



Christ Episcopal Church

Altar Guild

Handbook

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Christ Episcopal Church

Valdosta, Georgia

Altar Guild

Handbook

September 2009

Prayer

Direct us, O Lord, in all our doings with *thy* most gracious favor, and further us with *thy* continual help; that in all our works begun, continued, and ended in *thee*, we may glorify *thy* holy Name, and finally, by *thy* mercy, obtain everlasting life; through Jesus Christ our Lord. *Amen.*

Book of Common Prayer

This manual is a working document customized for Christ Episcopal Church in Valdosta, Georgia. Suggestions are welcome and will be considered for inclusion in future editions. The manual is posted online at www.christchurchvaldosta.org/altarguildhandbook.pdf.

Foreword

Liturgy begins and ends with the work of the Altar Guild. To care for the sacred vessels, the bread and the wine, the fair linens and hangings and the candles and torches used for worship in the Sanctuary is far more than a task, it is a true ministry. We are told that all things must be done "properly and in good order." It is the work of the Altar Guild that makes it possible to do so. The contribution of each Altar Guild member is important; together those contributions are a devotion to the greater glory of God. My thanks, and the thanks of all the parish family of Christ Church, are given for the devotion and dedication of our Altar Guild.

In Christ,
Peter+

General Duties

The duty of the altar guild is to prepare all the things necessary for the celebration of the Eucharist or any of the other sacraments and offices of the church. These services are included in the *Book of Common Prayer* and the *Book of Occasional Services*.

The altar guild is a ministry - a gift of time and talent to serve God in His house. It is a very great privilege to serve God in this way. The housekeeping and decoration of God's house should be done with sincere devotion and dignity in good taste.

The rector is the head of the guild, but he or she cannot do all that must be done in preparation for all of the services. The altar guild plays an important role and must be reliable and dependable. The rector sets the rules, the style, and the tone of the services by his or her preference for flowers, placement of the vessels used in the services, and whether to use incense or not. The rector appoints the head of the altar guild to organize and schedule work assignments.

Christ Episcopal Church organizes the altar guild into five teams of approximately five members each that take turns in a five-week rotation to set up and clean up for all the services during a week. During church holidays, the rotation is shortened so that the many services can be adequately covered.

Each team has members that have one or more of the talents needed to serve on God's altar: flower arranging, silver and brass polishing, washing, ironing, vacuuming, dusting, watering plants, trimming candles, marking the Bible lessons, or mending.

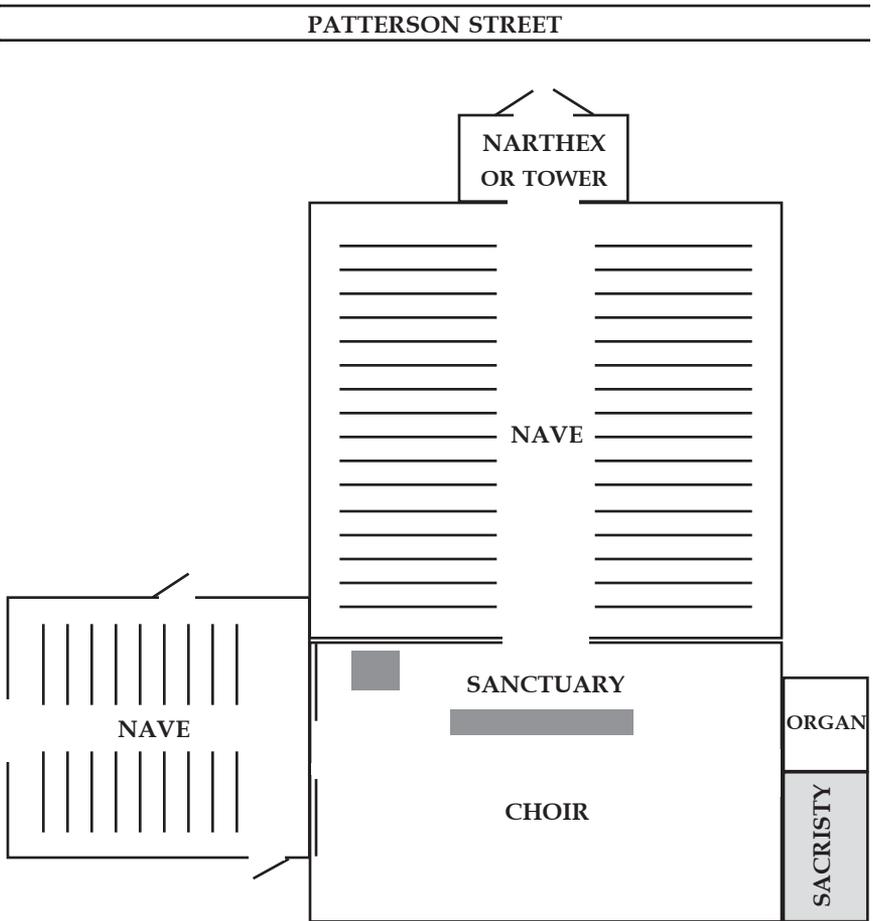
The altar guild welcomes new members. Share your talents to the glory of God.

