



Guide to Worship Leadership

Updated August 2017

*A Manual for Greeters, Ushers, Readers,
Communion Servers, Acolytes, and Assisting Ministers*

Introduction

The primary job of worship leaders is to aid in the proclamation of the Gospel and to help the people offer their praise and worship to God.

- Worship leaders announce the Good News of Jesus Christ with a warm welcome
- Worship leaders help people to hear the Good News through the words of Scripture
- Worship leaders prepare our worship space and help create the conditions that are most conducive to hearing the Word and offering praise
- Worship leaders announce the presence of Jesus and give Jesus to our partners in Word, Bread, and Cup
- Worship leaders are like Mary, announcing that the Lord is coming into the world, and bearing his presence in (and beyond!) the act of worship.

Worship leadership is a big deal. It is not just fulfilling a task, but is essential to carrying out our shared mission to proclaim Christ and to gather as God's people in worship.

In clarifying how we carry out certain leadership roles, we are setting up patterns of worship leadership that facilitate proclamation and worship, and extend Christian hospitality to all of our partners and guests. What we do, and how we do it, is for the sake of the Gospel and those who would hear and respond to it.

Ushers and Greeters

Greeters and Ushers are some of the first people that visitors to our church meet on a Sunday morning. Please be sure to wear your name tag, and be ready to offer a warm welcome to all who are coming to worship.

Greeters and ushers see and hear a lot, and in this way you are very helpful to the Pastor. If you see anything or learn of anything that should be brought to Pastor Chris' attention, please speak with him before, after, or even during the service, if necessary (a security concern, or someone who needs ambulance assistance, or a facility problem, for example).

Also, please take note of, and inform Pastor of, any visitors. A good time to inform Pastor of visitors is as the first song of the day is starting, or during the last song of the day, so that Pastor can greet the newcomers before they leave. Visitors don't always or often sign the guest book or blue book (and though we invite them to do so, we shouldn't pressure them to do so), and first time visitors often leave quickly after worship, as they often don't know anyone and are usually not comfortable lingering during coffee hour.

Please arrive to the church at 9:10pm.

Greeters provide support in the entranceway and narthex of the church. Please stand at the doorway (in or out, weather dependent) greeting those who come to church, inviting visitors to sign the guest book, and assisting them with locating the bathrooms, coat hooks, or nursery, and answering any questions they may have. Please make sure lights in the hallway and narthex are lit, and that the space is not unnecessarily cluttered. *At the end of worship*, during the last song, stand in doorway to greet people as they leave.

Ushers provide support inside the worship space. Arriving at 9:10, ushers prepare the worship space by making sure lights in the worship space are on, chairs are properly lined up, and blue

books and other pew materials are properly set up. Scan the worship space, and check that it is ready for worship. Be sure there are 3 offering baskets available in the baptismal stand at the rear of the church. Check in with Pastor Chris or another church leader if anything is amiss. Open the doors to the worship space using the doorstops and bungee cord. Ushers may also assist the Acolyte with lighting the wick on the snuffer.

Bulletins are on the counter in the church office. Distribute a bulletin to each person arriving for worship. Provide assistance to any who may need it. Offer to remove a chair on the end of a row for anyone in a wheelchair.

As the service begins, close the doors. At least one usher should remain in the narthex to greet and provide a bulletin to any who arrive late (studies show that most visitors arrive just on time or slightly late to worship for the first time at a new church – attention to latecomers is important!).

Ushers fill out the attendance sheet. Attendance sheets are located on the back wall of the sanctuary, between the doors and the kitchen window. Fill out the attendance sheet and return the COMPLETED sheet to the clipboard in the wall unit. At the 9:30 am service wait until the children's sermon has begun. Also, don't forget to count those in the nursery and elsewhere such as the classrooms. A "child" is defined as anyone in Grade 8 and below. All confirmed youth are to be counted as adults.

