

**THE  
ALTAR  
GUILD  
HANDBOOK**



**Peace Lutheran Church  
10625 Ranch Road 620 North  
Austin, Texas 78726**

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# Prayers for the Altar Guild

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

*Lutheran Book of Worship, p. 49, copyright 1978.*

Almighty God, you have blessed each of us with unique gifts, and you have called us into specific occupations, relationships, and activities using those gifts. Enable us to use our talents to witness to our faith in you and to communicate your love to the people we meet each day. Empower us to be ministers of your reconciliation, love, hope, and justice. Keep us steadfast in our commitment to serve actively in your name; through Jesus Christ our Lord.

*Occasional Services, p. 148, copyright 1982*

## **Acknowledgments:**

The Altar Guild Handbook was prepared by Kevin Anderson and the Board of Spiritual Life and revised in August 2009. Additional material was taken from the following resources: Parish Worship Handbook, by Ralph R. Van Loon, copyright 1979 by Parish Life Press. 2900 Queen Lane, Philadelphia, PA. Manual for Altar Guilds, by Victor Gebauer, prepared under the auspices of the Division for Life and Mission in the Congregation and the Board of Publication of The American Lutheran Church, copyright 1986 by Augsburg Publishing House, Minneapolis, MN. Revised, April, 2006.

# ALTAR GUILD CHECKLIST

## Early Service

**\*\*\*\*Please remember you are handling food and to wash hands when appropriate (before touching bread, wine, juice or water\*\*\*\***

- Check oil in candles; fill to 1” from top. Candles will be damaged if oil gets too low.
- Fill baptismal font with water for all services.
- Place fresh glass of water on the shelf inside pulpit.
- Use wine in glass jar first. Found in the refrigerator.
- Fix 2 – 3 trays – do all 8 center cups & 4 cups in second ring with grape juice.

## Middle Service

**\*\*\*\*Please remember you are handling food and to wash hands when appropriate (before touching bread, wine, juice or water\*\*\*\***

- Early service Altar Guild sets up for middle service and late service cleans up after middle service.
- Place fresh glass of water on the shelf inside pulpit
- Fix 2 – 3 trays. Use any extra trays/cups from previous service. Do all 8 center cups & 4 cups in second ring with grape juice.
- If only half a loaf was used in first service then use the unused portion for this service.

## Late Service and Evening Services

**\*\*\*\*Please remember you are handling food and to wash hands when appropriate (before touching bread, wine, juice or water\*\*\*\***

- Place fresh glass of water on the shelf inside pulpit
- Use one loaf from freezer, microwave to thaw if necessary.
- Fix 4 trays – do all 8 center cups & 4 cups in second ring with grape juice.
  - If all seating sections are full (including sides & choir), fix a 5<sup>th</sup> tray. For continuous communion, fix a 5<sup>th</sup> and 6<sup>th</sup> but only fill half of tray. If service starts and additional tray(s) is needed, place tray(s) with cup and bread to be carried to altar during service.
- Consolidate unused wine cups into wine jar, cover with plastic wrap, and place in refrigerator. Empty unused grape juice cups.

- Empty and dry baptismal bowl after each service.

## General information

- **Do Not fill chalice.**
- Bread is in freezer if not on counter.
- Leave all linens that are soiled on counter – do not take home. They will be picked up and laundered on Sunday or during the week.

\* If you have any questions, know someone who would like to join Altar Guild, or notice that we are running low on any supplies, please contact the Church Administrator at 258-2293 or [peaceaustin@sbcglobal.net](mailto:peaceaustin@sbcglobal.net)

**Thank you for serving on the Altar Guild**

# **Altar Guild Coordinator Church Year Checklist**

## Throughout the Year

- Check all supplies regularly and order as needed. See Altar Guild Supplies on page 15.
- See to it that the altar, pulpit and font are cleaned regularly.
- See to it that the paraments and linens are cleaned.
- See to it that the Communion napkins, purificator and veil are cleaned regularly.
- Coordinate the scheduling and training of Altar Guild members.
- Put up sign-up sheets and place orders for Christmas Poinsettias and Easter Lilies.

