



ACOLYTE NOTES May 2015

Last Sunday (5/3/15), we honored and celebrated the ministry of acolytes inducting 16 youth into the *Order of Acolytes* and presented each a cross to wear as a sign of their vows. One acolyte commented there were “a lot of words to digest” when Priest Lisa asked if they were willing and ready to commit themselves to this important ministry. So, just in case you missed it going by, here are some of those words: “*Each of you has been called to a ministry here in this congregation. Will you, as long as you are engaged in this work, perform it with care and respect?*” and “*Will you faithfully and reverently carry out the duties of your ministry honoring God, and with an earnest desire to add strength and hope for the spiritual well-being of this congregation?*”

The ministry of acolytes can be traced back to the 3rd century. While the church was developing its understanding of ordained orders of ministry with deacons, priests, and bishops, there were also four “minor” non-ordained orders recognized in the liturgy; porter/usher, reader, healer/exorcist, and acolyte. The word “acolyte” refers to *one who follows, attends, and serves the needs of the priest in the Eucharist*. The young people who have joined this order are learning how to exercise traditional and ancient roles in the contemporary, spirited and joyful setting of our worshipping community.

Eventually, each acolyte will learn to do all of the traditional functions of the ancient order of acolytes: light the candles, carry the torches, carry the Gospel Book, carry the processional cross, bring the offering plates for the ushers, and serve at the altar assisting the Celebrant/Priest. We have organized the acolytes into teams to allow for differences of age, size, experience, and interest.

We also have wonderful adults helping in many ways. **Laura Good, Ralph Reeves, James Boileau** and I see ourselves as coaches for the acolytes. We are here to help with instructions, encouragement, support, and continuously refining the role of our acolytes in worship. **Jerry Cuper** takes pictures for our photo board and makes reminder calls every Saturday for acolytes up on deck. **Lana Klosterman** built a firm foundation of acolyte ministry at St. John’s and we are so very grateful for her work. **Larry Brandenburg and Marv Sobodash** assembled a beautiful wardrobe for our new acolyte robes. Larry also made a wood pegboard for the acolyte crosses. Finally, we are grateful to all the adult Eucharistic Ministers; as our acolytes live more fully into the breadth and depth of their primary role of assisting the priests, the role of our adults will necessarily change as well. We are grateful for their generosity of spirit helping our acolytes ease into their new roles, and adjusting to the shift of responsibilities at the altar.

It has been said that liturgy is one united chorus of praise and thanksgiving involving the full participation of all. *Everyone has a role in the drama of the Eucharist... and the audience is God!* The whole is diminished when the variety of liturgical ministries is not fully expressed. It is with gratitude and humility we can confidently claim that we are moving into an even more faithful expression of participation as we gather each week as chorus to sing our praises to God.

The Rev. Bruce Campbell
Sunday Associate