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The Church Building

The church building is constructed for the basic purpose of housing the altar, the center of our worship. Christ Episcopal Church has its altar at the east end of the building. The liturgical space, the area of the church used for acts of public worship, is divided into the narthex or tower, the nave, the sanctuary, the choir, and the sacristy.



In the Sanctuary

The part of the church beyond the altar rail is called the sanctuary, from the Latin word *sanctus*, meaning “holy.”



ALTAR: Large, table-like furniture where communion is celebrated. It is usually draped with a variety of linens (see Fair Linen p. 5).

PULPIT: Lectern-like furniture from which the Bible is read and the sermon preached. It usually has a banner hanging that matches the one on the altar. The color of the hanging changes with the church season.



AUMBRY: A wall safe for storing the consecrated bread and wine from communion. If freestanding, it is called a “tabernacle.” A candle is kept lit close by to indicate that the aumbry has the reserved sacrament inside.



FONT: Large wooden stand containing a basin for baptisms.

CREDENCE TABLE: Table or shelf near the altar to keep vessels, wine, etc. for use at communion. It is usually covered with a small tablecloth.



SANCTUARY CANDLE: A special candle that burns to show that consecrated elements are in the aumbry. One will last about a week. Replacements are in the right-hand, lower cabinet in the sacristy.

SACRISTY: A room where the altar linens, silver, candles, etc. are stored near the altar.



Linens - Altar

CERECLOTH: A waxed cloth that is placed directly on the altar to protect the wood or stone - rarely removed.



FRONTAL: A cloth that hangs over the front of the altar. Color and decorations match the church season. There are two lengths of frontals: suprafrontal and laudian.



The Suprafrontal extends about 10 inches from the altar top and is often fringed.

Laudian is a full tablecloth that covers the altar to the floor. Christ Episcopal Church does not have one of these at this time.

FAIR LINEN: A long white, rectangular linen that covers the top of the altar and the frontal and hangs off each end. It is usually embroidered with 5 crosses, one on each corner and one in the center.



PULPIT HANGING: A rectangular banner that matches the frontal on the altar. It hangs from the top of the pulpit, down the front.



CREDENCE TABLE COVER: A small white tablecloth that covers the table or shelf where the elements and vessels used in communion are kept prior to the offertory.

Linens - Communion

See Laundry, p. 20, for folding instructions

CORPORAL: Square piece of linen with design on one side near the hem. When placed on the altar, it signifies the “field” on which bread and wine is consecrated.



PURIFICATOR: Small piece of linen-square with cross or design in center. It is used to wipe the cup as the wine is offered.



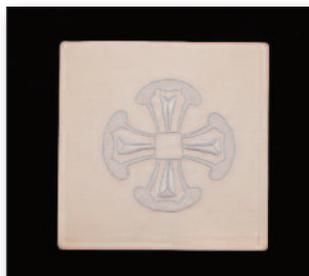


LAVABO TOWEL: Rectangular linen with cross on one end. It is used by the priest to dry hands after ablutions.