**\*Note:** Liturgical Arts is responsible for replacing the paraments. This is included for your knowledge since in the past this has been part of the Altar Guild duties.

## **Preparing for the Services of the Church**

Greetings in the name of Jesus Christ! Hopefully as this handbook is used, you will sense how much God's people depend on your ministry of worship preparation - for that is the business of altar guilds.

This handbook has two purposes. Obviously most of the handbook is designed to draw together information to help the members of the altar guild in their tasks. It begins, however, by describing the exciting changes which now more than ever before bring altar guild duties into the mainstream of worship leadership.

### **The Ministry of the Altar Guild**

Altar guild members, along with lectors, communion assistants, acolytes, ushers, musicians, and worship planners are "assisting ministers" in the broad sense of the term. In a narrow sense an assisting minister serves with the pastor (presiding minister) in leading the liturgy of the congregation, but all who serve the people gathered for worship are such assistants. All Christians who serve each other are exercising a ministry. The altar guild has a very specific ministry requiring knowledge and skill, and on its faithful service the congregation relies. The congregation's joyful response to God's presence in Word and sacrament simultaneously thanks those "assisting ministers" who make worship possible, including the altar guild.

The ministry of the altar guild is nothing new. It dates to the earliest Christian times. Today, we are in a transitional time because only recently have we grasped the historic factors which too often have led us to regard the altar guild as one of the women's organizations of the church. Altar guild work has also been regarded in recent history as adjunct to the pastoral ministry and separate from it rather than partner with it. Developments in liturgical studies and church history, however, now make it possible to regard altar guild work as a ministry somewhat in the pattern found in the early church.

Already in the New Testament it is clear that women and men together "served" the Christian communities in a variety of functions. See Romans 16:1; 1 Timothy 3:8-13; or Acts 6 for examples of service. Often such persons were called deacons or deaconesses. Originally they helped the community proclaim the gospel by freeing the apostles for proclamation. The deacons and deaconesses assumed part of the time-consuming work of the church by becoming administrators, custodians, doorkeepers, even teachers and preachers.

Edward Schillebeeckx, a European scholar, has pointed out that all such work had a sense of "we" about it, not a sense of private and personally owned office in the church. In the time immediately after the death of the apostles, all members of the Christian community joined in the common task of building on the foundation established by those apostles. As the need for more specialized forms of ministry became apparent, the community called certain individuals to more clearly defined duties. Quite early in church history those duties included preparations for the frequent Eucharistic meals of the congregations. At this time, worship preparations (that which we now call altar guild duties) were probably handled by men and women of the church with the understanding that Christians were sharing in a common work to which all were called, not pastors only. All people were to make certain the work begun by the apostles was carried forward successfully.

Today, the phrase "priesthood of all believers" is applied also to worship life and to the work of the altar guild. The appearance of assisting ministers in worship is a result of the perception that the entire congregation is gathered in worship and shares the leadership roles necessary for effective liturgy. Altar guilds, like the deacons and deaconesses of the early church, will now exercise a *ministry* within their local congregations. The task facing the altar guild today is the simultaneous restoration of the best traditions of the church and the exercise of freedom to respond to new ideas, new practices, and new liturgical materials which enrich those traditions.

## **Altar Guild Procedures**

The following section provides specific and detailed information regarding the ministry of the Altar Guild at Peace Lutheran Church.

### Preparing the church before all services

1. Arrive at least 30 minutes before the service.
2. Dust the altar and pulpit if necessary. Remove any trash such as old bulletins or pulpit notes, etc. from the chancel area.
3. Before the early service, check the oil level in the candles by unscrewing the brass top. Fill to within 1" of top and screw top back on tightly. Altar candles need to be filled at least every other week--more often depending on frequency of use. The oil is stored in the altar guild cabinet located in the kitchen. Call the Altar Guild Coordinator if you are using the last bottle of oil.
4. Wash hands before preparing bread, wine, juice, cups, chalice.

