

Altar Guild Manual

Christ Lutheran Church
Marshfield, WI

Prayer for Altar Guild

Almighty God, we thank Thee for the opportunity to serve You and Thy Church as a member of Altar Guild. Grant that we may handle holy things with reverence and perform our work with such faithfulness and devotion that it may be acceptable to Thee and obtain Thy blessings. We ask this in the name of Jesus Christ, Your Son, our Savior. Amen

What is Altar Guild?

Altar Guild is a service group of the church that:

- Sets-up and cleans-ups Communion
- Takes care of, sets-up, and stores altar items (ie. Linens, eternal candle, flowers, paraments, communion ware, wafers, and wine
- Keeps the chancel and furnishings clean and polished

Policies

The Altar Guild is responsible for purchasing: Corporals, purificators, napkins, vinyl runners, fair linen, Baptismal Napkins, and non-alcoholic wine/grape juice. They are responsible for informing the office when running low on wine, wafers, individual communion cups, and Eternal Candles.

Church members may donate toward Easter and Christmas memorial flowers used to decorate the church. Money remaining after the purchase of holiday flowers can be used throughout the year to purchase Altar Flowers or for other needed supplies. Altar Guild members are responsible for watering and care of flowers and plants.

To honor a deceased Altar Guild member, a \$25 donation is made to the Church Library Fund.

Structure

Officers shall be: President, Vice-President (or co-Presidents), Secretary, and Treasurer

Meetings

Meetings are held the second Monday of the month except January, June, and July.

Altar Duties

1. Set-up and clean-up Communion when it is scheduled
2. Prepare for Sundays: flowers (watering and placing), dusting (Altar, Pastors' chairs, Communion Rail, and Baptismal Font), check the eternal flame and replace if necessary (lasts about ten days), keep Working Sacristy clean
3. Check calendar in Sacristy for the color of the paraments and eternal flame globe (and change if necessary). The banner is usually changed by the office manager or janitor, but can also be done by the Altar Guild
4. Check for updated suggestions/changes/problems posted on the bulletin board in the Sacristy.

Flowers

Check the flower sign-up calendar in the Narthex for flower donations. Please call the donor the week of the donation as a friendly reminder and thank you. At the beginning of the month coordinate with the office about flowers donated for the Altar. Check after weddings and funerals if flowers are left for altar use.

Flowers should be delivered by Noon on Thursdays.

Artificial flowers should not be placed on the Altar. Place them on a stand by the Altar.

Remove bows and ribbons unless doing so leaves gaps or detracts from the appearance.

Always place plastic squares under the container when placing flowers on the Altar or stands.

Flowers or plants that can be used for several weeks should be placed in the Working Sacristy and watered during the week.

Dispose of old flowers promptly in wastebasket. Containers can be washed out and returned to the florist. Usually you will be offered a flower as a thank you.

No flowers during Lent

Communion

If you are unable to set-up Communion for any reason and another Altar Guild member can't, please contact the office. The Pastors or Office Manager can set it up (especially Thursday).

Supplies: When down to one box of cups, wafers, or wine, let the office know.

Cleaning the Altar: A long, clear, vinyl runner goes over the fair linen (long white Altar cloth) and stays on permanently. Wipe this off after communion. Use a damp cloth and dry with a towel. Scrape off wax from candle drippings using the small, white plastic scraper.

Non-alcoholic/Grape Juice: Date when opened. Grape Juice should be tossed after 1 month. Use one cup per tray on the top two trays.

See picture on last page for how to set-up Communion ware. Communion stands should be put ahead of the first pews. Place a tray with paper doily on each.

Traditional set-up: Place the Corporal on the Altar first. Fill bread plate full of wafers. Place extra wafers in a ziplock bag. A small container is used for gluten free wafers. Place two fresh wafers in the container the first week of each month. Dispose of old wafers in the contaminated bag. Put cups in the trays and fill with wine. Fill one cup on at least 2 trays with non-alcoholic wine/grape juice. Place a paper and cloth napkin on the Altar for spills. Check the previous year's calendar to estimate the number of trays needed. Set-up on the left side of the Altar (organ side).

Common Cup set-up: Fill cup about 1/3 of the way. Cover with linen napkin, gold paten, and pall (square). Place on the Altar behind the bread plate.

Clean-up: Count used individual cups (record the number on the calendar) and toss them. Also record the number of members receiving common cup and add a + to the calendar (ask Pastor for the number). Dispose of unused consecrated wine in the common cup (and any left from the used individual cups) reverently on the ground outside. After Sunday's service, if there is unused consecrated wine in the individual cups it can be consumed or saved in an empty wine bottle and labeled as such (place the consecrated wine sign around the neck of the bottle) and stored in the refrigerator. After Thursday service, unused cups can be stored in the fridge in ice trays (covered in plastic wrap) to be used on the top tray on Sunday. Unused wafers can be put into a ziplock bag. The linen napkin from the common cup will have to be brought home and cleaned.

Cleaning Communion Ware: DO NOT USE SOAP on trays! Wash and wipe using cold water and dry **ONLY** with *microfiber towels*. Use a Q-tip to ensure the ridge of the tray is dry. Apply Pledge with a fleece rag as a protective coat about once a month or when spills occur. The common cup should be cleaned with soap and warm water then dried with a dish towel. Make sure all Communion ware is dried thoroughly.

Cleaning Linen Napkin: For wine stains, place the stained area over a glass cup or bowl. Pour boiling water through the stain until gone. For lipstick stains, use any of the following: white vinegar, rubbing alcohol, and cool water, oxiclean, make a paste with washing soda, or use a cheap white toothpaste without crystals. Never use bleach. Then wash, line dry, and press the napkins in thirds lengthwise, then thirds again from the opposite ends, keeping the embroidered cross in the middle of the napkin.