VEIL: Similar in size and shape to the corporal. It is made of lighter material and has lace or edging on hem. It is used to cover communion elements while they are on the altar. (We rarely use this.)

PALL: A square piece of cardboard covered with linen. It is used to cover the wine in the chalice. Before air conditioning, it was used to keep foreign objects like insects out of the chalice.



BURSE: A “purse” of cardboard covered in colored fabric. It is used to carry extra linens to the altar. Its color matches the altar hangings/seasons. (We rarely use this.)



Vessels

CHALICE: (Latin - “cup”)
Silver goblet for administering wine at communion.



FOOTED CIBORIUM/BREAD BOX:
Containers for bread. The bread box is a small, lidded, round container. The ciborium resembles a chalice but has a lid.



PATEN: The paten is a thin, saucer-like plate that holds the priest's host and the hosts (small wafers).



LAVABO: Small silver open bowl for the priest's ablutions (Latin - “to wash”).

CRUET/EWER/FLAGON: Various sized vessels of glass or silver for the wine and water at communion. It can also be used as a pitcher for water for the font at baptisms. However, we have a designated pitcher for baptisms. (See photo p. 23.)





THURIBLE/BOAT: A “smoke pot” on a chain for burning incense. The boat on top of the stand carries extra incense.

Other Articles - Special Use

ASPERGES:
A sprinkler for holy water.

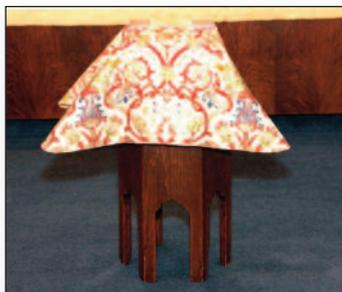


ALMS BASIN: Large silver basin to hold offerings when placed on the altar. Offering plates sit in it.



FUNERAL PALL: A large silk drape to cover the coffin during a funeral.

URN PALL: A small square tapestry that covers the container of ashes.



PASCHAL CANDLE: A large candle about three feet high in a stand. A new one is lit each year at Easter. The Paschal Candle, signifying the light of Christ, burns beside the baptismal font throughout the year, except in Lent and when the Advent and Christmas season wreaths are in use.



MISSAL STAND: It is usually a metal stand to hold the book for the priest while he or she celebrates. We use a tapestry pillow.



PROCESSIONAL CROSS: Ceremonial cross on a long pole, carried in processions.

TORCHES: Candles on poles that accompany the cross in procession.



TAPER SNUFFER: A metal bell-shaped instrument with a wooden handle used by acolytes to snuff candles.

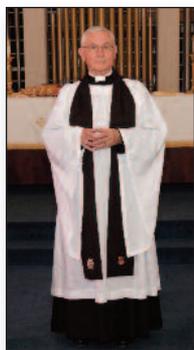
TORCH: A butane torch for lighting candles.



PRIVATE COMMUNION KITS: These are portable kits (wooden and box-like in shape) containing the vessels and linen to celebrate the Eucharist in homes, hospitals, and nursing homes. If a kit is on the counter on Saturday, please check; clean and restock linens if necessary.



Vestments



CASSOCK: A long, dress-like garment worn as the basic vestment.

SURPLICE/COTTA: A white, loose tunic-like outer garment, worn over a cassock. The surplice is long; the cotta is short.

TIPPET: A black stole worn for any non-eucharistic service.

CHASUBLE: A poncho-type outer garment worn by the priest who is celebrating communion. It is usually decorated with symbols and seasonal color.





CINCTURE/GIRDLE: A woven rope used as a belt.

DALMATIC: Resembles the Chasuble, except that the dalmatic has sleeves rather than being open like the poncho-style. It is worn by a deacon.



STOLE: A long narrow band of damask, linen, or silk that is often fringed on the ends. It is worn differently by the Eucharistic ministers, according to their function in the service. It has symbols and seasonal color.