5. Place a fresh glass of water on the shelf inside the pulpit. If we have a guest pastor or speaker, tell them where the water is located.
6. Always fill the font with water. Water is the symbol of Baptism, not the font itself. When there is no water in the font, this is equivalent to having no wine in the chalice or no bread on the paten or no Bible on the lectern. After all, the bread and wine symbolizes Christ's body and blood, not the chalice and paten. The Bible is the Word of God, not the pulpit.

## Preparing for Holy Communion

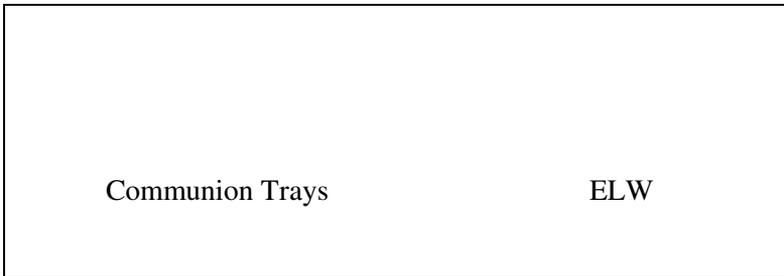
Holy Communion is celebrated every Sunday at the 8:00 A.M., 9:30 A.M. and 11:00 A.M. services. In addition, Holy Communion is celebrated at all Principal Festivals of the Church Year which do not fall on a Sunday: Christmas Eve, Christmas Day, Ash Wednesday, Maundy Thursday, and The Easter Vigil.

### Duties before the 8:00 A.M. service and Principle Festivals which do not fall on a Sunday

7. All communion vessels are in the cabinet in the kitchen: trays, chalice, paten, server, purificator, veils, napkins, wine, and dispenser. The bread, wine and grape juice are stored in the refrigerator. Additional bottles of wine and grape juice are stored in the Altar Guild cabinet located in the kitchen.
8. Fill the server (no more than 2/3 full) with wine from the glass bottle located in the refrigerator. **Do not fill the chalice**; cover the chalice with the purificator and the pall. Set the chalice and server on the service counter outside the service window so that they may be brought forward by the Communion Assistant during the Offertory.
9. Now fill the trays with empty plastic cups from the cabinet, if not already done. Each tray holds 33 individual cups.
10. Taste the grape juice in the refrigerator before using it to be sure it has not fermented. Pour out the grape juice if it can not be used. When not in use, keep the grape juice container in the refrigerator.
11. Use the white, plastic dispenser to fill the glasses in the center, and 4 in the inner ring, of the communion tray about 2/3 full with grape juice. The unused grape juice from the dispenser should be poured back into

the bottle and put back into the refrigerator. Rinse the grape juice dispenser every Sunday. Store in the Altar Guild cabinet with the cap off.

12. Use the dispenser to fill the remaining cups in the tray (½ full) with wine. If only one unopened bottle of wine is left in the Altar Guild cabinet, contact the Altar Guild Coordinator. Put the extra wine from the dispenser back into the wine bottle. Do not store wine in the dispenser bottle for even a short time because it will leak. Rinse out the dispenser with hot water.
13. Assemble the trays as follows: Place all full trays, except one, on top of the base. Next, place an empty tray (no glasses) and then the last full tray on top. Cover with the lid and then the communion tray cloth. Place the communion tray on the altar. See the diagram below.



Altar front

14. The loaves of bread will be in the freezer or refrigerator. Microwave the bread if frozen.

If frozen:

- A. Microwave bread on defrost for 5 – 7 minutes.
- B. Flip bread and microwave on same settings.
- C. Cut into bread to make sure it is not cold. Microwave more as needed.

Place one loaf of bread on the paten. Cover the bread with a veil and leave it on the pass through counter in the Sanctuary next to the chalice and server

**Note:** Cut the bread only ¾ through. The altar guild no longer should completely break the bread. The act of breaking the bread speaks of a host of

associations, both religious and secular - Jesus feeding the multitudes, sharing with the poor, a dinner table, Jesus' body broken as a sacrifice - all are relevant.

