

Customary for Emmanuel Episcopal Church

Liturgical Ministries

Acolytes

Acolytes are called to serve at the altar, to actively assist in the worship of God. Their service helps to keep the liturgy flowing smoothly, thus opening the way for worshipers to participate without distraction.²

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General Instructions

1. Schedules for acolyte service are issued from the parish office each quarter. Schedules are published in the monthly *Messenger*, the weekly e-mail update, and on Emmanuel's website (www.emmanuelbristol.org).
2. If you who are unable to serve at a scheduled service, you are responsible for finding a replacement AND for notifying the scheduled adult acolyte leader as soon as possible.
3. Your role as an acolyte is to assist in the worship of God. Your duties, therefore, should be performed with reverence, without unnecessarily drawing attention to yourself or creating a distraction for others.

4. Always walk slowly and with dignity. Your movements should never appear rushed or hurried.
5. Participate in the entire worship service by standing, sitting, and/or kneeling, when appropriate.
 - a. *Standing* – Always stand up straight.
 - b. *Sitting* – Sit up straight with knees and feet together.
 - c. *Kneeling* – Put all of your weight on your knees and kneel upright. Never squat or slouch when kneeling at the altar.
6. Either *kneel* or *stand* quietly and reverently during prayer. NEVER SIT during prayer (unless directed by the officiant).
7. Always *stand* when the Gospel is being read, while singing congregational hymns, during the reciting of the Creed, and at other times whenever the congregation is standing – or as you are directed.
8. Always pause to bow simply when approaching the altar or when crossing in front of the altar. BUT, NEVER BOW if you are carrying a processional cross (senior or junior) or a torch. Processional crosses and torches should be held upright at all times.
9. No chewing gum, please!

Preparation for Worship

1. Arrive at the Acolyte Vesting Room no later than 20 minutes before the service is scheduled to begin.
2. Verify your assignment with the adult acolyte leader. [NOTE: The number, ages, and experience of the acolytes available for duty may necessitate changes in assignments or the assignment of multiple roles and responsibilities to a single acolyte. It is always preferable, whenever practicable, for older more experienced acolytes to function as the *Senior Crucifer* and *Server*.]
3. Vest in an acolyte's alb and cincture. A cross may also be worn.
4. At the adult leader's direction, collect your appointments (e.g. processional cross, torches, missal, etc.) and gather in the rear of the nave approximately 5 minutes before the service begins.
5. Remain quiet as the congregation prepares for worship during the musical prelude.
6. As the service begins, join the procession according to the order of procession described elsewhere in this Parish Customary.

Responsibilities for Assisting in Worship at Holy Eucharist

Senior Crucifer

The Senior Crucifer carries the processional cross while leading liturgical processions during worship. The Senior Crucifer is also expected to perform other tasks of assistance during the service. Specific instructions for the Senior Crucifer are these:

1. Collect the processional cross from the stand at the rear of the nave.
2. Stand at the center aisle in the rear of the nave ready to lead the procession. While waiting for the service to begin, take care not to block the aisle in a way that would prevent arriving worshippers from choosing a seat.
3. The service customarily begins with a musical prelude followed by the singing of a congregational hymn. Prepare to lead the procession as the organist plays an introduction to the hymn and the congregation stands.
4. Begin leading the liturgical procession down the aisle when the congregation and choir start singing. Walk slowly and hold the cross with dignity. It is customary for the congregation to reverence the cross as it passes. [NOTE: If there are torch bearers, they may flank the Senior Crucifer in procession.]
5. Proceed up the chancel steps and stop (with the torch bearers), facing the altar, in front of the altar rail. [Remember, the processional cross and torches should always be held erect; never reverence the altar cross while holding these appointments.]
6. Turn, signaling the torch bearers to move with you, and move toward the sacristy once the last choir member moves past the processional cross so that the altar rail opening is clear for worship leaders and ministers following in the procession to enter into the sanctuary (area beyond the altar rail).
7. Secure the processional cross in its holder on the chancel wall next to the sacristy entrance.
8. Wait at the sacristy door to re-enter the chancel with the torch bearers.
9. If other members of the procession have reached their seats and the hymn is still being sung, move to the center of the altar, in front of the rail, and reverence the altar cross (with the torch bearers). If singing of the hymn has concluded, wait until the minister has ended the opening prayer before re-entering the chancel.
10. Proceed to your seat on the bench at the right side of the altar.
11. During the exchanging of the Peace, locate and retrieve the alms basins in preparation for the offertory. [The alms basins are usually on the bottom

shelf of the credence table, but they may have been left on the other side of the altar platform during a prior service.]