Bring prayer request cards to Pastor during the song after the sermon, as practical.

Collect the offering during the service - one usher on each side of the center aisle, pass a basket to the first row. At the end of that row, it will be passed to the row behind. You then take the basket and give to the next row. After passing the basket through the right side, the usher then goes to the north side and passes a basket.

Ushering attendees during communion: After receiving communion yourself, two ushers are positioned on each side of the center aisle. Ushers invite one row up at a time to receive communion, starting with the back row. The north side is invited to follow its corresponding middle row.

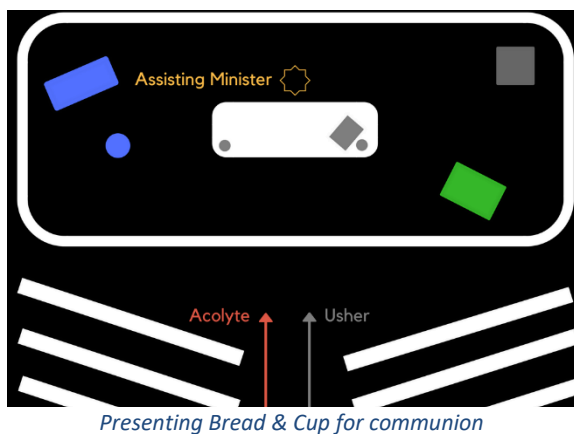
During the final song, open the doors to the worship space. After service, check the sanctuary and make sure it is picked up before you leave. Retrieve any and all completed blue book forms, and leave them on the counter in the office.

Acolytes

In the early church Acolytes were ministers who took the bread and wine of the Lord's Supper to those who couldn't attend the church service. Today, Acolytes assist in preparing the worship primarily by lighting candles that remind us of the light of Christ, and by assisting with the preparation and serving of communion.

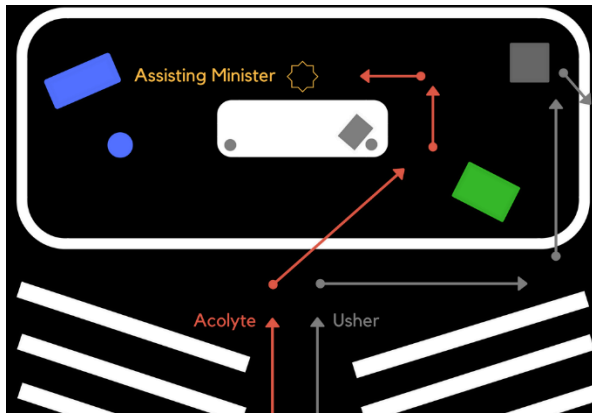
Acolytes will light candles at the start of the service, during the first song. Make sure there is enough of a wick in the snuffer to burn during the time you need to light the candles. If the wick needs to be changed, ask for assistance from one of the ushers, Altar Guild leaders, or Pastor Chris. Walk slowly with the lit snuffer, as walking too fast may extinguish the flame.

During Advent and Christmas and other occasions, additional candles might be present. Though we usually light anything that has a wick, please ask Pastor Chris or an usher if you have any question as to which candles to light. Some special candles are lit during, rather than before, the service.



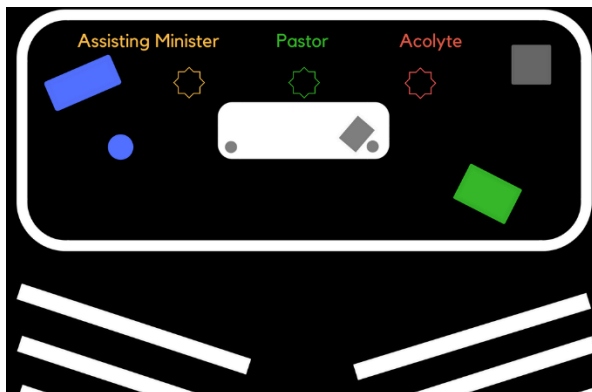
Acolytes will also bring a plate of bread and a cup to the communion table, when the offering is presented. As the Peace is being shared, Acolytes should go to the baptismal font table where they will find the plate and cup. Holding a plate in one hand and a cup in the other, they will walk side-by-side with the usher (Acolyte at left, Usher at right), and present the bread and cup for

communion. As the Usher and the Acolyte are standing on the floor in front of the altar, Pastor or the Assisting Minister will lead the Offering Prayer from behind the altar.