15. On Christmas Eve, Easter Sunday, and occasionally at other services, we will have *continuous* Communion. Check the bulletin to verify if we are to have continuous Communion (See the *italics* paragraph below the Communion heading). The following variations in the Communion set-up need to be made:
  - A. Do not leave an empty tray in the individual wine stack. Baskets will be used to collect the empties.
  - B. Set out *two* chalices.
  - C. Place *one* loaf of bread on the paten.
  - D. Set *two* baskets under the pulpit to collect the empty glasses. Rinse and dry these after the service.

### **Following the 8:00 A.M. service**

16. Throw away all used wine glasses.
17. Unused individual glasses should remain in the trays for use at the 9:30 A.M. service. Unused wine in the server also can be reused at the 9:30 A.M. service. Any wine left in the chalice is to be consumed or poured on the ground outside.
18. Wash hands to prepare Communion Trays and bread
19. Wipe off any spots on the Communion trays. Refill trays in preparation for the next service. Prepare 2 – 3 trays depending on time of year and choir schedule.
20. Do not discard any bread in the trash. Any bread left over should be eaten or left outside for the birds. Please do not leave leftover bread in the kitchen! Replace with fresh loaves for the next service.
21. Clean up the kitchen area and leave the Communion elements and vessels in the kitchen for the next Altar Guild member.

### **Before the 9:30 and 11:00 A.M. services**

22. Follow steps 8 - 15. The early service Altar Guild person will set up for the 9:30 service and the 11:00 AM person will clean up after the 9:30 service. This procedure will be used until the point in time that the 9:30 AM service has its own Altar Guild.

### **After the 11:00 A.M. service and Principle Festivals which do not fall on a Sunday**

23. Throw away all used wine glasses.
24. Any unused grape juice and any wine left in the chalice are to be consumed or poured on the ground outside. Unused wine in the individual glasses and server are to be poured into the brown bottle and put back into the refrigerator.
25. The unused glasses are to be washed in warm water and detergent, rinsed, and wiped or drained on towels or may be thrown away.
26. Clean the dispenser bottle using hot water only.
27. Wash the chalice and server in hot soapy water.
28. Communion trays do not have to be washed each time, just be sure to wipe off all the spots. However, if they are particularly messy, please wash them in warm soapy water.
29. Do not discard the bread in the trash. Any bread left over should be eaten or left outside for the birds. *Please do not leave leftover bread in the kitchen!*
30. Wash the paten in warm soapy water. Unused wafers are to be resealed in their plastic bag.
31. Empty the water in the baptismal font and wipe the bowl dry. This will prevent hard water deposits from forming on the bowl.
32. Fill communion trays with empty glasses as a courtesy for the person who serves the following Sunday early service.
33. Clean up the kitchen area.

34. Leave any stained napkins on the counter for the designated linen. Check the large white cloth which covers the altar for spots. Replace with a clean one if necessary and put with other linens to be washed. These are stored in the Altar Guild cabinet.
35. Return all Communion vessels to the Altar Guild cabinet.

### **Preparing for services which include Holy Baptism**

36. Lightly dust the top of the baptismal font. Place warm water in the bowl on the baptismal font.
37. Put a baptismal candle(s), napkin(s), sea shell (all located in the Altar Guild cabinet) next to the bowl on the font. One candle is needed for each baptism. (Place the box on the shelf behind the baptismal font.)
38. The Pascal candle normally stands directly behind the font except during the Easter season when it stands by the pulpit. If a baptism occurs during the Easter season, move the Pascal candle to the font.
39. Clean up the area following the service.

### **Preparing for occasional liturgies, weddings and funerals**

The Altar Guild Coordinator will contact you with any additional information.