12. When the priest says the offertory sentence(s), collect the two smaller alms basins (leaving the larger collection basin behind) and promptly move with the Server to the front of the altar. Reverence the altar, turn and move to the top of the chancel steps.
13. Once the Server collects the Eucharistic gifts from the ushers, hand an alms basin to each of the ushers. You may assist the Server in carrying the Eucharistic gifts back to the altar, as needed.
14. Return to your seat beside the altar.
15. Once the offertory music is concluded and the organist begins to play the Doxology, stand and carry the large collection plate to the top of the chancel steps.
16. After the ushers place each of the alms basins into the large collection plate, turn and move toward the altar.
17. Hand the offerings across the center of the altar to the priest.
18. Turn and move the kneeling cushion across the opening in the altar rail; then slide the brass rail across the opening and secure it into the opposite railing. A torch bearer may assist with this from the choir side of the rail. Before closing the rail, make sure that Eucharistic Ministers who may have been singing in the choir have moved into the sanctuary area. Afterward closing the rail, return to standing in front of your seat.
19. You may stand beside the altar to receive communion from the priest.
20. Remain quietly seated while communion is being administered from the altar rail to the congregation.
21. Once everyone has received communion, open the altar rail and move the kneeling cushion away from the opening. [NOTE: Be prompt in opening the rail. The priest may need to pass through the open rail to carry communion to parishioners who cannot walk to the front of the chancel.]
22. After the blessing, leave the sanctuary, reverence the altar, and move toward the sacristy as the organist begins to play the recessional hymn.
23. Promptly retrieve the processional cross and, holding the cross erect, move to the altar rail opening and face the altar. [NOTE: You may again be flanked by torch bearers.]
24. Watch for the priest's signal before turning and leading the closing liturgical procession. Again, walk slowly and with dignity.
25. Return the processional cross to its holder at the rear of the nave.

Torch Bearers

Torch Bearers symbolically light the way for the liturgical procession and provide light for the reading of the Gospel. Torches are always carried in pairs, and both should be held at approximately the same height. Specific instructions for Torch Bearers are these:

1. Collect a torch from the stand at the rear of the nave. The adult acolyte leader will assist with lighting the candles in the torches.
2. One Torch Bearer should stand on each side of the Senior Crucifer.
3. When the service begins, walk in procession beside the Senior Crucifer down the nave aisle and up the chancel steps. Stop with the Senior Crucifer in front of the opening in the altar rail. [Remember, torches should always be held erect; never reverence the altar cross while holding a torch.]
4. Stand facing the altar until the Senior Crucifer gives a signal to turn left and walk into the sacristy.
5. Place your torch in its holder in the sacristy as quietly and quickly as possible.
6. Stand with the Senior Crucifer at the door between the sacristy and chancel, and wait for a signal from the Senior Crucifer.
7. At his/her signal, move with the Senior Crucifer to the altar rail opening, reverence the altar, and move to your seat with the adult acolyte leader in the designated choir pew.
8. At the beginning of the Gradual (usually a hymn), return to the sacristy and retrieve your torch.
9. Move with your partner back to the opening in the altar rail, and stand facing the altar on either side of the Missal Bearer.
10. When the priest signals, turn and walk slowly in front of the priest with the Missal Bearer and other Torch Bearer to the center of the nave.
11. At the center of the nave, turn facing the priest and holding your torch very still, stand beside the Missal Bearer while the priest reads the Gospel.
12. At the conclusion of the reading of the Gospel, walk back toward the altar in front of the priest with the Missal Bearer and other Torch Bearer.
13. Continue to the sacristy and replace your torch in its holder as quietly and quickly as possible.
14. Return to your seat with the adult acolyte leader remembering the reverence the altar if you pass in front of it.
15. You may move with the adult leader to the altar rail to receive communion when it is your turn, and then return to your seat.