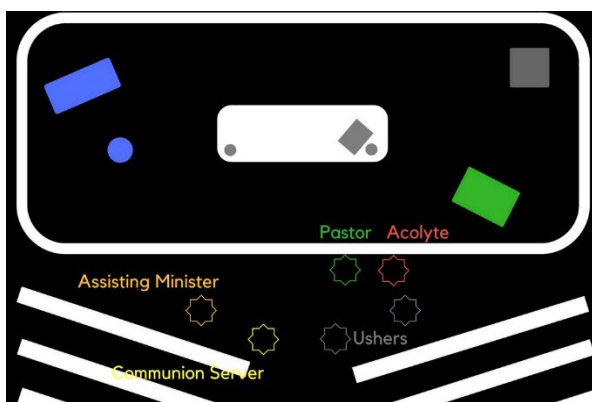
Setting elements in place

After the Prayer, the Acolyte will come behind the altar (walking between the altar and the pulpit), and set the bread and cup on the altar. The Acolyte will remain behind the altar, pulpit side. The Usher, walking to the outside of the pulpit, will bring the gifts forward and set them on the second shelf of the credence table (the table behind the pulpit).



Position for during communion prayers

After the table is set, Pastor will come forward and invite the congregation to stand for the communion liturgy. The Assisting Minister will step toward the band side of the altar.



Distributing Communion to Ushers, Servers

After all the communion prayers are said, and Pastor invites the people to receive communion, Pastor will hand the Acolyte a cup. Together, Pastor and the Acolyte will serve the Ushers, Communion Server, and Assisting Minister. Then, the Acolyte will give their cup to the Communion Server, and Pastor will give the bread plate to the Assisting Minister.

Pastor will then hand the Acolyte the other cup (from the altar), and Pastor will take the other plate (from the altar). Pastor and Acolyte will serve the congregation together, and then will serve each other after everyone else has received.

During the song after communion, the Acolyte will assist with returning all of the communion vessels to the credence table (table behind the pulpit).

At the end of the service, during the final song, the Acolyte extinguishes the candles. After approaching the table, the Acolyte extends the wick on the snuffer and lights the wick. Then, using the bell of the snuffer, the Acolyte extinguishes the flame.

NOTE: Do not smoosh the candle with the bell – this can damage the candle. Instead, lower the bell carefully over the flame but don't touch the top of the bell to the candle. Count to two or three, and then raise the bell. In this way you will allow the flame to burn out without damaging the candle.

After extinguishing all candles, walk down the center aisle and return the snuffer to the table in the back of the worship space, and waits to be high-fived by the Pastor and Assisting Minister.

Readers

Readers proclaim the Word of God as found in the words of Scripture. These are Words of wisdom, promise and power handed down to us from the ancients to nurture us in faith today. When we read Scripture publicly, our call is to read in a way that allows hearers to hear the text's wisdom, promise, and power.

- What lines deserve a slight emphasis?
- Is there room for a pause in the text?
- Is the text poetry, story, or instruction?

As you review the reading in advance, seek to understand what is going on in the text. Your understanding of the basic premise and flow of the text will help you read it in a way that helps the hearers to hear. Don't hesitate to consult online pronunciation guides or Pastor Chris with questions you have about pronouncing any words in the text.