## **Church Access**

The church is open by 7:30am on Sunday morning and about one hour before evening services. You may set up the previous day (Keeping elements, bread, and wine/juice covered. Wine should be placed in the refrigerator as well) or very early before a service, but you will need to check out a key from the church office and learn the security procedures.

## **Altar Guild Scheduling**

Altar Guild members will be assigned to the 8:00 A.M. or 11:00 A.M. service as the member requests. All members will share in preparing for evening services (i.e. Lent, Holy Week, and Christmas Eve). Schedules will be mailed four times a year and should arrive about two weeks in advance. Also, a monthly schedule is included in the Messenger that is mailed out each month. **If you are unable to attend your assigned service, you are responsible for arranging your own replacement.** For your convenience, a list of Altar Guild members and their home phone numbers and email addresses will be included separately with the

schedule. Call another member who attends your service time to arrange for your replacement. Then call the church office (258-2293) to inform the Office Administrator of the change by the Wednesday prior to your assigned date. If needed, you can call after office hours and leave a message on the answering machine.

# Appendix A

## Communion Bread (Optional)

The biblical themes that inform our Eucharistic practice permit either the use of leavened or unleavened bread. Various kinds of bread are appropriate and desirable as we intentionally avoid a uniform approach. The symbolic value of this element of the meal, however, suggests that it appear loaf-like and that it tastes like bread. Furthermore, it is best to use bread that can be easily broken and that will not flake or crumble.

The recipe below has many advantages. It is unleavened but has the appearance of bread. Wheat and honey give it a strong and pleasing flavor. If properly prepared it is pliable, easy to break, and may be frozen for future use. With the edge of a knife, the bread can be scored into quadrants and simple symbols can be inscribed on it. The ingredients and measures below make approximately three medium loaves--enough to accommodate 300 for communion.

3 3/4 cups whole wheat flour  
1 1/4 cups bread flour  
2 tablespoons oil  
2 teaspoons salt  
2 teaspoons baking powder  
1 3/4 cups water (approx.)  
1/2 cup honey (approx)

Sift dry ingredients three times. Cut in oil. Stir honey into water, and then add mixture to the flour. Dough should be a little sticky. Weigh out what is needed for each loaf. Pat on a few drops of oil, sprinkle lightly with flour, and roll to desired size on a greased pan. Press lines into the bread with a straight-edge or ruler if you desire "breaking lines for easy distribution. Decorative crosses or other symbols may also be made.

Dough should remain soft and flexible. It is difficult to maintain soft dough when working in large batches since you tend to over-mix. If dough hardens, add more water. Scraps can be reused once if water is added to soften the dough and then a little flour added to bring it back to the right consistency.

With the oven at 350 degrees, baking time for an eight-inch loaf rolled out to 1/4 inch thickness (no thicker) will be 18 minutes. Remove bread and lightly paint the surface with oil. Return to a 400 degree oven and bake 10 to 15 minutes more. Use same temperature for smaller loaves but bake for a shorter time (15 minutes at 350 degrees, then 10 minutes at 400 degrees for six-inch loaves.)

Bread may be baked in advance and kept in the freezer.

# Appendix B

## Church Calendar Season

### Advent Season

- Blue Paraments
- Remove the Pascal candle and attach the advent wreath to the stand.

### Christmas Season (December 24 - January 6)

- White paraments
- Continuous Communion distribution on Christmas Eve

### Epiphany Season

- The Baptism of Our Lord (1st Sunday after the Epiphany) and the Transfiguration of Our Lord (the last Sunday after the Epiphany) both use white paraments.
- The other Sundays after the Epiphany use the green paraments. If Lesser Festivals fall on a Sunday during this season, they will replace the Epiphany celebration with their own. The paraments should be changed only if the following dates fall on Sunday:
  - The Confession of St. Peter, *white*
  - The Conversion of St. Paul, *white*
  - The Presentation of Our Lord, *white*
  - St. Matthias, Apostle, *red*

### Ash Wednesday

- Purple paraments
- Continuous Communion distribution
- No flowers or vases
- A receptacle for ashes--use 2 glass votive candle holders. Mix ashes with several drops of baby oil or mineral oil and place on the altar. Place a container of wet wipes near the Presiding and Assisting Minister's chairs.

