

Mt. Olive Lutheran Church

Training Guide

September 2026 edition



Whatsoever you do, work at it with all your heart, as working for the Lord, not for man, since you know that you will receive an inheritance from the Lord as a reward. It is the Lord Christ you are serving.

Colossians 3:23-24

Thank you to all who volunteer in one or more of the roles listed below. We deeply appreciate the God-given gifts you bring to our worship liturgy.

SECTION 1: ACOLYTES

Please arrive 15 minutes early if you are scheduled to serve. This allows enough time to get dressed and meet with Pastor. The server should wear the alb (white robe), cincture (rope tied at waist) and the cross. Boys need to wear pants (no shorts please). Acolytes should avoid flip flops and Crocs. Instead, please wear shoes in which you can walk quietly (preferably closed toe). Parents are encouraged to check their son or daughter for neatness and appearance prior to the service.

Candle Lighting

Following the Welcome and Announcements, the Prelude begins. Proceed down the center aisle slowly as soon as the music starts. Bow when approaching the altar. Light the candles on the altar first, always starting on the RIGHT-hand side. Then move to the left side. Proceed around to the back of the altar, exiting in the back to light the candles on the wall. Again, start lighting from the RIGHT and move to the LEFT. Return the candle lighter to its holder and have a seat in the chairs to the right of the altar (when facing it from the pews).

Additional Candle Lighting

During certain times of the church year, there will be additional candles to light including the Advent Wreath, Paschal Candle and Tenebrae Candles.

- Advent Wreath
 - The acolyte should light the regular candles and the previous week's candles during the Prelude. At a designated time in the worship service, the Acolyte will get up and light that week's candle. On Christmas Eve, all four candles and the center white candle (Christ Candle) are lit. The Christ Candle is lit throughout Christmas until the last Sunday of Epiphany, which is the Feast of Transfiguration.
- Paschal Candle
 - This special candle is lit during Easter and remains lit until Ascension Sunday. It is also lit for baptisms and funerals.
- Tenebrae Candles
 - Before the Good Friday service, only the seven Tenebrae candles on the altar are lit, starting on the RIGHT side. During the reading of the Seven Last Words

of Christ, the acolyte (optional if available, wearing a black alb instead of white) extinguishes ONE candle after each reading. When extinguishing candles, the acolyte should start on the LEFT, which is always opposite of how they were lit.

Communion

Currently, servers return to their seats after receiving a blessing or Holy Communion. However, in the event that there is no one to carry the individual cup tray, an acolyte or crucifer may be asked to assist at the altar, following behind Pastor but in front of the Elder carrying the chalice.

End of Service/Extinguishing Candles

There is a timing consideration when leaving your seat to begin extinguishing the candles. When in doubt, ask Pastor PRIOR to the start of the liturgy which verse you should start extinguishing. Similarly, keep making eye contact with Pastor as the closing hymn gets underway.

Generally, if it is a three-verse hymn, you can start making your way to the back wall candles when the congregation starts singing the first verse. If only two verses, you will need to get up as soon as the music starts. If a four-verse hymn, you can likely sing the first verse then make your way to the back wall.

Always extinguish the back wall candles first and going in the opposite direction of how they were lit. In other words, start extinguishing on the LEFT side and move to the right.

Next, enter the altar from the back, come to the front of the altar and extinguish the candles on the LEFT, before moving to the right.

As you exit the altar at the front, please turn around and make a slight bow before walking down the center aisle. Generally, the acolyte is first in a processional, followed by the crucifer and then Pastor.

SECTION 2: CRUCIFERS

Please arrive 15 minutes early if you are scheduled to serve. This allows enough time to get dressed and meet with Pastor. The server should wear the alb (white robe), cincture (rope tied at waist) and the cross. Boys need to wear pants (no shorts please). Acolytes should avoid flip flops and Crocs. Instead, please wear shoes in which you can walk quietly (preferably closed toe). Parents are encouraged to check their son or daughter for neatness and appearance prior to the service.

Holding the Cross:

Place the right hand at chest level with the palm facing out and the left hand at the waist with the palm facing in. Keep the pole directly in front of your nose to help you keep it straight. The crucifix (cross) should be above your head.

When the congregation begins to sing the first verse of the processional hymn, the crucifer should begin walking slowly down the center aisle, with Pastor behind you. Walk up to the first step of the altar and turn around and face the congregation. Pastor will give you a nod when it is time to exit the altar, place the crucifer in the stand and go to your seat.

Communion

Currently, servers return to their seats after receiving a blessing or Holy Communion. However, in the event that there is no one to carry the individual cup tray, an acolyte or crucifer may be asked to assist at the altar, following behind Pastor but in front of the Elder carrying the chalice.

Recessional

As the music begins on the last hymn, remove the crucifix from its stand and take your place in front of the altar on the first step, facing the congregation. Hold the crucifix in the same manner as in the Processional. Pastor will cue you when it is time to step down and begin walking slowly down the center aisle to the back of the church.