16. Remain quietly seated while communion is being administered from the altar rail to the congregation.
17. Promptly following the blessing, return to the sacristy to retrieve your torch. The adult acolyte leader will assist with re-lighting the candles in the torches. [If the candles don't light right away, don't worry about it! Move on into position for the recessional.]
18. Move with your partner from the sacristy as quickly as possible and stand beside the Senior Crucifer facing the altar.
19. At the priest's signal, turn with the Senior Crucifer to lead the closing liturgical procession. Again, walk slowly and with dignity.
20. Blow out the candle in your torch, and return the torch to its holder at the rear of the nave.

Missal Bearer

The Missal Bearer carries the Gospel Book in procession and holds the book for the priest during the reading of the Gospel. Specific instructions for the Missal Bearer are these:

1. Before the service begins, go to the front of the church and retrieve the Missal (Gospel Book) from the altar.
2. Carry the Missal to the rear of the nave in preparation for the liturgical procession.
3. Find your place in the liturgical procession behind the choir and/or the Junior Crucifer, and be ready to move down the aisle toward the altar with the procession.
4. In procession, carry the Missal in front of you with the cross on its cover facing outward, grasping the book with one hand on each side. You may carry the Missal slightly above and in front of your forehead in procession.
5. Enter the altar rail and place the Missal on the Gospel side of the altar (to the congregation's left) once you reach the front of the church.
6. After placing the book on the altar, move to your seat with the adult acolyte leader in the designated choir pew. [NOTE: When the Missal Bearer is also serving as Candle Lighter/Extinguisher, s/he may sit inside the altar rail in a chair to the left of the altar (except for the large center chair that is reserved for the celebrant).

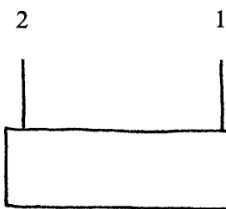
7. At the beginning of the Gradual (usually a hymn), retrieve the Missal from the altar.
8. Move in front of the opening in the altar rail, and stand facing the altar between the Torch Bearers.
9. When the priest signals, turn and walk slowly in front of the priest with the Torch Bearers to the center of the nave.
10. At the center of the nave, turn facing the priest. Hold the Missal very still so that it can be easily seen by the priest while s/he reads the Gospel from it.
11. At the conclusion of the reading of the Gospel, walk back toward the altar in front of the priest carrying the Missal as you did previously.
12. Return the Missal to the Gospel side of the altar.
13. Return to your seat with the adult acolyte leader.
14. You may move with the adult leader to the altar rail to receive communion when it is your turn, and then return to your seat.
15. Remain quietly seated while communion is being administered from the altar rail to the congregation.
16. Promptly following the blessing, leave your place in the chancel and move to the sacristy with the Torch Bearers. [NOTE: The Missal is left on the altar; it is NEVER carried out in recession.]
17. Join the closing liturgical procession in the same position behind the choir and/or the Junior Crucifer. Reverence the altar as you pass, and remember to walk slowly and with dignity as you recess.

Candle Lighter / Extinguisher

The Candle Lighter/Extinguisher lights the altar candles before the service begins and extinguishes the altar candles as the service concludes.

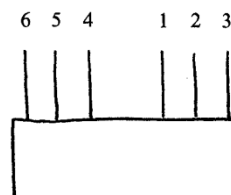
1. Always vest before lighting the candles.
2. Light the altar candles no less than 5 minutes before the service is to begin. The candles may be lit before the musical prelude begins, or you may enter the chancel from the sacristy as the organist begins playing.
3. To light the candles, enter the sacristy from the door to the parish hall and retrieve a candle lighter.
4. Check the taper in the candle lighter. Extend the taper 1 to 2 inches and light the taper in the sacristy entering the chancel. Ask the adult leader if you need help lighting the candle lighter.

5. Enter the chancel carrying the lit candle lighter; stop in front of the opening in the railing and reverence the altar. Extend the taper with the lever on the side of the candle lighter, as necessary, so that the taper remains lit while you are lighting the candles.



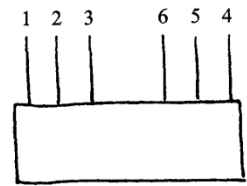
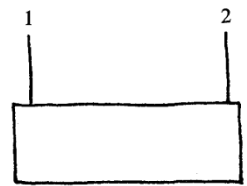
6. Light the Eucharistic candles on the altar first. The candle on your right (the Epistle side) should be lit first; then light the candle on the Gospel (left) side of the altar. You may light these candles from behind the altar if you cannot easily reach them from the front.