### Lent

- Purple or unbleached linen paraments

## **Palm Sunday**

- Scarlet or purple paraments
- Give the palm branches to the ushers for distribution

## **Maundy Thursday**

- Scarlet or white paraments
- Continuous Communion distribution
- No flowers--palm arrangements may be left from Palm Sunday
- Prepare a basin and towels if the foot washing ceremony is included in the service
- Assist during the service with the Stripping of the Altar. (All paraments, banners, altar book, processional cross, etc. will be removed from the sanctuary)

## **Good Friday**

- No paraments - the altar is bare
- All decorations should be removed from the church
- No flowers
- No Communion

## **Easter Vigil**

- Move rugged cross out of the sanctuary. It may be put away at this time or displayed outside or in another location out of the sanctuary.
- Check oil in the Pascal candle and place on the floor directly in front of the altar.
- Prepare the baptismal font with water and a cedar or evergreen branch for the sprinkling rite. Check to see if there are any baptisms at the service.
- During the service the altar will be gradually redressed with white paraments. Assist the ministers with this task by bringing forward and redressing the altar and pulpit at the time specified in the service.

## **Easter Season**

- White paraments
- The Pascal candle will be lit every Sunday during the Easter season. Check the oil level.

## **The Day of Pentecost**

- Red paraments

## **The Holy Trinity**

- White paraments

## **The Season of Pentecost**

- Green paraments
- Use the Trinity symbol on the pulpit paraments.
- If Lesser Festivals fall on a Sunday during this season, they will replace the Pentecost celebration with their own. The paraments should be changed only if the following dates fall on Sunday:
  - St. Barnabas, Apostle, *red*
  - The Nativity of St. John the Baptist, *white*
  - St. Peter and St. Paul, Apostles, *red*
  - St. Mary Magdalene, *white*
  - St. James the Elder, Apostle, *red*
  - Mary, Mother of Our Lord, *white*
  - St. Bartholomew, Apostle, *red*
  - Holy Cross Day, *white*
  - St. Matthew, Apostle and Evangelist, *red*
  - St. Michael and All Angels, *white*
  - St. Luke, Evangelist, *red*
  - St. Simon and St. Jude, Apostles, *red*
  - Reformation Day, *red*
  - All Saints' Day, *white*
- The last Sunday in the Season of Pentecost is Christ the King. The paraments are white.
- Purchase new Advent Wreath candles from Augsburg.

## **Dressing the Altar**

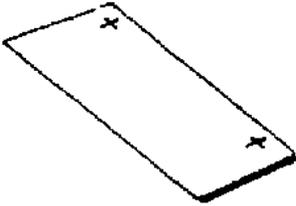
Place the colored seasonal parament(s) in the center of the altar. The fair linen is placed last, on top of the parament(s). It should be centered on top of the altar with an even drop on both ends.

The colored seasonal parament for the lectern is placed centered on the lectern stand placing the metal bar on top to hold it down. Then the Bible is placed on top.

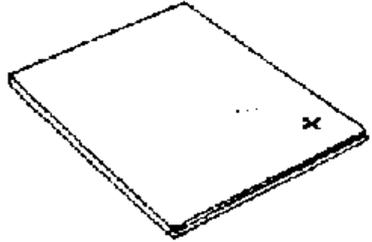
# Appendix C

## Eucharistic Items

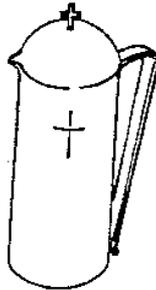
Purificator



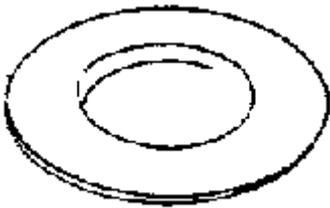
Veil



Server



Paten



Chalice