SECTION 3: DUAL ROLES

One person serving as both Acolyte and Crucifer

In the event there is only one person to serve in both positions, please follow these instructions (abbreviated from above):

After lighting the candles, instead of taking a seat, walk down the side aisle of the church to take your place in the back, in preparation for the Processional, carrying the Crucifix.

At the end of the service, as soon as the music for the closing hymn begins playing, immediately start extinguishing the candles. Return the candle lighter to its holder, remove the crucifix from the stand and step up to the altar. If time is running out (follow Pastor's cues), remove the crucifix and immediately begin walking down the center aisle.

SECTION 4: PROPER FIT FOR ALBS/ROBES

*This applies to Acolytes, Crucifers and Elders
(and others assisting with Holy Communion)*

Length: The bottom of the robe should reach around the ankle to the top of your shoes. This ensures it covers your footwear and maintains a neat, reverent appearance.

Sleeves: Sleeves should reach past the elbow and slightly above your wrist, but not so long that they drag or bunch.

Waist and Cincture: The robe should allow you to tie a cincture (rope) comfortably around your waist without pulling too tightly. The cincture should sit at a natural waistline, not too high or too low.

For the robes, please note that there are youth sizes (8-16) as well as adult sizes (S-L). Similarly, the cinctures (ropes tied at the waist) are also sized.



SECTION 5: USHERS

Ushers do much more than hand out bulletins, accurately count worshipers and direct worshipers to the communion rail. Ushers are the hosts of the worship service, staying attentive to any needs of the people or the Pastor that may arise. As hosts, they welcome visitors and members, making them feel comfortable. Please also see SECTION 7: GREETERS on page 11 for more information on welcoming visitors.

Ushers are good listeners, answering questions, helping people to find a place to sit, get to restrooms, use the nursery and find Sunday School classes. Ushers introduce visitors to members who can also assist them. Ushers *lead* people into God's house.

USHER DUTIES

Before worship:

One usher is scheduled for the Saturday liturgy, two for the 8:00 am and two for the 10:30 am. Please arrive 20 minutes before the service begins. Greet persons who enter and hand them a bulletin in the Narthex.

Make sure everything is in order for the service. Verify that the hymn numbers on the board match the hymns listed in the bulletin. Make sure the printout of the assigned lessons to be read are placed on the lectern. If not, leave a copy of the bulletin. Also make sure there are bulletins in the seats for acolyte and/or crucifer.

Please note: Sound System (iPad, organ, microphones) is handled by those members trained specifically for this task. Unless trained on the equipment, this is not an Usher responsibility.

If able, one usher should stand at the outside door to open and assist worshippers entering the church.

On the small table against the wall in the Nave, is a weekly print out of who is serving in all positions for each service as well as fields to enter the number of attendees. Verify the acolyte and crucifer assigned to serve. If the young person is not present, robed and ready to serve, ushers need to recruit other youth to fill in. If no young persons are available, an Elder should assume those duties (lighting and extinguishing of candles).

Ask visitors, the elderly and handicapped persons – “How may I help you?” As needed, please escort persons to their seats. Point out available seating and wait for the person's approval.

Depending on their ability, handicap or elderly worshipers may find it easier to sit in the pews along the wall and receive communion from their seats.

During worship:

Keep main entrance doors to the Nave/Sanctuary closed during the Worship Service. Outside doors always remaining closed to conserve energy in the Narthex.

Late comers may be seated during the Prelude and congregation hymns. Please help parents with restless children to find their way to the Nursery/Cry Room if needed or assist in other ways as appropriate.

Worshipers who leave the service should be re-seated at times other than the Bible readings, the Sermon or Prayers. Offer them a seat at the rear of the Sanctuary to wait for an appropriate time to return to their pew.

Please assist worshipers re-entering during the service to close the doors quietly.

Counting and recording worship attendance:

Ushers should record the number of people attending the liturgy. Ushers are encouraged to be discreet when recording the number of people in the service. It is best to complete the count during the First and Second Lessons. Count all persons! Always include Pastor, Organist, Choir members, other musicians and those in the Nursery too.

Please count from the back of the Sanctuary OR you may also consider counting people from the choir loft (but you will still need to note any persons in the back that cannot be seen from above). ***Ushers no longer need to record how many people take the Eucharist.*** Record the attendance numbers on the weekly printout at the back of the Nave on the small table.

Offerings are collected in the Nave. The Offering plate should be set on the small pedestal in the center, but behind the pews (closer to the wall). After each service, an Elder will collect the offerings, place them in a manila envelope marked for that particular liturgy and place them in the safe, located in the Copier Room.

Eucharist:

The role of the usher is to anticipate the flow of communicants to the altar for the Eucharist to ensure a smooth transition from one table to the next, while avoiding any overcrowding at the altar or “traffic jams”.

Directing the communicants to the altar does not begin until either the Pastor has received the Sacrament OR Pastor has nearly completed communing those members and visitors

who cannot come to the altar. Ideally, those needing the Eucharist brought to them should sit on the left side of the church.

