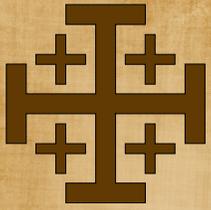


The Sacred Order of Acolytes

A Gamified Acolyte
Training Program



How to Use this Leader Guide

In this guide you will find several sections of preparation work, then the actual content of the program itself. Generally this program requires quite a bit of set up before carrying out the training. Feel free to skip around when reading, but there should be at least one leader who has read this guide fully and understands the picture of the whole before starting.

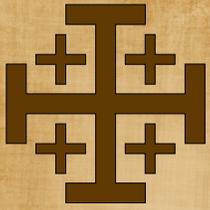
You will find the following sections:

- Guiding Principles of This Program
- Who This Program is For
- Overview: How It Works
- Preparing to Hold the Training
- The Sacred Order of Acolytes Program

The first three sections provide an overview and background information to add context to the program. Starting with section four, you will learn exactly what you need to do to hold the program in your specific church or formation context.

Head to the next page to get started!



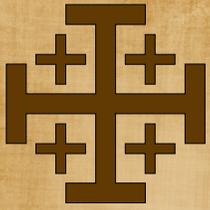


Guiding Principles

In developing this program I wanted to provide, not only a way to make Acolyting more fun for the youth at my church, but also an entry into lifelong faith formation, and specifically formation in the Liturgical worship of the church. These are the principles that I work from when I provide this training, but you can add any elements that are essential to your faith tradition or parish context when providing this training.

- *Kids have a deep sense of sacredness.* Work within your context and tradition to explore with participants how they can encounter the divine.
- *Kids have a calling to serve in the church.* Use this training to illustrate to importance and essential nature of their service in the church.
- *Kids are moved by Ritual and Liturgy.* This training incorporates narrative storytelling and drama to enhance participants' understanding of the liturgy.
- *Kids need rites of passage.* This program offers an experience that participants will remember and be excited to share with others. Bring in current and past acolytes to help your new acolytes celebrate!



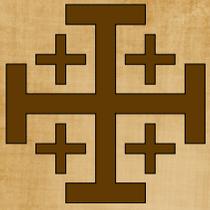


Who Is This For?

If you are wondering whether this program is right for your church. These are a few examples of folks who might find the Sacred Order of the Acolytes Beneficial. This obviously will not include everyone who might find this training useful. Feel free to make it your own as you work with it.

- Liturgical Churches who want to offer a new form of acolyte training that will keep participants engaged in the long term.
- Those interested in implementing gamification in faith formation programming.
- Christian Educators desiring to grow their Acolyte Ministry.
- Those wishing to train acolytes ranging in age from 2nd - 8th grade. (You can experiment outside this age range, but this is the recommended age)





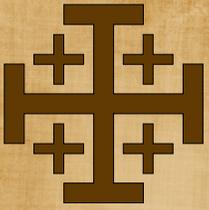
How Does it Work?

The Sacred Order of Acolytes is a new way of training acolytes that applies elements of gamification such as: Narrative, Puzzle Solving, and a Badge System. The narrative will be implemented through letters that the participants will receive, inviting them to join a secret society that has existed for centuries. In order to gain membership into this society they will be required to go on an adventure of sorts.

Instead of simple verbal communication of knowledge, this program will lead them to a variety of puzzle style activities in which solving the puzzle allows them to practice the physical skills of acolyting as well as engage with related theological concepts. The participants will be exposed to the content through narrative storytelling (from leaders and letters) as well as the puzzle activities. These activities will also give them a chance to practice team work and communication which are necessary skills for an acolyte.

When you start reading the program section of this guide you will find that each section includes:

- Materials needed
- Set up Instructions
- An Explanation of the activity
- Verbal cues (Clues are hidden in these cues.)

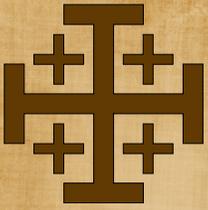


Preparing to Hold the Training

You will want to prepare the elements of this program in advance. This ensures that when you are holding the training you can simply focus on running the program rather than trying to scramble to get things into place. This is a list of what you need to prepare before you start the program.

- Create your Felt Banners (Instructions provided in banners document)
- Prepare all your print materials (letters, maps, etc.)
- Place all materials for activities in the designated location for that activity. (These materials can be found in the Program section of this guide)
- Have Instructions to give to all volunteers and chaperones (especially those decorating for the surprise celebration at the end.)