COPE: Festive cloak worn by the presiding priest or bishop at special celebrations.



Set Up For 8:00 a.m. Sunday Service and For Small Weekday Services

Set up the silver tray as follows: The tray is used to carry vessels and linens to the credence table or for chapel services. It holds the items until used.

1. SMALL SILVER CRUET with V on handle is filled 2/3's full with wine. Cruet sits at the front, right-hand side of the credence table. Turn the handle toward the wall.
2. SMALL SILVER CRUET with A on handle is filled 2/3's full with water. Cruet sits at the back, right-hand side of the credence table. Turn the handle toward the wall.
3. BREAD BOX contains 30 hosts (wafers) and is placed at the front, left-hand side of the credence table.
4. LAVABO AND TOWEL are placed at the back, left-hand side of the credence table.
5. CHALICE is vested with a purificator over the rim and is placed in the center.
6. PATEN with priest's host goes on top of the purificator.
7. PALL is placed on top of the paten.
8. CORPORAL is placed on top of the pall.

Set Up For 9:30 a.m. Sunday Service and Major Feasts (Easter, Christmas, All Saints, etc.)

Set up credence table as follows:

1. 1st CHALICE is vested in the following order:
purificator, silver paten with 40 hosts and 1 priest's host placed on the paten; pall covers the paten with the corporal on top. This chalice stands at the center front of the credence table.
2. 2nd CHALICE is vested in the following order:
purificator and silver paten. It stands directly behind the first chalice.
3. 3rd CHALICE is vested with a purificator without a paten. This chalice is placed at the left-rear of the credence table.
4. 4th CHALICE is vested with a purificator without a paten. It will be used at the discretion of the priest and placed on the credence table in front of the 3rd chalice.
5. GLASS CRUETS filled with wine to the bottom of the handle. Place one cruet on the right-hand side of the credence table. The other cruet is placed in the tower.
6. SMALL SILVER CRUET with the A in the handle is filled 2/3's full of water and placed on the right-hand side of the credence table in the front next to the glass cruet of wine.
7. LARGE SILVER CRUET is used at Christmas, Easter, or when a large crowd is expected.
8. CIBORIUM with 45 hosts (wafers) is placed in the tower.

9. LAVABO AND TOWEL are placed on the left-hand side of the credence table in front of the 3rd chalice.
10. 2 SILVER OFFERING PLATES are placed in the tower.
11. ALMS BASIN is placed on the table next to acolyte.
12. BULLETINS should already be in the tower. Place 20+ on the table by the side chapel door and one on each acolyte chair. Pulpit should have a bulletin.

Set Up For 11:30 a.m. Sunday Service

Set up credence table as follows:

1. 1st CHALICE is vested in the following order:
purificator, silver paten with 40 hosts and 1 priest's host placed on the paten; pall covers the paten with the corporal on top. This chalice stands at the center front of the credence table.
2. 2nd CHALICE is vested in the following order:
purificator and silver paten. It stands directly behind the first chalice.
3. 3rd CHALICE is vested with the purificator, without paten.
4. GLASS CRUET filled with wine to the bottom of the handle and placed in the tower.
5. SMALL SILVER CRUET with the A in the handle is filled 2/3's full of water and placed on the right-hand side of the credence table, in the front next to the glass cruet of wine.

6. CIBORIUM with 45 hosts is placed in the tower.
7. LAVABO AND TOWEL are placed on the front, left-hand side of the credence table.
8. 2 SILVER OFFERING PLATES are placed in the tower.
9. ALMS BASIN is placed on the table next to acolyte.
10. BULLETINS should already be in the tower. Place 20+ on the table by the side chapel door and one on each acolyte chair. Pulpit should have a bulletin.

NOTE: We now have a fourth chalice. Father Ingeman will instruct us when this will be used. It will be vested in the same manner as the third chalice.

Set up Instructions Posted in Sacristy

Instructions for communion set up for all three services are posted on the cabinet doors in the sacristy. Written instructions are included in this handbook under the specific service.

