

An Update on the Liturgical Ministries at Christ Church Cathedral

On Sunday, April 22 the Cathedral welcomed and commissioned the new Guild of Vergers and Head Verger. For two consecutive Saturdays in May, acolytes engaged in a training and refresher course in the Nave. Over the summer, Eucharistic Ministers will be trained for a new role on the altar. You may have been wondering: Where are we headed with liturgical ministries, and why?

For several years, many liturgical ministries have needed training and recruitment. Rather than rush into this work, and so that each ministry could be handled with care, we spent time first with leadership understanding structure, local tradition, and needs. We identified key issues and created a rough timetable for reviewing each of the liturgical ministries, beginning with the vergers, and systematically moving through each of the others.

One issue, both in liturgy and elsewhere in the church, was the problem of very few or only one or two people handling various areas. Both for sustainability and accessibility, we need to bring more people on board. We also saw that a “hierarchy of importance” on the altar had emerged, with certain positions holding more clout than others. In some instances, liturgical ministers understood that they had “earned their way up the ranks” and issues of entitlement and ownership surfaced. These dynamics do not bring people together, but create division. Given the recent history of division at the Cathedral, it seemed that change was needed to continue the healing process that was well underway - the goal being to raise up many leaders who can share in the ministry of the liturgy.

The **Guild of Vergers** was established in the spirit of shared leadership to help the Vicar and community with organization and implementation. Cathedral worship needs many hands on deck to run smoothly, both leading up to and during worship. The Guild was trained for this work and is doing an excellent job.

Acolytes, several of whom reported having not been trained for many years (if ever), as well as friendly new faces, gathered for training in May. Strong and consistent feedback that we should particularly seek more young people on the altar lead to a thorough recruitment effort in this area by the Head Verger.

For many months the **Chalice Bearer** ministry has lay dormant. When former leadership stepped down, several requests for leadership were made to the group with no response. We used this as an opportunity to reevaluate this and other roles on the altar.

In order to have a stronger and more consistent lay presence on the altar, to move away from the liturgical “hierarchy of importance”, and to re-activate the chalice bearers, the decision was made to merge the roles of server, subdeacon and chalice bearer. The new vision would be that each week two vested persons would be present in the chancel, one with primary focus on the Liturgy of the Word and the other on the Liturgy of the Table. Acolytes would be formally

charged with a few new and greatly needed responsibilities while the **Eucharistic Ministers** or “**EM**”s would assume some of the responsibilities formerly held by acolytes. The EMs will be trained in June and July when leadership for this group will be appointed. The new EM/acolyte structure will be activated on the first Sunday of August when worship resumes in the Nave (the Nave will be closed in July for electrical work). Each ministry will be equipped with a customary in check-list form and refresher help will be offered consistently for acolytes trained in May.

The **Lector** ministry will be reviewed during the month on October in consultation with coordinator Tom Gardner and co-contact Miriam Jorgensen.

Finally, it is our goal to convene the first meeting of a “**liturgy coordination team**” (yet to be named) consisting of the Guild of Vergers, the acolyte coordinator and co-contact, the Eucharistic Minister coordinator and co-contact, the Lector coordinator and co-contact – as well as Organist and Choirmaster, the Altar Guild coordinator and co-contact and the Usher coordinator and co-contact in anticipation of Advent 2012, sometime around the first of November.

There are many exciting things happening at Christ Church Cathedral and we hope and pray the liturgical changes outlined will further enhance our worship and lead to community building in this place and offer more opportunities for shared leadership. Worship is very important to us at the Cathedral and we hope and pray we can continue to seek the very best for the greater “we” of which we are all a part as individuals.

For any questions, comments or concerns, please speak with the Vicar, Amy Chambers Cortright, who may be reached at (314) 255-1643.