

WHY DO WE LIGHT AND EXTINGUISH CANDLES DURING WORSHIP?

Jesus said: "I am the light of the world." (John 8:12)

The presence of the light in worship reminds us of Jesus' coming into our world and into our lives.

The light is carried into the worship service as a symbol of Jesus' coming into the presence of the worship community.

Many congregations use two candles on the altar to point out that Jesus was both a human being and God.

At the end of the service, the light is carried out into the world to show that Jesus Christ is for all people everywhere. This symbolizes the light of Jesus going out into the world where believers are to serve.

From "Worship Matters", A United Methodist Guide to Worship Work, Vol. II

Since ancient times, light and fire have reminded people that God is here with us. When you bring the light (flame) into the place where people are gathering to worship, and when you light the candles, you are reminding the people that God is with us at home, at school, at work, as well as in the worship service. Lighted candles also remind us that Jesus Christ is the Light of the World. Many persons like to think of two candles on or beside the Lord's table as reminders that Christ is both human and divine.

From "The Acolytes Book"

What does the word acolyte mean?

The word ACOLYTE comes from the Greek word, akolouthos, which means to follow, accompany, or escort. Thus an acolyte is an attendant, a follower, a helper.

Acolytes' Job Description

The acolytes are responsible for lighting the altar candles for worship. The flame represents Christ's presence with us during the worship service.

1. Arrive for worship 15 minutes before the service begins (8:15 or 10:30).
2. Go to the choir room to put on your robe and cross necklace. (*Robe is not required ... your choice.*)
3. The candle lighters are also in the choir room. If you come at 10:30, the candle lighters may already be by sound booth. Check the length of the wick in the candle lighter. New wicks are kept at the sound booth in the back of the sanctuary. Have an usher or the sound person install a new wick, if needed.
4. Meet Rev. Bob at the back of the sanctuary by the sound booth before the service starts.
5. An usher or sound person will light the wick for you before you lead Rev. Bob and the liturgist down the center aisle. (The wick should be no longer than 1½ inches.) **This represents the light of Christ being brought into our worship service.** Always hold the candle lighter with two hands. Do not run to the chancel, but do not walk too slowly, either.
6. Light all candles on the altar table (there are usually just two). If your flame goes out on the way to the altar, receive light from the other acolyte or Rev. Bob at the altar table. (Hint: hold the "bell" straight up to get the correct angle to light the candle.)
7. Extinguish your flame before turning and walking back to sit near the sound booth.
8. When Rev. Bob has finished his sermon, get the candle lighter and stand near the sound booth. During the first stanza of the last hymn, and at the direction of the usher or sound person, walk up the aisle with your unlit candle lighter, holding it with two hands.
9. Light your lighter from the candle and extinguish the altar candles (please be gentle and don't smash the candle wick). Keep your candle lighter lit as you return to the back of the sanctuary. **(This represents the light of Christ going out into the world.)** Leave the sanctuary by using the BACK SANCTUARY DOORS to the right, which the usher will have opened. KEEP YOUR FLAME BURNING IN THE HALLWAY UNTIL YOU HAVE PASSED THE SECOND SET OF SANCTUARY DOORS (which the ushers have also opened) SO THAT THE CONGREGATION CAN WITNESS THE LIGHT GOING OUT INTO THE WORLD. Extinguish your candle lighter when you reach the red stripe on the carpet just past these doors, and go directly to the choir room.
10. Return the candle lighter, robe and cross to the choir room. Please be sure to hang all items neatly.

Thanks for helping to create a worshipful atmosphere.

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