Clean Up

- Be sure that the water heater is on. The switch is on the wall to the right of the sink and should be up in the on position.
- Take all vessels and linens back to the sacristy.
- Bread wafers should be returned to the storage bin.
- Unconsecrated wine should be funneled into the wine bottle and returned to the wine shelf.
- Put used, soiled linen in the water bucket on the counter to soak in cold water before laundering.

- Wash silver and glass in warm, soapy water. Glass cruets can be up-ended on the drying rack on the counter to the left of the sink. Silver should be dried with a soft cloth and stored in cabinet, or you may need to set up the vessels and linen on the silver tray for the next service.
- Alms basins should be stored on wooden organ box near the sink.
- Hymn board should be cleared of numbers, re-file or re-set for the next service.
- Flowers should be watered if needed. They will be taken to the sick or shut-ins on Thursday.
- If this has been a special service (e.g., baptism) check to see that additional vessels have been cleaned and stored.
- Turn off the water heater and lights and lock the door upon leaving.

NOTE: If the purificator is draped over a cruet, this signifies consecrated, unused wine. Such wine should either be: 1) placed in the aumbry, 2) poured into the piscine or designated sink (left side in our sacristy) or 3) poured onto the ground after consulting with the rector.

Flowers

People sign up on the flower chart in the parish hall or call the office to provide flowers each week. If no one provides flowers, the church assumes financial responsibility for them. They are arranged by the florist and brought to the church on Saturday morning. Flowers are delivered to the sick in the hospital or homebound on Thursday mornings.

Calendar

A church calendar is posted in the sacristy with the days in the appropriate color of the season. This is your guide to the color that should be used on the altar and pulpit hangings.

Candles

Candles should be checked before all services and replaced when needed.

FOLLOWERS are open brass or glass tubes that fit over the top of the candle, allowing the wick to stick out and preventing drips. Check to see that the follower is not stuck to the candle, but sits loosely. A blocked follower will overflow with the drips it should be preventing.



Candle wells develop after a candle has burned for a while. If the well is too deep, the wick cannot be reached for lighting. Trim away the wax at the top so that the well is not more than 1/3 inch deep. Wicks burn best if not longer than ¼ inch above the well. Snap off excess wick, especially if the wick has curled over.

New candles should be lit and burned for 30-60 seconds to “season” the wick.

SANCTUARY CANDLE: A special candle that burns to show that consecrated elements are in the aumbry. One will last about a week. Replacements are in the right-hand, lower cabinet in the sacristy.



GLASS HURRICANE GLOBES:

These glass sleeves are placed over candles on candlesticks in the windows for special services like Easter and Christmas. They are stored on shelves to the right of the choir.

Saturday Check List for Altar Guild

- Check the calendar for changes in the color of hangings – altar, pulpit, and banner.
- Check bulletins for baptisms and set up accordingly.
- Check silver and brass – polish if needed.
- Check torches and candles – clean off old wax, replace candles if needed and trim wicks to about $\frac{1}{4}$ inch.
- Check linens on altar and credence table. Change if soiled.
- Missal/Pillow is placed on the left-hand side of the altar (when facing altar).
- Mark Bible readings.
- Put up hymn numbers for 9:30 a.m. service.
- Check sanctuary candle above credence table. Replace if it is burned out or very low. It should always be lit if there are reserved sacraments in the aumbry.
- Place bulletins on the table in the tower and on the table by the side door (20+). Put one on acolytes' chairs and on the pulpit.
- For the 8:00 a.m. service, get the small table in the tower and put it $\frac{1}{3}$ of the way down the aisle next to the pews on the right when facing the altar. Place a wooden offering plate on it.
- Please take out the trash. Cans are beside the alley in the vine covered fenced enclosure behind the kitchen.
- Linens should be taken for laundering after the Sunday services and again on Thursday and returned as soon as possible.
- Water all plants and flowers.
- Flip the pillows at the altar rail.
- If we are down to five bottles of wine or low on hosts, please notify the church secretary or altar guild chairperson. If you see that any supplies are low, please call so that more can be ordered.