Please limit the seating of communicants at the rails to between 14 – 16 (except when the church is decorated for Christmas). The placement of the Christmas trees requires that number to be reduced to between 12-14.

Facing the altar, the RIGHT side should ALWAYS go first, start with any persons sitting in the right transept. If no one is seated in that area, start with those seated in the right-side pews. As the RIGHT side goes to **kneel**, then the LEFT side should be signaled to come forward. Start with persons seated in the left transept.

After that, the flow should move smoothly, with the next group moving to the altar once the last person on the front of the altar turns to go to their seat, generally passing near the collection plate for individual cups. (This allows those coming from the side or the back to be transitioning without interrupting the flow of new people going to the altar on the opposite side. The goal is to avoid a traffic jam BUT also ensure continuous flow so that Pastor and the Elders are not waiting for the next table to come forward either.

If you are aware of a person who needs extra time to walk forward, consider using them as the break until the next table moves forward, rather than having them be the last person to step forward AND also have to walk the farthest. At the same time, since the person may need extra time to walk to the front, signal that table to move forward sooner than normal (i.e before the table leaving the altar even clears the collection plate for individuals). This allows the person who may have some difficulty to not have to walk a greater distance. Ultimately, we should also reflect patience to allow God's faithful to come to the Lord's Table, even if a little extra time is needed by an individual.

Ushers should identify and communicate with Pastor ahead of time if possible, those who need the Sacraments brought to them.

After worship:

After each service, check the pews and floors. Pick up all loose papers and put hymnals back in their place. Ushers serving at the 10:30 am service should also replace pens and giving envelopes as needed in preparation for the next weekend. Spare pens and envelopes are in the drawer of the table at the back of the Nave.

Confirm that the attendance record has been recorded on the printout for the assigned weekend. Generally, Pastor picks up the weekly print out after the late service.

8:00 am ONLY: One of the Ushers should remain in the Narthex inviting visitors to stay for Sunday School and Bible Study class(es). Enlist members to help escort them to classes.

SECTION 6: LECTORS

About mid-week prior to the liturgy you are scheduled to serve, the assigned lector will receive an email from the Church Secretary with the readings appointed for that day.

Please review and read the lessons PRIOR to the worship service.

If there are words you are unsure of how to say, research on-line to hear how the word is correctly pronounced.

Prior to the service, ensure that the readings are printed and placed on the lectern.

As you approach the Altar, it is appropriate to make a slight bow before approaching the lectern. Adjust the microphone, if necessary.

Speak slowly and clearly.

The reading should be announced in this manner:

The First Reading/Lesson OR the Epistle Reading comes from the Book of [blank}, beginning with the [__] chapter.

Lectors do not need to state the specific verses.

As applicable, it is also correct to read certain books of the Bible in this manner:

The Epistle Reading comes from Paul's Second Letter to the Corinthians....

You may also highlight the church calendar, *The First Lesson appointed for Holy Trinity Sunday comes from...* When in doubt, ask Pastor.

Always conclude each reading with: "This is the Word of the Lord".

SECTION 7: GREETERS

The position is presently inactive; however, those persons serving as Ushers or Elders should fill this role.

The goal is to be intentional in your assistance to others.

Welcome: It is important that all of us welcome everyone. It is noted that visitors will more likely remember WHO welcomed them, rather than the conversation itself. Smile, greet and assist worshipers as they enter the Narthex.

If the people are someone you have seen before but haven't met, say "Hello! My name is [___]. Have we met?" Or "I don't believe we've met".

If they are guests, introduce yourself and ask if it is their first time visiting, new to the area or simply passing through. You can ask them if they have a Lutheran background and direct them to the Communion Statement in the Olive Seeds. Handouts are available in a basket located in the Narthex, including the current newsletter as well as a Mt. Olive brochure. Feel free to share these with persons visiting our congregation for the first time.

Offer Directions: Following the 8 am service, assist in directing visitors to Sunday School or Bible Study class(es) as needed. Whenever possible, enlist members to escort visitors to their selected places

Currently, an Usher or Elder needs to serve in this capacity until such time that Mt. Olive reinstates this position and assigns an individual to serve at each of the three liturgies. If/when greeters are put into rotation, if someone is scheduled but not present, the role should be filled by the Ushers and Elder serving at the particular liturgy.

SECTION 8: First Aid and AEDs

First Aid Kits

First Aid Kits can be found in the following locations:

- Kitchen – facing the large commercial sink, it is in the bottom left cabinet (marked with a red 'X')
- Downstairs near doors to nursery. There is a First Aid kit on the counter underneath the stairwell.

Automatic External Defibrillators (AED)

The church has two:

- One is mounted on the wall in the Sanctuary to the right of the small table under the Nave.
- A second one is in the kitchen along the back counter.

While no one is officially certified, members and friends with a medical or law enforcement background generally have knowledge of how this device is used. An AED provides step-by-step voice commands to assist someone in sudden cardiac arrest.