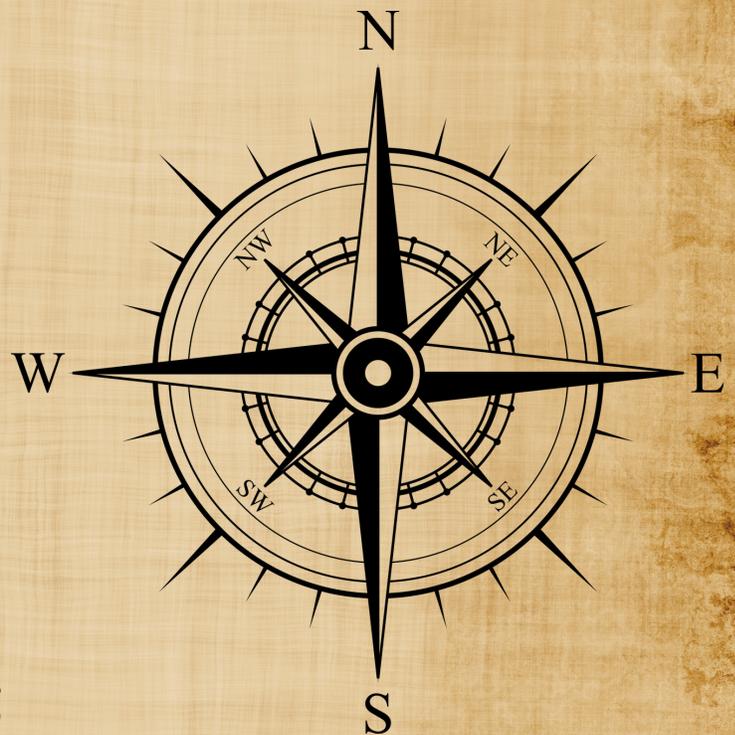


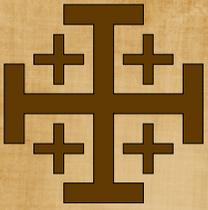


The Sacred Order of Acolytes

There are five stages, each with a different activity. Follow the setup and instructions as you progress through the adventure!

- **The Invitation**
- **Entering Sacred Space**
- **Preparing to Serve**
- **Approaching the Altar**
- **Ministry of Service**
- **Celebration and Belonging**





The Invitation

- Setting: A Dark Room with candles lit. I like to create a cross formation with the candles. The purpose is to create drama and a sense of mystery. You can quietly play music that feels fitting. Work with your group's personality to create the setting.
- Materials: Candles, Letters of Invitation, envelopes, Black Light Flashlights, Black light markers, Quest Maps, Writing Utensils
- Set Up: Place and light your candles. Mark your maps with black light pens. Place the black lights in a location where participants will find them. Place an unwritten map on the table.

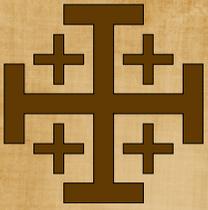
Do not allow participants to enter the room until the program is ready to begin. Lead them in a line into the room with intention. Play up the drama as you desire.

Participants will find letters in envelopes addressed with their names. Have everyone open their envelope and have a leader or participant read the letter out loud. Then, hand each participant a map.

Say: The Body of Christ has many different parts, and so each of you has a different piece of the puzzle. You may only take one map from this room, so join your knowledge together. Remember that the light of Christ is the key.

Participants are meant to use the black light to read the maps. Each map is marked with an x on a different location in the nave or worship space. The participants may only take one map out of this room. They should use the empty map to combine all the information from their various maps. If they are stuck, you may repeat the prompt until they work out what they are meant to do.

*You can include different locations based on what your church looks like and how many participants you have. I typically include one location per participant.



Entering Sacred Space

- Setting: Your Church's Nave or Worship Space. Keep the lights low for dramatic effect. You may light candles or other elements to add atmosphere.
- Materials: Cards with parts of the service. Book of Common Prayer (Episcopal)
- Set Up: Divide the cards into sections based on the number of locations on your maps. Place each section into that location. Have BCP's where your participants will be able to find them.

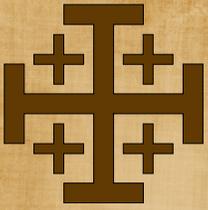
After participants collect all their locations onto a single map, lead them into your Nave or Worship space. They will begin to search for the locations on the map.

When they find all the cards you may introduce the puzzle.

Say: When you approach the Altar you will encounter many mysteries. The first of these mysteries is before you. You must use the holy words of the service to piece together this puzzle.

Participants are meant to use the Book of Common Prayer to put the parts of the service in order. You may give them hints to use the book and find the page if they are struggling. This activity can be adapted to different ages by simplifying the number of cards you use. If it is not challenging enough you can add a second optional stage after they put in order the correct time. Pick up the cards and shuffle. Then hand them out. Give them two minutes to place them back in order.

