon entering the chancel



The Crucifer and Torchbearers will stop briefly at the foot of the sanctuary step, the raised carpeted area around the altar. The Torchbearers will stand on either side of the Crucifer *without reverencing the altar* (bowing or nodding your head). When all three acolytes are in place all three acolytes will, *simultaneously* turn to their right when the Crucifer turns right. The Epistle-side Torchbearer will then lead the acolytes to the right (*Epistle*) side of the chancel (5). Walk slowly and reverently to the Epistle (right) side of the chancel and place the processional cross and the torches in their places near the *credence table* (4), making sure the embossed side of the cross faces the congregation. Then move to your seats and **remain standing** at your place.

As soon as the **clergy cross bearer** reaches the sanctuary step (3), he or she should immediately turn left *without reverencing the altar* and proceed to the holder for the clergy cross (6). Then as soon as you can cross the chancel, walk slowly and reverently to your place, joining the other acolytes in standing before their chairs.

Whenever you are walking in the chancel without an object to carry, you should clasp your hands together in front of you as if in prayer.

All acolytes should pay attention to the Verger at all times and follow the lead of the Verger, standing and sitting as he or she does. You are part of the leadership for the worship service and should follow along with the service, singing hymns and saying the prayers with the congregation whenever you have no other duties to perform.



Remember the congregation is watching you throughout the serve. If you move about or talk, you will interrupt the people in their prayers, so pay attention and set a good example for everyone in the church.

iii. The Gospel procession

The Gospel procession brings the Gospel to the midst of the people.

As soon as the Verger rises for the Gospel procession, Crucifer, the Torchbearers and the clergy cross bearer should all rise together and prepare to process, taking up the torches and the cross.

When the Verger walks down the chancel steps, a Torchbearer should lead the Crucifer, followed by the second Torchbearer, to the front of the sanctuary step (3), just as you did upon the earlier entrance to the chancel. Walk slowly and evenly to the front of the sanctuary, and then, without reverencing the altar, all three should turn to the left simultaneously with the Crucifer and face the congregation.

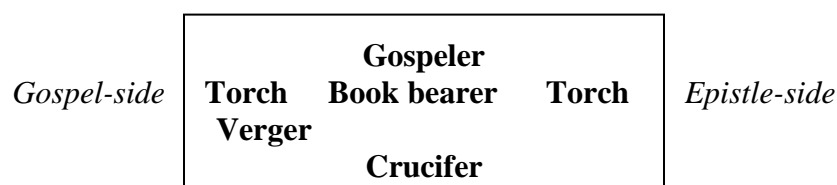
The clergy cross bearer will follow a short distance behind the second Torchbearer waiting at the Epistle (right) side of the sanctuary until the Gospeler enters the sanctuary and takes up the Gospel book from the altar.

The Verger will indicate the procession is to begin by reverencing the altar when the Gospeler picks up the Gospel book and turning to walk down the aisle. Once the Verger starts the Gospel procession down the aisle, the Crucifer and torches should follow down the chancel steps and down the aisle in the nave. As soon as the Crucifer and torches start forward, the clergy cross bearer should come to the front of the sanctuary (3), reverence the altar and then turn and follow the Crucifer and torches down the aisle, again clasping hands in front.

The Crucifer, followed by the two Torchbearers, who are following about one pace behind the Crucifer, will follow after the Verger to the position in middle of the *nave* where the Gospel is proclaimed. The Verger will stop just beyond the third set of cross lines on the floor (about the 7th row of pews), and stand on the *Gospel side* (left) of the aisle facing the aisle.

When the Verger steps to the Gospel-side of the aisle, the Crucifer also stops on the double lines on the floor (7) and turns to face the altar. The clergy cross bearer will stop one pace in front of the Crucifer and turn to face the Gospeler, taking the book as instructed and hold the book open for the clergy, standing steadily. The Torchbearers will each stand to either side of the clergy cross bearer, backs against the pew ends, facing the center of the aisle. The correct arrangement is shown below in Figure 3.

Figure 3: At the Gospel Reading





When the Gospel has been read, the Gospeler and clergy cross bearer step aside to the Epistle-side of the aisle with their backs against the pews. The Verger will then step forward and lead the procession back to the chancel, followed by the Crucifer, then the two Torchbearers, the clergy cross bearer and the Gospeler. Both Torchbearers walking side by side one pace behind the Crucifer and the clergy cross bearer following one pace behind the torches.

Upon reaching the sanctuary step (3), the Torchbearers and Crucifer again stand abreast of one another (without reverencing the altar) and simultaneously turn to the right and process to their seats, just as in the opening procession. The clergy cross bearer upon reaching the sanctuary step (3) reverences the altar and turns right to return to the acolyte seating near the *sacristy* door. Please sit when the congregation does and remain seated through the sermon.

iv. Processing with the Gifts

At the start of the passing of the peace, the Verger will rise, nod to the acolytes and proceed to the rear down the Gospel-side aisle. When the Verger stands, the Crucifer and both Torchbearers rise and take up the processional cross and torches as assigned. The Crucifer then leads the two Torchbearers down the Epistle-side aisle of the church with the torches again walking one pace behind the Crucifer.

Upon reaching the *narthex* they should join the Verger back at the start point for the procession (2). The Verger and Acolytes will wait in the *narthex* while the offering is collected. When the offertory anthem is over, Verger and Crucifer, followed again by the Torchbearers (at one pace distance) lead the procession of gifts carried by the Ushers down the center aisle of the nave. The Crucifer and Torchbearers actions at the foot of the sanctuary steps (3) are the same as in the other processions.

v. Setting the Altar for the Eucharist

The **Crucifer** has a major role to play at the time the altar is set for the Eucharist. At the direction of the Verger, the Crucifer will bring the bread box and the wine and water cruets to the Verger who will receive them at the communion rail enclosing the sanctuary (7) from the credence table.