7. Light the 6 candles behind the altar after the Eucharistic candles are lit. Light the 3 candles to the right of the cross first – starting with the candle closest to the cross. Then light the 3 candles to the left of the cross – again, starting with the candle closest to the cross.



8. When all of the candles are lit, extinguish the taper by pulling down on the lever and then immediately pushing it back up so that the wax does not melt and clog the tube.
9. Reverence the altar and exit through the sacristy.
10. Leave the candle lighter in its stand in the sacristy, and join the other acolytes in the rear of the nave for the liturgical procession.
11. Once you reach the chancel in the procession, you may sit either with the adult acolyte leader on the designated choir pew or in a chair on the left side of the altar (except do NOT sit in the Sedilia, the large chair in the center reserved for the celebrant).
12. Remain at your seat and stand, sit or kneel, as appropriate during the worship service.
13. You may stand beside the altar to receive communion with the Lay Eucharistic Minister if you are seated inside the altar rail; otherwise, you may move with the adult leader to the altar rail to receive communion when it is your turn.
14. Remain quietly seated while communion is being administered from the altar rail to the congregation.
15. Promptly following the blessing, leave your seat and move to the sacristy with the Torch Bearers.
16. Retrieve a candle lighter, and stand at the sacristy door while the closing liturgical procession leaves the chancel.

17. Move to the center of the altar rail and reverence the altar as soon as the procession has left the chancel steps. Do NOT wait until the recessional hymn has ended.
18. Using the bell shaped end of the candle lighter, gently extinguish the candles in the reverse order from the way in which they were lighted. Extinguish the Eucharistic candle on the Gospel (left) side of the altar first; then extinguish the Eucharistic candle on the Epistle (right) side of the altar. Again, you may do this from behind the altar if you cannot easily reach them from the front.
19. Next, extinguish the 6 candles behind the altar. Extinguish the 3 candles to the left of the cross first – starting with the candle farthest away from the cross. Then extinguish the 3 candles to the right of the cross – again, starting with the candle farthest away from the cross.
20. Reverence the altar and exit through the sacristy.



ADDITIONAL NOTES:

- a. Hold the candle snuffer gently over each candle to smother the flame. Do NOT use pressure to push down on the tops of the candle as excess pressure damages the candles.
- b. At baptisms, a larger candle on a tall stand is generally placed near the baptismal font. This candle should be lit before the service begins and left lit at the conclusion of the service.
- c. During certain liturgical seasons, there may be a larger candle on a tall stand near the altar (e.g. the Paschal candle during Easter season or the Christ candle in the Christmas season). This candle should remain lit after the service concludes. Do NOT extinguish the larger candle.
- d. In Advent, four candles hang in the Advent wreath above the chancel. The number of candles lighted is determined by which Sunday it is during Advent. These candles are lighted BEFORE the service begins and extinguished AFTER the service concludes. The acolyte leader or another adult must assist with lowering and raising the Advent wreath.

Junior Crucifer

The Junior Crucifer carries the smaller, wooden cross behind the choir and ahead of the Ministers and Priests in the liturgical procession. Specific instructions for the Junior Crucifer are these:

1. Collect the smaller, wooden cross from the stand at the rear of the nave.
2. Find your place in the liturgical procession behind the choir, and be ready to move down the aisle toward the altar with the procession.
3. In procession, lift the cross and carry it erect with the metal decorative art facing forward.
4. Once you reach the altar rail, turn and proceed to the sacristy. Remember, do not reverence the altar while carrying the cross; keep the cross erect at all times.
5. Place the cross in its holder in the sacristy as quietly and quickly as possible.
6. Stand with the Senior Crucifer and Torch Bearers at the door between the sacristy and chancel, and wait for a signal from the Senior Crucifer.
7. At his/her signal, move with the Senior Crucifer to the altar rail opening, reverence the altar, and move to your seat with the adult acolyte leader in the designated choir pew.
8. You may move with the adult leader to the altar rail to receive communion when it is your turn, and then return to your seat.
9. Remain quietly seated while communion is being administered from the altar rail to the congregation.
10. Promptly following the blessing, leave your place in the chancel and move to the sacristy with the Torch Bearers.
11. Retrieve the cross and join the closing liturgical procession in the same position behind the choir as when you entered. Remember, do not reverence the altar as you pass, and remember to walk slowly and with dignity as you recess.