Say: Those who hasten to prepare for the Lord will be rewarded. Can you walk the same path again? You have two minutes to achieve order.



Preparing to Serve

- Setting: Where you keep your Acolyte Vestments, if space permits. Otherwise you may move your vestments to a location with enough space for everyone.
- Materials: Acolyte Vestments. These may differ between churches.
- Set Up: Have enough Vestments for each participant to try on.

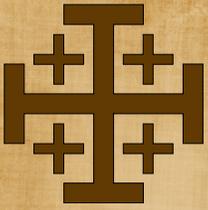
Lead participants to the area where the vestments are set up.

Say: All journeys require preparation. Your journey requires sacred vestments so that all who see you may know that you are members of a Sacred Order. They will set you apart and let everyone know that you are a servant of God.

Have everyone practice putting on vestments, whatever they may be in your context. In my parish we use an Alb and Cincture. Have the participants practice any elements of donning their vestments. For example. I show all participants how to knot a cincture. You can find helpful diagrams online for these knots.

Then present your group with their elements (i.e. Cross, torches, etc.). They are meant to be holding them at all times for the next section of the program.

Say. We've reached an important step in our journey. Now it's time to learn to serve at the Altar of God. I have three gifts to offer you. The first symbolized Christ's love and sacrifice, it will give you strength on your journey. The next represents the light of God. They will illuminate the path before you. You won't be able to make your journey without them, so make sure that someone is always holding them.



Approaching the Altar

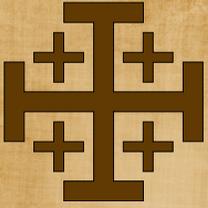
- Setting: The Nave or Worship Space
- Materials: Keys (either printed or purchased), Labels with actions acolytes perform.
- Set Up: Create Cards that name each of the actions acolytes perform in your service. These may be different in different churches.. Place these cards in the locations in the worship space where the actions are performed. Have volunteers ready at each station to pass out keys when actions have been performed correctly.

Bring Participants back to the Worship space.

Say: One of the greatest mysteries you will encounter as an Acolyte is how to lead the way for others to worship. In order to pass through this mystery you will have to collect the keys of action. For each action that you demonstrate you will receive a key.

Participants can be split into groups of three or whatever grouping makes sense for your training. Have current acolytes or leaders to demonstrate each action. Allow time for participants to practice the different actions.

When they are ready, they may demonstrate the actions. As they complete them with proper technique, each participant will receive a key.



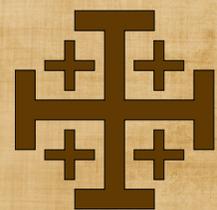
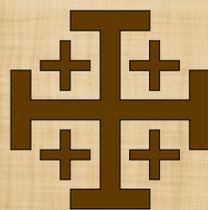
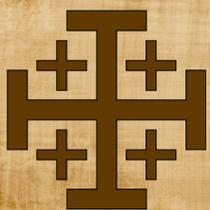
Ministry of Service

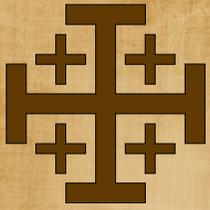
- Setting: The Nave or Worship Space
- Materials: Book of Common Prayer or Printed Prayer or Service
- Set Up: Have your service available for all participants and leaders. Have a prepared chant.

Bring Participants back to the Worship space if no longer there. Guide participants through a service recognizing and praying for their ministry as acolytes. This can be as simple as Evening Prayer or a Service of Eucharist. It is up to you. I personally like the Commissioning Service found in *I Serve at God's Altar: The Ministry of Acolytes* by Roger A. Speer Jr. and Sharon Ely Pearson. You can tailor this service to fit your faith context.

Finally either before or after the service, teach your group a chant. I use Laudate Dominum by the Taize community. But it should be simple and easy to follow for all participants.

Have participants follow in line while singing the chant. Return to the room where you first began. During the training you should have had a volunteer decorate the room for the surprise celebration.





Celebration and Belonging

- Setting: The Room where the program began. It should be decorated, but dark until participants enter.
- Materials: Party Decorations, Cake or other celebratory snacks. Acolyte Banners. Badge Lists.
- Set Up: Have a volunteer set up the room for a party, secretly as the program takes place. I use current acolytes with a chaperone to decorate.

As you approach the door, let the chant come to an end.

*Say: We stand before the door and ask to gain entrance.
Will you offer your keys to open the door?*

Wait for participants to hand in the keys they have earned in the previous activity. After all have done so, knock on the door three times and enter. After all participants have entered. Turn on the lights and celebrate. Shout Surprise! or Congratulations Acolytes!

Enjoy the party. After everyone has celebrated, a leader can hand out the list of badges and present everyone with their own banner that will hang in a prominent location in the church.