When announcing the reading, Readers will prepare for the reading with this introduction, which is found in the lectern: *Paul writes that "Faith comes from what is heard." Let us prepare to hear the Word of God this day.*

After this introduction, the music ministers will lead us in singing the Scripture Acclamation song. Immediately following the acclamation song, the Reader will announce the reading: "A reading from John," or "A reading from Deuteronomy." There is no need to announce the chapter and verse numbers, particularly if it jumps all around. The precise citation is listed in the bulletin for any who want or need to know.

Following the reading, offer a slight pause, and then announce, "The Word of the Lord!" to which the congregation will respond, "Thanks be to God." Then, during the second singing of the Scripture Acclamation song, you may return to your seat.

Communion Servers

Communion Servers share the gifts of our Lord's Supper with all who desire to receive it. They may also offer blessings to those who are not receiving.

The Lutheran Church teaches that our Lord is present in the bread and drink of this holy meal. The gifts of bread and wine are to be handled with reverence but not with rigidity or overwrought formality. This is a meal, after all. We share the food and drink carefully yet warmly and with joy.

The movement

After Pastor Chris offers the instructions for receiving communion and announces "These are the gifts of God for you, the people of God, and for that we say, 'Thanks be to God,'" Communion Server comes forward to receive the sacrament (with Ushers and Assisting Minister). Communion will be served to the congregation by Pastor, the Assisting Minister, the Acolyte and one Communion Server.

- Pastor Chris and the Acolyte will commune the Assisting Minister, Communion Server, and Ushers.
- Pastor will give the bread plate to the Assisting Minister; the Acolyte will give the cup to the Communion Server. Pastor will then give the remaining cup to the Acolyte, and take the remaining plate for himself.
- Pastor and Acolyte will commune each other after the congregation has been served.
- The Assisting Minister and the Communion Server will serve communion to the band, after the congregation has been served.

Distribute Holy Communion to the congregation

Pastor and the Assisting Minister will distribute the bread at the front of the center aisle, saying the words of promise, "The Body of Christ, given for you," as the bread is placed in the person's hand. The cup ministers – the Acolyte (standing with Pastor) and Communion Server (standing with Assisting Minister) will stand a few feet to the outside of the bread minister, saying these words of promise, "The blood of Christ, shed for you." Speak slow enough, and loud enough, that you can be understood. Look the person in the eyes and smile.

Martin Luther wrote that the most important words in the sacrament are, "for you." It's not good enough that we hold in our hands the body and blood of Christ. But instead, we hold and share these gifts which are given for a purpose – "for you" and for the world. Make your announcement that "the Body of Christ is given for you" and "the Blood of Christ is shed for you" clear, so that the person receiving the sacrament can clearly hear this Good News.

You may use the person's name, if you choose to do so, but by no means should you feel pressure to do so. Accidentally using a wrong name or stumbling over their name can become an unnecessary distraction to receiving the gift of holy communion.

If for some reason we do not have an Assisting Minister that day, we will call upon another Communion Server who will then distribute the bread alongside the Pastor. Communion Servers should understand how to distribute the bread, too, in case they are called upon to do so.

If the bread falls to the floor, please pick up the bread and hand it to Pastor or keep it to give to Pastor after distribution. Pastor will consume the bread, or leave it to be distributed in the memorial garden following the service. If someone loses their bread in the intinction cup simply give the person another piece of bread, saying again the words of promise. Anyone distributing the bread should be prepared to offer a blessing to anyone - child or adult - who does not receive the sacrament. Sample blessings are listed below.

If you are distributing bread, don't make the pieces unnecessarily small. We want to avoid pieces so small that people risk dipping their fingers into the cup. This is a meal of God's abundance, after all, not God's scarcity. We have wafers in the altar if, for some reason, we happen to run out.

Blessings for those not receiving communion

Blessings need not involve touch or a gesture, but they may. Appropriate touch would include making the sign of the cross on the person's forehead, or making the sign of the cross in front of the person with a free hand. If someone appears uncomfortable to receiving a touch, a spoken blessing offered without any touch is perfectly legitimate.

