



SERVING BEHIND THE SCENES



by Shari Cuttormson.

LOL member since 2004 and Head of the Altar Guild

"While they were eating, Jesus took the bread, and after blessing it he broke it, gave it to the disciples, and said, 'Take, eat; this is my body.' Then he took a cup, and after giving thanks he gave it to them, saying, 'Drink from it, all of you; for this is my blood of the covenant, which is poured out for many for the forgiveness of sins.'" Matthew 26:26-28

How amazing is our God! And what a blessing it is to be able to set the table for the people at Lord of Life every week. You go to church, you see the altar is set, the baptismal font is ready, the pulpit is prepared...but what does it all mean and why do we do it? These are the places where the sacraments of our faith take place, the altar where we celebrate and participate in the Lord's supper, the font where we publicly proclaim our faith and are baptized into the Lord's family, and the pulpit where we hear the word of God spoken over each of us every week.

What is the roll of altar guild? Primarily, to work in coordination with our liturgical arts team to set the tone of our worship space and make it a place where the congregation can come together and glorify God in a meaningful way and to help connect the words that are written in the bible with our everyday lives through the physical acts of being in worship together.

While the liturgical arts team focuses primarily on making the sanctuary space beautiful which, let's be honest, is what most people will notice (and hopefully enjoy) as they come into the sanctuary. The altar guild team focuses on the sacred as well as the sacraments of worship. So, let's break it down:



The colors of the season: Seen through the fabric hanging on the altar, font, and pulpit. We focus on 5 main colors.

Green – “ordinary time” color – we use it all summer.

Purple – representing penance, preparation & sacrifice used primarily for Lent before Easter.

Red – as a symbol for passion and blood - used for Pentecost & Reformation Sunday.

White – a holy color used for Christmas, Easter, Trans-figuration, Holy Trinity & All Saints services.

Blue – symbolizing the birth of Christ for the season of Advent.

Preparation of the baptismal font:

Cleaned weekly – did you know that it has three drops of water from the river Jordan, where Christ was baptized, squeezed in there? When you dip your finger in you are connected to the places where Christ has been.

The three shells in the water represent the Father, Son, & Holy Spirit. When someone is baptized they take home a shell from the water as a symbol of their baptism.

The Paschal candle is there. Often called the Christ Candle, it is lit for the first time at Easter every year – the light of Christ coming into the world.

Preparation of the pulpit: where the word of God is spoken over us.

Usually just adorned with a parament representing the color and symbols of the season.

The Bible is also placed there.

Preparation of the altar: where we honor God.

Liturgical Book – containing the text and directions for running the service.

Chalice – the cup holding the blood

of Christ and covered with a veil.

Bread – the body of Christ broken for you.

Wine – to be poured into the chalice, symbolizing the blood of Christ,

Cloths – like purificators and patens that are used to wipe and cover the cup.

White candles on each side of the altar – symbolizing that Jesus was both human and God.

Red Candle – always lit and a remembrance that the light of Christ is with you always.

What does being part of altar guild mean to some of the people who do it? Why do we enjoy it and how does it further God's work in the world?

For me, my few minutes up at the rail on my knees taking communion are some of the closest and most private moments I have with God while I'm at church. It's just me and him at that moment and I know he is listening – like a private audience with the King. Being able to help other people have that same experience by simply setting the table for service is special for me as an act of service to God and also an act of obedience in answering his call to serve him in the church. I enjoy it because I am grateful to God every day that I am saved by his Grace.

I asked a few of our volunteers for their thoughts, as well:

"Since I was not raised Lutheran, I am interested in understanding the traditions of the Church. Weekly communion is certainly a strong tradition and that is why I joined Altar Guild. We normally have at least 2 people serving Altar Guild per week, which offers me the side benefit of meeting and working with some members of the church that I didn't know." - Patrick O'Toole

"Altar Guild for me is one way of helping prepare our church for worship. I enjoy being a part of Altar Guild

because it is one way of being more than just present for worship, it allows me to become a part of the worship service. It is a privilege to be able to help bring the body and blood of Jesus to our worshipers." - Pam Dube

"Working with the Altar Guild team is important to me because I love taking communion. We have lived overseas in places we couldn't attend church or communion was only given quarterly. I missed it. I love that Lord of Life has communion every service, every week, it is a blessing. I enjoy making it happen for others." -Valerie Millman

Welcome to the table the Lord has prepared for you. I look forward to seeing your kind and smiling faces as soon as we are able but may the Grace of our Lord be with you till we meet again.

If you are interested in serving on the Altar Guild we have a place for you at the table. Our volunteers are as diverse as our congregation and we would love to have you. Email s.guttormson@yahoo.com or call the church office at 281-367-7016.