Server

The Server assists the priest in preparing the altar for celebration of the Holy Eucharist. Specific instructions for the Server are these:

1. Find your place in the liturgical procession behind the Eucharistic Ministers and immediately in front of the priest; be ready to move down the aisle toward the altar with the procession.
2. Reverence the altar when you arrive at the altar rail in procession; then proceed to the seat on the bench to the right of the altar, and move to the position nearest the credence table (small table to the right of the altar). Remain standing through the opening prayers and until the congregation sits just prior to the reading of the first lesson.
3. Stand, sit or kneel, as appropriate during the worship service.
4. When the priest concludes the announcements with the offertory sentence(s), promptly move with the Senior Crucifer to the front of the altar. Reverence the altar, turn and move to the top of the chancel steps.
5. Collect the Eucharistic gifts (bread and wine) from the ushers so that they can then accept the alms basins from the Senior Crucifer.
6. Holding the bread and wine, turn with the Senior Crucifer toward the altar. The Senior Crucifer may assist with carrying these gifts, if necessary.
7. Carry the Eucharistic gifts to the front of the altar and hand them to the celebrant. Be sure to turn the handle of the wine cruet toward the priest when handing it to him/her.
8. Return to your position beside the credence table and remain standing to assist the celebrant in preparing the altar for celebration of the Holy Eucharist.
9. At his/her instructions, hand the cruets containing wine and water to the priest making sure to turn the handles away from you toward the priest. As the priest prepares the Eucharistic feast, he/she may ask for other appointments from the credence table or hand items to you to be returned to the credence table; remain standing and be prepared to assist.
10. If the priest chooses to cleanse his/her hands before consecrating the communion elements, place the lavabo towel over your left wrist, and hold the lavabo bowl in your left hand. Open the lid of the cruet containing water, and pick it up with your right hand. Turn toward the priest. When the priest holds his/her fingers over the lavabo bowl, pour a small amount of water over his/her fingers. When the priest nods for you to stop, raise your

left arm so that the priest can wipe his/her fingers. Bow to each other, and return the bowl, towel and cruet to the credence table.

11. It is customary to strike the Sanctus bell at specified times during the Eucharistic Prayer. Prior to the beginning of the Great Thanksgiving, determine from the day's order of service which Eucharistic Prayer (e.g. A, B, or C) is being used, and find the marked Prayer in the Book of Common Prayer lying beside the Sanctus bell. This book is marked for the appropriate times to strike the bell. Strike the bell at the designated times.
12. You may stand beside the altar to receive communion with the Lay Eucharistic Minister and then be seated while communion is received by the congregation.
13. At the conclusion of communion, stand to assist in the clearing of the altar by receiving the appointments handed to you by the priest and other ministers for placement on the credence table.
14. Following the blessing, remain standing at your position until it is time to join the closing liturgical procession. Join the procession in the same order in which you entered – following the Lay Eucharistic Ministers, ahead of the Priest. Pause to reverence the altar as you pass through the opening in the altar rail.

Responsibilities after Worship

1. Return all appointments (processional crosses, torches, etc.) to the designated space at the rear of the nave.
2. After the service, you MAY ring bells in the bell tower (but please do not swing on the ropes); you MAY enjoy a doughnut in the Parish Hall.
3. You MUST return to the Acolyte Vesting Room to remove and neatly re-hang your vestments in the designated storage spaces.

Responsibilities for Assisting in Worship at Morning Prayer

Preparation for Worship

1. Light the 6 service candles behind the altar (refer to page 8, step 7). (At Morning Prayer, the Eucharistic candles should not be on the altar.)
2. Retrieve the processional cross, move to the rear of the nave, and wait to lead the procession with the singing of the processional hymn.