Spoken blessings are best done with a generous smile, unless the tone of the service (Holy Thursday, perhaps) calls for a more sober expression. If the Pastor, Assisting Minister, or Communion Server is able, it is perfectly appropriate – but by no means expected – to lower oneself to a child's level to offer a blessing. Please know that unbaptized adults or adults not receiving communion for any reason may also ask for a blessing.

Language for the blessing can vary, and may include the following:

- “Remember that Jesus loves you, this day and always.”
- “The blessings of God [Father, + Son, and Holy Spirit], be with you now and forever.”
- “You are God's child, precious in God's sight.”

No matter the words used, the most important part about such a blessing is that it simply and concisely declares the promise of God's love and grace for the person receiving the blessing.

Gluten Free

For any who ask for Gluten Free elements, the bread server will turn around and set their plate on the altar and pick up both the Gluten Free plate and cup. DO NOT HANDLE THE BREAD YOURSELF, as you have gluten on your fingers from handling the wheat communion bread.

Hold the chalice on top of the plate (as it is usually placed on the altar), and instruct the communicant with words such as, "My hands have gluten on them. Please take the bread yourself, and dip in the cup." Then, as they are taking the bread, boldly announce, "The body and blood of Christ is given and shed for you." After the communicant has stepped away, return the gluten free vessels to the table, take the plate of wheat communion bread, and return to your position.

Assisting Minister

The Assisting Minister is the primary worship leader, together with the Pastor. Significant parts of the service are led (or co-led) by the Assisting Minister. The following description of duties is a guide to “standard practice” of the Assisting Minister.

Assisting Ministers are to arrive to church no later than 9:15am, preferably closer to 9:00am. A folder will be created with everything the Assisting Minister needs.

Within the service, the Assisting Minister fills the leadership roles described below.

- Serve as a pinch-hit reader, if one is not appointed or if the reader fails to show up.
- Lead the congregation in saying the Creed and Mission Statement (if used), standing behind the altar.
- Lead the Prayers of Intercession (which will be provided to you in the worship folder), usually from behind the altar. The Assisting Minister is invited to use an appropriate prayer gesture for this and for all prayers that she/he leads, and to stand center behind the altar when praying. (See notes on prayer gestures at end of this document.)
- Set the table (altar) for Holy Communion. This takes place while the offering is being collected. Bring all communionware from the credence table (table behind the pulpit) and set on the altar, *setting one cup and plate in the center of the table for Pastor to handle during the Words of Institution*. Loosely fold all clothes and set alongside the plate or cup they were originally draping.
- When the Acolyte and Usher present the communion elements and offering, say the Offering Prayer from behind the altar. Then, step to your right (toward the band), and remain standing throughout the communion prayers.

Distributing Communion: the movement

After Pastor Chris offers the instructions for receiving communion and announces “These are the gifts of God for you, the people of God, and for that we say, ‘Thanks be to God,’” Assisting Minister moves to the floor to receive communion with Ushers and Communion Server).

- Pastor Chris and the Acolyte will commune the Assisting Minister, Communion Server, and Ushers.
- Pastor will give the bread plate to the Assisting Minister; the Acolyte will give the cup to the Communion Server. Pastor will then give the remaining cup to the Acolyte, and take the remaining plate for himself.
- Distribute communion to the congregation (see notes below)
- Serve anyone who needs to receive the sacrament in the seats. Ushers will indicate to the Pastor and/or to the Assisting Minister if someone needs to receive the sacrament in the chairs.
- The Assisting Minister and the Communion Server will serve communion to the band, after the congregation has been served.

