

## Bethel United Methodist Church Altar Guild Guidelines

*Purpose: To assure the worship space and supporting materials are prepared for worship.  
The sanctuary should be a place where people are welcomed to be in the presence of God.  
The space should be in such a condition that makes it easy for people to worship;  
makes people feel respected and welcomed.*

### Sanctuary Preparations

1. **Friendship Registers.** Keep filled with the insert tablet and a working pen. Make sure they are located in the narthex for the ushers to distribute.
2. **Welcome bags.** Keep at least 8 ready for each Sunday. The prepared bags go on the lower shelf of the table in the narthex. Supplies include the bags themselves, brochures, pens, magnet, bookmark and bag of cookies. When preparing the bags, pay attention to the season of the year and use appropriate bags.
3. **Hymnals, Bibles and Faith We Sing books.** Make sure they have been replaced into the pew racks and into the corners of the pews as follows: Hymnal on one side of the rack, the Faith We Sing in back of the Bible in the other side of the rack. On the long center pews, place a Hymnal on top of a Faith We Sing in each corner of the long center pews. On the short side pews, place a Hymnal on top of a Faith We Sing in the corners nearest the aisle. On the front pew, there should be a Hymnal on top of the Faith We Sing in each corner and in the middle of the pew. Also, the Bible goes on top of each of the corner books.  
  
In *back row* of the sanctuary on the main floor – if there are chairs for seating – straighten the row of chairs and place Hymnals on top of Faith We sing books on 3 chairs. Place a Bible on the remaining chairs. If there are chair rows in front of the sanctuary, place Hymnals on top of Faith We Sing books on the 2 outer chairs and a Bible on the center chair. If there are just 2 chairs, then just one of each.
4. **Candles.** Clean off any wax build up on the brass. Straighten the brass caps when needed – right after the service if the best time when the wax is still pliable. Peel off any extra wax, straighten or trim the wicks, if needed. Pastor Marty has the communion table candles. When they get too short – when there is about 4 inches left – remind him to bring in new ones (if he forgets).
5. **Paraments.** Check that the correct colored paraments are on the lectern and bookmark – change, if necessary. The correct colors are posted in the left rear narthex (the robing room). Paraments are kept in the white drawer attached to the wall in that rear narthex.
6. **Clutter Check.** Check the pews, floors and windowsills for any leftover bulletins or miscellaneous “stuff”. Check the narthexes and make sure they are welcoming, and not cluttered.

## Communion Clean Up

1. **Communion elements.** Because these are consecrated elements, they are to be disposed of reverently and carefully: never poured down the drain or put into the trash. Empty the chalices of excess grape juice by taking them outside and pouring the juice onto the foundation of the church. As you do that, you could silently pray for the church or for those who have received the elements and remember those who were not able to receive them. Take the bread home and feed it to the birds. There are a few in the congregation who love to take the bread home and eat it. That's just fine, too. Just so it doesn't get tossed in the trash.
2. **Communion Service pieces - chalices and paten, linens.** After disposing of the elements. Rinse the chalices and dry them thoroughly. Then return them to the shelf in back of the podium in the sanctuary. There are 2 velvet bags into which the wooden chalices go. Just wipe off the paten that held the bread and return it to the back of the podium with the chalices. If the linens are stained, please take them home and wash them, returning them during the week. They all dry in dryers well and usually don't need any ironing.
3. **Communion table clean up.** Wipe off the glass - use Windex, if needed. Windex is in the janitor's closet in the social hall next to the coat closet.
4. **Communion rugs.** After the 2<sup>nd</sup> service - roll up the rugs and place them behind the front pew in the choir loft.

## Special Seasonal requirements of the church.

### Advent

1. **Greening of the Church.** This is the responsibility of the Worship Committee, but the Altar Guild can help if you would like to.
2. **Poinsettias.** Typically poinsettias are brought in on the 1<sup>st</sup> or 2<sup>nd</sup> Sunday of Advent to last until Epiphany. The Altar Guild needs to see that they are watered and deadheaded.
3. **Greens in windows.** Check for dryness and be prepared to replace the greens on the 3<sup>rd</sup> or 4<sup>th</sup> Sunday of Advent – prior to Christmas Sunday or Eve. Dolores Goff usually can bring in additional greens, or anyone who has some in their yards is welcomed to do it. Just so the greens aren't dead and dried for Christmas.

### Christmas Eve

1. **Candles.** Prepare candles for both Christmas Eve services. This includes inserting the candles into the holders and placing them in a baskets or some type of attractive container for use at the services. (Pastor Marty has a big basket that we have used). Prepare at least 150 candles.  
  
After the first service collect the candles and ready them for the next one. After the second service, collect the candles and store away. They are stored in the upstairs sound room. This storage doesn't have to happen for a few days. Just so the narthex and worship space are not cluttered with the candles and holders.
2. **Nativity.** Pastor Marty will handle putting out the crèche and adding to it each Sunday.
3. **On Christmas Eve.** After the family service help tidy things for the second service. Get the candles ready as noted above. Usually you will need to run the vacuum up front and down the aisles after this service because of the mess created by so many folks being there.

### Holy Week

1. **Maundy Thursday.** At the close of that particular service, the chancel area is stripped of it's ornamentation. Communion Elements, cross, candles, Bible, Bible holder, paraments, banners, and purple drape are removed. The cross is draped in black in preparation for Good Friday. An Altar Guild person should help with this process. Typically the Altar Guild person will come forward and hand each of the items noted above to choir members to take out of the sanctuary.
2. **Easter Service.** Most years there are either potted lilies or a mixture of potted flowers brought to the sanctuary later Saturday afternoon (after 12 noon) or on Easter morning. Those are usually left in the sanctuary for that Sunday and one or two more. They just need to be watered and deadheaded.

*Revised: January 2, 2008*