During Worship

1. Hold the cross with dignity and walk slowly as you lead the liturgical procession.
2. Proceed up the chancel steps to the altar rail; pause briefly at the altar rail, facing the altar. (Hold the cross erect; never bow to reverence the altar when carrying a processional cross.)
3. Turn and walk toward the sacristy. Stop to secure the processional cross in its holder on the chancel wall next to the entrance to the sacristy; then proceed to your seat on the bench at the right side of the altar.
4. Stand, sit, or kneel at the appropriate times as indicated in the order of service.
5. When the officiant says the offertory sentence(s), collect the two smaller alms basins (leaving the larger collection basin behind) and promptly move to the front of the altar. Reverence the altar, turn, move to the top of the chancel steps and hand the alms basins to the ushers. Return to your seat.
6. Once the offertory music is concluded and the organist begins to play the Doxology, stand, take the large collection basin to the top of the chancel steps, and hand the collection basin to the officiant. When a congregational hymn is sung as the offertory, the Doxology may be omitted. When there is no Doxology, watch for the officiant to stand and signal for the alms basin to be brought forward; this usually occurs during the singing of the last stanza of the offertory hymn.
7. Remain standing behind the officiant while the officiant receives the alms basins from the ushers, raises the plates, and makes a brief statement followed by a congregational response.
8. When the officiant then turns and hands the alms basins to you, take the alms basins and place them on the altar.
9. After placing the alms basins on the altar, turn and move toward the sacristy to retrieve the processional cross.
10. Holding the cross erect, move to the altar rail opening and face the altar when the organist begins to play the recessional hymn.

11. Watch for the officiant's signal before turning and leading the closing liturgical procession. Again, walk slowly and with dignity.
12. Return the processional cross to its holder at the rear of the nave.

At the Conclusion of Worship

1. The service concludes with the extinguishing of the service candles behind the altar.
2. When the crucifer is the only acolyte, s/he should return quickly to the sacristy through the parish hall, retrieve a candle snuffer from the sacristy, and proceed back into the sanctuary to extinguish the candles (refer to page 9, step 19).
3. When there are two acolytes, the second acolyte serves as the candle lighter and extinguisher. At the recessional, s/he remains behind, waiting at the sacristy door for the liturgical procession to reach the rear of the nave before proceeding to extinguish the service candles (refer to page 9, step 19).

Notes for Adult Acolyte Leaders

1. Acolyte Leaders should arrive at the Acolyte Vesting Room no later than 25 minutes prior to the service to assist acolytes with vesting and to review the assignment of duties with each acolyte.
2. The number, ages, and experience of the acolytes available for duty may necessitate changes in assignments or the assignment of multiple roles and responsibilities to a single acolyte. Such changes or additions to assignments should be made prior to the service rather than as an afterthought during the service. It is always preferable, whenever practicable, for older more experienced acolytes to function as the *Senior Crucifer* and *Server*. Combined assignments to be considered may include a) Missal Bearer AND Candle Lighter/Extinguisher, b) Server AND Candle Lighter/Extinguisher, or c) Crucifer holding the Gospel Book for the reading of the Gospel by the priest.
3. The Acolyte Leader should make certain that an acolyte is charged with responsibility for lighting the altar candles and that the candles are lit prior to the start of the service. The candles should be lit no later than at the beginning of the musical prelude. [NOTE: The assigned acolyte should be tall enough to easily reach the candles with the candle lighter and should be trained in the proper order for lighting and extinguishing the candles.]

4. Acolyte Leaders may use personal discretion as to whether s/he chooses to vest and join in the liturgical procession or to enter the chancel discretely from the sacristy. If processing, the Acolyte Leader should join the procession ahead of the Lay Eucharistic Ministers.
5. The Leaders' primary roles are to assist in acolyte training, at the direction of the Rector, and to discretely provide minimal coaching to acolytes, as necessary, during worship.
6. Depending upon the occasion, and in consultation with or at the direction of the Rector, other acolyte duties, such as a thurifer, banner bearer(s), or flag bearers, may be included in a liturgical procession.
7. This Customary provides step-by-step instructions for each distinct acolyte role in current, common practice at Emmanuel Episcopal Church. The intent is to provide clarity of the duties and responsibilities for each function. If there is a need or desire to limit the number of acolytes assisting in worship, all of the duties can be efficiently executed for Holy Eucharist by only a Crucifer and Server (with the Server also acting as Candle Lighter/Extinguisher and the Crucifer serving as Missal Bearer), or a third acolyte could serve as Missal Bearer and Candle Lighter/Extinguisher. Torch Bearers, Banner Bearers, Junior Crucifer, etc. are all optional.
8. When there is a liturgical procession for simpler services, such as Morning Prayer, only a crucifer is generally sufficient; an additional acolyte serving as candle lighter/extinguisher is optional on these occasions.

References:

¹ Michno, Dennis G., *A Manual for Acolytes*, Morehouse Publishing, Harrisburg, PA (1981).

² The Christian Formation Committee of the Diocesan Commission on Ministry, *Liturgical Ministries Profiles: A Customary for the Diocese of Vermont* (2006)

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