Laundry and Ironing of Linens

ALTAR FRONTALS: They are usually made of silk or damask and rarely need cleaning. We have them dry cleaned when necessary.

FAIR LINEN: Ironed on the wrong side and rolled on a cardboard tube to prevent folds and creases.

CORPORAL: Ironed and folded in thirds, length and breadth-wise. It is folded wrong side out so that it will unfold properly at the altar when used.

LAVABO TOWEL: Ironed flat and folded in thirds length-wise. Then it is folded in half, so that it will hang properly across the acolyte's arm.

PURIFICATORS: Ironed flat and folded in thirds, length and breadth-wise.

Tips on Laundering Linens

DO NOT use bleaches or soaps containing bleach on linen.

Pure Irish linen is not only the most beautiful and the most aristocratic of fabrics; it is the sturdiest and the longest lasting as well. With care, it will wear for many decades, but it will not last very long if you use strong soaps.

We cannot caution you too strongly about the use of detergents and bleaches on linen. A bleach that is even slightly too strong for the fabric will cause it to fall into holes, and some types of bleaches used in today's detergents are often unknown to us. The safest soap to use is Ivory Soap. Also, there is nothing better than sunshine, the

natural bleach, to renew linens to snow-white beauty. Linen has a crispness of its own and seldom needs starching, which weakens the fibers.

To simplify ironing altar linens, many altar guild members find it convenient to acquire a 24" wide piece of plywood the length of their ironing board. Cover this with Turkish toweling and keep it to put on top of your ironing board when you are doing flat linens. When ironing altar cloths, familiarize yourself with the width of the finished cloth, and as you iron, keep a yardstick at hand. Keep measuring it to iron it to that width. You can change the size and shape of a piece of linen by the direction in which you, often unconsciously, apply pressure as you iron.

We suggest that you iron your church linens on the wrong side while still damp. Use a Turkish towel on the board and put iron setting at Wool. Iron the embroidery first on the wrong side until dry; then turn on the right side. Lean on it as you iron, with slow firm deliberate strokes of the iron.

In storing linens avoid cedar-lined drawers or chests which tend to yellow linen, and take the necessary precautions about insects which, in some climates, eat holes in linen.

Candle Wax, Stain, and Lipstick Removal

Candle grease spots can vary with the type of wax used in the candle and whether or not the wax is combined with soot or dirt. Scrape it off carefully with fingernail, put linen upside down over a bowl, and from a height of 12" to 18", pour boiling water from a tea kettle; then wash as usual. If any wax remains, try Fels Naptha Soap.

To remove scorched spots from white linen, sponge with peroxide, then wash and rinse well. We find K2R very helpful for spot removal on vestments.

To remove a stubborn stain from some washable man-made fabrics, try pouring a little liquid detergent on the spot and rub it in, then rinse. To remove ballpoint ink stains, try spraying hair spray on it before laundering.

To remove lipstick from purificators, wet the purificator with tepid water and rub Pears Soap, a glycerin soap, on the lipstick spots. Set aside and wash later in Ivory Soap.

An altar guild member told me recently that "7-Up" was good at removing some types of lipstick stains from purificators.

Though we ourselves do not recommend it, we have been told that ERA Plus, as a last resort, is an efficient stain remover from white linen. If it is used, use it carefully and sparingly.

The following is the method used by an expert laundress who has dealt with some of the country's finer heirloom linens and laces for over 35 years, and it is our preference.

"Most important is to soak linens overnight in tepid water," she says, "with a mild soap such as Ivory Flakes. This will take out most things. If not, rub gently with more Ivory Soap, but never bleach. Rinse well in tepid water. Wrap in terry towels. Iron damp on a very well padded ironing table."

Notes from our own Eloise: Lipstick will come out easily with just a squeeze of dish detergent on the spot. Then scrub gently.

Vessel Care

SILVER-PLATED: This item requires the same care and handling as your finest sterling items. Handle with gloves whenever possible and store in a clean, dry place in tarnish-resistant bags. To keep the fine finish, use a reliable name brand silver polish such as Gorham, International, or

Goddard. However, do not polish any silver plate items more than necessary.