After communion is over, the Crucifer will carry these back to the credence table as the Verger brings them to the altar rail. After each element is brought back to the credence table, turn and be prepared to respond to the Verger's direction.

A silent way to say "thank you" after someone has just handed you something is to slightly nod the head. This is not the same as reverencing the altar. For instance, the Verger will nod "thank you" when you bring a cruet of wine or water, and you may nod "you're welcome". Each time you hand off or receive an item, nod slightly to the Verger to acknowledge that you have received them.

The Verger will walk to the interior of the communion rail that encloses the sanctuary, and turn to the Crucifer. The Crucifer should walk to the Epistle-side of the communion rail (7) and receive the veil and burse and place them on the small table near the credence table. Once the



offering plates have been raised, they too will be passed by the Verger to the Crucifer to return them to the credence table.

Immediately upon placing the plates on the table, , the Crucifer will remove the stopper from the water cruet and pick up the silver bowl and towel for the hand washing at the altar. Hold the cruet of water in your right hand, the bowl in your left hand with the towel draped over your left forearm, just like a waiter does in a fancy restaurant. At the direction of the Verger bring the water cruet, bowl and towel to the Epistle-side of the communion rail enclosing the sanctuary (7), handing it, handle-first to the Verger, and remain standing at the rail with the bowl and towels in hand.

Once the Celebrant adds water to the wine, the cruet will be passed back to the Verger who will hand the cruet back to the Crucifer. When the Celebrant comes to the rail, and places his or her fingers over the bowl, slowly pour a slow and steady stream of water over the Celebrant's fingers until the Celebrant wiggles his fingers. That is the sign to stop pouring. The Celebrant will take the towel, dry his hands. When the towel is returned, take the cruet, bowl and towel to the credence table and move to your place and remain standing.

When the Celebrant begins the Great Thanksgiving, remain place in front of the acolytes' chairs and participate in the service.

vi. At Communion

After the consecration, the Verger will again look to the Crucifer and motion for the Crucifer to bring the second chalice and the purificator cloth that is on the credence table over it to the communion rail. Once it is received, return to the credence table and await any additional instructions from the Verger.

After the clergy and chalice bearers receive communion, all of the acolytes are to proceed to the rear of the Epistle-side of the communion rail to receive communion. Once you have received communion return to your seat near the credence table and keep alert for directions from the Verger.

vii. Clearing the Altar after Communion

Stay attentive to remove items from the altar at the direction of the Verger. Both **Crucifer** and **clergy cross bearer** should be prepared to help clear the altar, shuttling to and from the credence table to the side of the sanctuary as necessary an as directed by the Verger.

vii. Processing Out After the Service

After the post communion prayer, the organist will start playing the recessional hymn. This is the signal for the Crucifer and the clergy cross bearer to rise and prepare to move.

The **Crucifer** moves to extinguish the altar candles as soon as the singing begins, by taking up the candle snuffer from its place near the door to the *sacristy* and proceeding to the rear sanctuary step (9). Approach the altar from the rear (organ side), reverence the altar, and then extinguish the candle on your right (the Gospel-side) first. Then, without reverencing between



candles, extinguish the other candle, back up a couple of steps, reverence the altar, and then turn around and leave the sanctuary to return the candle snuffer to its place.

The **clergy cross bearer** should walk behind the Crucifer when he or she walks to the sanctuary to extinguish the service candles. The clergy cross bearer should reverence the altar with the Crucifer (9) and, when the Crucifer enters the sanctuary to extinguish the candles, the clergy cross bearer should proceed across the chancel and go to the clergy cross holder on the Gospel-side, keeping his or her hands clasped in front of the body at waist level. Once there, the clergy cross bearer should take up the clergy cross and remain standing facing the Verger.

After extinguishing the service candles, and returning the candle snuffer to its holder near the door to the sacristy, the **Crucifer** should take up the processional cross and await the Verger's direction on the procession. The **Torchbearers** should also rise when the Crucifer returns from extinguishing the altar candles and take up their torches and prepare to process out of the chancel.

The Verger will rise at an appropriate time and turn and bow to the choir who in turn will bow back to the Verger. The Verger will then begin the recessional procession. During some seasons of the church year, we process while singing the hymn. Other times we process after singing the last hymn.

When the Verger walks down the chancel steps, one Torchbearer should lead the Crucifer, followed by the second Torchbearer, to the front of the sanctuary step (3), just as you did upon the earlier entrance to the chancel. Walk slowly and evenly to the front of the sanctuary, and then, without reverencing the altar, all three should turn to the left simultaneously with the Crucifer and face the congregation.

The recessional procession will begin when the Verger reverences the altar and turns to walk down the aisle. The Crucifer, followed by the Torchbearers (again walking once pace behind the Crucifer), follows after the Verger and proceeds away from the chancel. The choir will process behind the Crucifer and Torchbearers.

As soon as the last choir member passes the **clergy cross bearer**, the cross bearer should follow the choir to the front of the sanctuary step (3) and immediately turn to face the rear of the church and proceed down the aisle without stopping to reverence the altar. The other ministers of the chancel will process behind the clergy cross.

Upon reaching the rear of the nave, all of the acolytes should line up along the black line across the narthex facing the altar and remain standing at the center rear (10).

After the dismissal, unless the priest asks you to do otherwise, you are then free to return to the vesting room, put away your vestments, and leave.

V. Special Services

From time to time acolytes will be called to serve in special services such as Advent Lessons and Carols, Choral Evensong, Ash Wednesday, Holy Thursday, Easter Vigil or Christmas services.



When these are scheduled, you will receive instruction in advance as to the order of service for these events and one or more Vergers will be present to assist you.