Distribute Holy Communion to the congregation

Pastor and the Assisting Minister will distribute the bread at the front of the center aisle, saying the words of promise, "The Body of Christ, given for you," as the bread is placed in the person's hand. The cup ministers – the Acolyte (standing with Pastor) and Communion Server (standing with Assisting Minister) will stand a few feet to the outside of the bread minister, saying these words of promise, "The blood of Christ, shed for you." Speak slow enough, and loud enough, that you can be understood. Look the person in the eyes and smile.

Martin Luther wrote that the most important words in the sacrament are, “for you.” It’s not good enough that we hold in our hands the body and blood of Christ. But instead, we hold and share these gifts which are given for a purpose – “for you” and for the world. Make your announcement that “the Body of Christ is given for you” and “the Blood of Christ is shed for you” clear, so that the person receiving the sacrament can clearly hear this Good News.

You may use the person's name, if you choose to do so, but by no means should you feel pressure to do so. Accidentally using a wrong name or stumbling over their name can become an unnecessary distraction to receiving the gift of holy communion.

If for some reason we do not have an Assisting Minister that day, we will call upon another Communion Server who will then distribute the bread alongside the Pastor. Communion Servers should understand how to distribute the bread, too, in case they are called upon to do so.

If the bread falls to the floor, please pick up the bread and hand it to Pastor or keep it to give to Pastor after distribution. Pastor will consume the bread, or leave it to be distributed in the memorial garden following the service. If someone loses their bread in the intinction cup simply give the person another piece of bread, saying again the words of promise. Anyone distributing the bread should be prepared to offer a blessing to anyone - child or adult - who does not receive the sacrament. Sample blessings are listed below.

If you are distributing bread, don't make the pieces unnecessarily small. We want to avoid pieces so small that people risk dipping their fingers into the cup. This is a meal of God's abundance, after all, not God's scarcity. We have wafers in the altar if, for some reason, we happen to run out.

Blessings for those not receiving communion

Blessings need not involve touch or a gesture, but they may. Appropriate touch would include making the sign of the cross on the person's forehead, or making the sign of the cross in front of the person with a free hand. If someone appears uncomfortable to receiving a touch, a spoken blessing offered without any touch is perfectly legitimate.

Spoken blessings are best done with a generous smile, unless the tone of the service (Holy Thursday, perhaps) calls for a more sober expression. If the Pastor, Assisting Minister, or

Communion Server is able, it is perfectly appropriate – but by no means expected – to lower oneself to a child’s level to offer a blessing. Please know that unbaptized adults or adults not receiving communion for any reason may also ask for a blessing.

Language for the blessing can vary, and may include the following:

- “Remember that Jesus loves you, this day and always.”
- “The blessings of God [Father, + Son, and Holy Spirit], be with you now and forever.”
- “You are God’s child, precious in God’s sight.”

No matter the words used, the most important part about such a blessing is that it simply and concisely declares the promise of God’s love and grace for the person receiving the blessing.

Gluten Free

For any who ask for Gluten Free elements, the bread server will turn around and set their plate on the altar and pick up both the Gluten Free plate and cup. **DO NOT HANDLE THE BREAD YOURSELF**, as you have gluten on your fingers from handling the wheat communion bread.

Hold the cup on top of the plate (as it is usually placed on the altar), and instruct the communicant with words such as, “My hands have gluten on them. Please take the bread yourself, and dip in the cup.” Then, as they are taking the bread, boldly announce, “The body and blood of Christ is given and shed for you.” After the communicant has stepped away, return the gluten free vessels to the table, take the plate of wheat communion bread, and return to your position.