GOLD-PLATED interiors should not normally be polished with any of the above cleaners but should be rinsed with warm soapy water followed by a rinse with clear warm water. Dry with a soft, clean cloth. However, if tarnishing does occur, use a mild liquid silver polish.

STERLING SILVER: To keep the lasting beauty and fine finish, handle with gloves whenever possible. Polish regularly with a reliable name brand silver polish such as Gorham, International, or Goddard. Use a soft clean cloth to prevent scratching. Store in a clean, dry place in tarnish-resistant bags if available.

Baptisms

Baptisms are normally done in the course of Sunday Eucharist. In addition to the normal Eucharistic vessels and linens, you will need to see that the following are put out:

FONT: The font is placed in the center of the aisle leading to the altar but outside the altar rail leaving sufficient room for people to get to the altar rail for communion.

SMALL TABLE: kept in the tower. It is placed in front of the font between the font and altar rail.



PASCHAL CANDLE: placed on the left side of the font when facing the cross.

BAPTISMAL SHELL: This sits on the font with a lavabo towel placed under it.

LAVABO TOWEL: Place under Baptismal Shell.

SILVER PITCHER, three-fourth's full of warm water is placed on the small table beside the font.

BAPTISMAL OIL is kept in the priest's office. The priest will bring the oil to the church. Place the small vial on the small table beside the silver pitcher.

BAPTISMAL CANDLE is kept in the lower cabinet on the far right-hand side in the sacristy. Place on small table next to the baptismal oil.

BAPTISMAL BANNER is available. Ask the Rector if it should be displayed.

After the baptism when cleaning, pour baptismal water (holy water) onto the ground unless otherwise instructed by the priest.

Weddings

Consult the Rector for special instructions.

- Set up communion if celebrated.
- Use celebration or white frontal and hangings.
- Make sure tower is neat and orderly.
- Make white kneeling pillows available.
- After wedding, return church to proper condition for Sunday service.

Funerals

The casket will be closed throughout the service, as well as while the body lies in state in the church. A funeral pall for deceased civilians or a United States flag for deceased servicemen and women will be used. The funeral pall and the urn pall are stored in the bottom drawer to the left of the door in the sacristy. The funeral pall is to be placed in the tower prior to the funeral. It will be put on the casket as it enters and removed as it leaves the church. The funeral home personnel do this. The priest or deacon will vest the urn of ashes with the urn pall. The celebration or white frontal and hanging will be used.

The Rector will estimate the number of people to receive communion.

The Paschal Candle is placed in the center aisle leading to the altar and will be at the head of the casket. It is lit before the service. An acolyte, a deacon, or priest will light all candles.

Preparations for the Interment of Ashes

The urn of ashes is placed in front of the altar on the small table from the tower or on the one that is kept in the Rector's office. It is covered with the urn pall. The paschal candle stands to the left of the urn when facing the altar.

HYMNS: If hymns are being sung, the numbers should be posted on the boards.

Lenten funerals are conducted just like other funerals throughout the year.

The team on duty for the week of the funeral is responsible for setting up for the service and cleaning up after the service and for putting the church back in order. The church secretary will notify the team leader when her team is responsible for a funeral.

The Altar Guild Schedule is revised twice a year in June and December. You can receive the schedule by paper mail or e-mail. If you are unable to assist your team on your scheduled week, please notify your team chair person in advance and schedule a replacement. Members of other teams will often swap weeks if given enough notice.

*May God bless your comings and your goings
and all that you do.*

For further study of altar guild practices consult the following books found in the Christ Episcopal Church library:

The New Altar Guild Book by Barbara Gent and Betty Sturges, Morehouse Publishing, 1996.

A Working Manual for Altar Guilds, third edition, by Dorothy C. Diggs, Morehouse Publishing, 1988.

The Complete Training Course for Altar Guilds, by B. Don Taylor, Morehouse Publishing, 1993.

Additional information is also available on the national Episcopal Church Web site:

<http://www.episcopalchurch.org>

Notes

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