Lent and Easter

Prior to Ash Wednesday: Make sure unbleached muslin cloth is cleaned and pressed. This linen replaces the white Altar cloth from Ash Wednesday through Maundy Thursday. Place the white linen on the Altar for Maundy Thursday. Check with the office so that the Purple cloth can be hung on the cross. Don't wait until last minute! Please wash cloth after it is taken down.

Palm Sunday: Arrange Palm plants. Check with DCE/Board of Education about single palm branches for Sunday School.

Maundy Thursday: The Altar is stripped at the end of the service by two Altar Guild members. All palms are removed before the service.

Good Friday: the Altar is bare. A black cloth is hung on the wooden cross behind the Altar, on the big cross, and a veil placed over the gold cross to the right of the Altar. These need to be removed before Easter Sunday.

Check last year's Communion numbers before setting up (especially for Maundy Thursday and Good Friday).

Easter Sunday: The white veil is hung on the cross. Easter flowers and other decorations are arranged on Saturday. Also make sure to place the Paschal Candle.

Confirmation

Use red paraments on Confirmation Sunday. Check with the office about flowers. Roses are bought for each confirmand to take home.

Check with the office/Pastors for class size to help plan how many people to set-up Communion for.

Advent

The Advent wreath (with blue and pink candles) should be set-up starting the first Sunday of Advent to the left of the Altar. Candles are switched to all white for Christmas Eve. The wreath is taken down after Epiphany.

Christmas decorations will be set-up as scheduled by the office.

Weddings

The wedding paraments are rarely used. If they are, the pulpit parament is removed. All paraments would have to be returned to normal after the wedding.

Baptisms

Elders or Pastors are responsible for setting up for Baptisms with the following guidelines: place a baptismal cloth napkin and the shell on the Font. Make sure the water is removed from the font and poured outside afterwards. The basin and surrounding area should be dried off and the cover replaced.

Altar Guild members make the napkins. Please keep an eye on the supply. Fold carefully into thirds, then in half to form a square.

Of General Concern

Make sure everything is clean and back in their spots before you go off duty. Return all items to the same place you found them so others can find them easily. Be neat and orderly. Dust and vacuum the Working Sacristy and by the Altar as needed.

The fair linen should be washed and ironed occasionally. Check with members who have done this on how to do it properly.

Contact the members on duty before or after you with any concerns. Place the key in the communion ware cupboard. Record any problems/changes/suggestions on a sheet and place on the bulletin board.

Report any needed or broken items to the President. Some supplies (like soap) can be purchased and the receipt turned into the Treasurer.

If you need help or cannot serve as assigned, it is your responsibility to find a substitute.

If you have questions or concerns, please ask the President.

When down to one box of eternal flames, please let the office know. Used inserts are saved for recycling.

Check-list

Weekly

- ✓ Flowers
- ✓ Eternal Flame
- ✓ Correct Parament Color
- ✓ Dust/Wipe Altar Vinyl Runner
- ✓ Repairs/Supplies

Communion

Set-up

- ✓ Place stands for used cups – 1 on each side + tray and doily
- ✓ Check set-up picture – one on each side (2-3 trays in center on Thursday)
- ✓ Corporal
- ✓ Cloth and Paper Napkin
- ✓ Ziplock bag with wafers
- ✓ Bread tray/base/cover filled with wafers
- ✓ Gluten-free wafer container
- ✓ Wine trays (2 total non-alcoholic)
- ✓ Common Cup

Taking Down

- ✓ Place stands out of way to the side
- ✓ If doilies are soiled, dispose, if good, may be stored with trays
- ✓ Replace Corporals and Napkins in drawer. If soiled, wash and return
- ✓ Count and record number of cups used; dispose in wastebasket. Any wine left in used cups, put in a glass and reverently dispose of on ground outside

- ✓ On Thursday – unused Communion cups can be placed in ice cube trays, covered in plastic wrap, and stored in refrigerator. Otherwise on Sunday pour wine back in empty wine bottle (labeled as consecrated) and dispose of cups
- ✓ Check brass trays for any wine spill. Use Q-tips to wipe out ridge. **DO NOT WASH WITH SOAP** – rinse and dry thoroughly. Place in bags and store them on shelves in cabinet. On occasion – use Pledge as a final coat to protect the finish.
- ✓ Wash common cup w/soap and water.
- ✓ Remove wafers from Bread Plate; wash and dry, return to container. Store base/cover/plate in bags on shelf in cabinet.
- ✓ Ziplock bags with wafers are placed on the shelf above the counter

End of Month

- ✓ Repairs or supplies – notify President
- ✓ Clean linens
- ✓ Check Altar Fair Linen and vinyl runner
- ✓ Sacristy clean and in order
- ✓ Return key to locked cabinet (where wine and bread trays are kept)
- ✓ Flower containers returned to florist
- ✓ Clean followers with brass cleaner – see instructions

Baptism

- ✓ Napkins – running short? Notify President

Wedding

- ✓ Will there be Communion?
- ✓ What time is it at on Saturday?

Seven Commandments of Altar Guild

If it's metal, polish it

If it's floral, arrange it

If it's cloth, iron it

If in doubt, wash it

If it's been taken care of by one person for more than ten years, avoid it

If it's a memorial, revere it or try to work around it

If it's been done only one way for more than five years, don't try to change it

Excerpted from “Once Upon a Pen” by Ken Alley

As often as you eat this bread and drink the cup, you proclaim the Lord's death until he comes. – 1 Corinthians 11:26