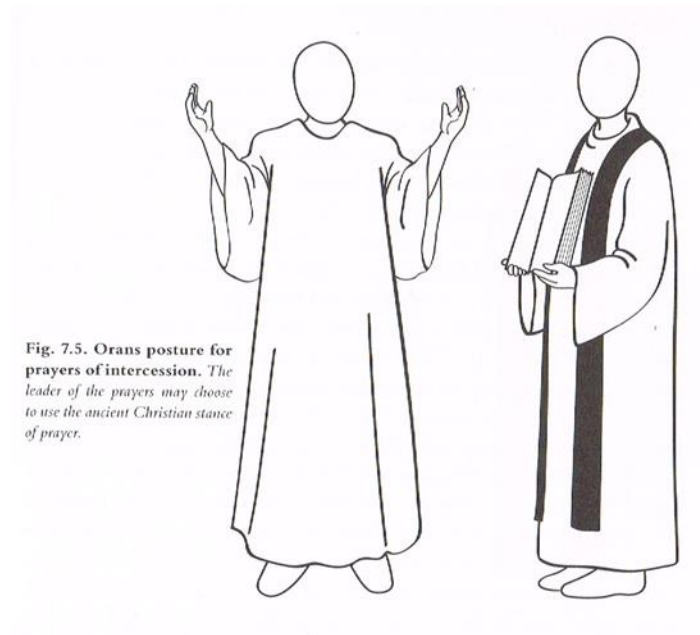
- Following distribution of communion, take primary responsibility for cleaning up the table removing all communion vessels to the credence table, and setting them on the top shelf. It is unlikely, but possible, that the post-communion song concludes before everything is back in its proper place. It is perfectly appropriate to finish cleaning up the table in silence. There is no rush to clean up the table.

- Lead the post-communion prayer, printed in the Assisting Minister's folder, usually from behind the altar. After the prayer, return to seat in front row. Pastor will make any necessary announcements.
- Walk out of the sanctuary with Pastor, usually on the second verse of the sending song. Pastor and Assisting Minister will pause briefly at the bottom of the steps to reverence the altar. Then, the Assisting Minister and the Pastor will walk out side-by-side down the aisle. If Pastor stops to greet someone on the way out, Assisting Minister doesn't need to wait for him, but can continue to the back of the sanctuary to prepare to proclaim the dismissal.
- Proclaim the dismissal, from the back of the church, immediately after the sending song.

Prayer Gestures

Since the earliest days God's people have prayed not only with words but also with their whole bodies. In many instances, they have lifted their arms to the heavens, a gesture that suggests the lifting up of prayer to God, and also an openness to receiving what God has to give.

Assisting Ministers are invited to pray – the Offering Prayer, Prayers of the Church, and the Communion Prayer – with uplifted, open arms.



(Notice that Pastor Chris holds his arms in a more out-stretched, open manner than depicted in this image, at left. Variety in posture is to be expected and embraced!)

Most of the prayers are said from the altar, and the Assisting Minister can set the worship folder on the bookstand (feel free to adjust the bookstand for best viewing

positioning). If it is too hard to read the prayers from the bookstand, the Assisting Minister should ask Pastor to hold the book at a better height (see picture, at left).

When praying from behind the altar, the Assisting Minister stands center behind the altar (not off to one side or the other). If more than one minister is standing behind the altar, the minister who is leading the service at that moment stands center behind the altar, and the other minister stands at the side.

Blessings for those not receiving communion

Blessings need not involve touch or a gesture, but they may. Appropriate touch would include making the sign of the cross on the person's forehead, or making the sign of the cross in front of the person with a free hand. If someone appears uncomfortable to receiving a touch, a spoken blessing offered without any touch is perfectly legitimate.

Spoken blessings are best done with a generous smile, unless the tone of the service (Holy Thursday, perhaps) calls for a more sober expression. If the Assisting Minister is able, it is perfectly appropriate – but by no means expected – to lower oneself to a child's level to offer a blessing. Please know that unbaptized adults or adults not receiving communion for any reason may also ask for a blessing.

Language for the blessing can vary, and may include the following:

- “Remember that Jesus loves you, this day and always.”
- “The blessings of God [Father, + Son, and Holy Spirit], be with you, now and forever.”
- “You are God's child, precious in God's sight.”

No matter the words used, the most important part about such a blessing is that it simply and concisely declares the promise of God's love and grace for the person receiving the blessing.