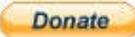


THE COMPLETE GUIDE TO PASCHAL CANDLE CARVING



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*Rather than selling this booklet, we give it away free because we love the art and want to share it. However, a **lot** of work went into creating it. If you find it useful, please consider supporting our continued work by visiting www.candlecarving.info and clicking the  button. Thank you.*

The Complete Guide to Paschal Candle Carving - Revised 4.14.2009.

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“May the light of Christ, rising in glory, dispel the darkness of our hearts and minds.”

Each year at Easter vigils, these words pierce the darkness as Christians gather around the lighting of a large candle. This candle is the paschal candle, sometimes called the Easter candle or Christ candle; its name comes from *pasach*, the Hebrew word for Passover. Congregations may have different Easter celebrations and very different-looking paschal candles, but the meaning and symbols are universal.

After a period of darkness beginning on Good Friday, congregations first light this candle during their earliest Easter celebrations, signaling Christ’s banishment of death and darkness. This tall white candle represents Christ’s steadfast presence in our midst, and its flickering flame dances with light and warmth, illuminating our shadowed world. We continue lighting the paschal candle each Sunday throughout the Easter season, with most congregations continuing to light it until Ascension Day.

We also light this special candle for baptisms, signifying the Holy Spirit and fire that John the Baptist promised to those baptized in Christ. From this flame, a member of the congregation lights another candle, which is given to the newly baptized along with these words: “Let your light so shine before others that they may see your good works and glorify your Father in heaven.”

Just as we light the paschal candle at the beginning of life, so, too we light it at the end of life. Its presence at the head of a casket or beside an urn reminds us again that Christ triumphed over darkness and death and that even in death, there is brilliant life.

“The light shines in the darkness, and the darkness cannot overcome it.”
John 1:5



Although paschal candles have different designs, most today share three symbols:

✚ A central cross identifies it as the Christ candle, and its flame burns despite the death Christ endured. Most paschal candles also have five nails with incense inserted into the center and four endpoints of the cross to represent Jesus’ wounds.

AΩ The letters *alpha* and *omega*, which begin and end the Greek alphabet, signify that God is the beginning and the ending of all things, and that the Word of God is present from creation until the end of time.

2009 The current year indicates that God is present not just at the beginning and the end of time, but throughout history and among those gathered here and now around the candle.

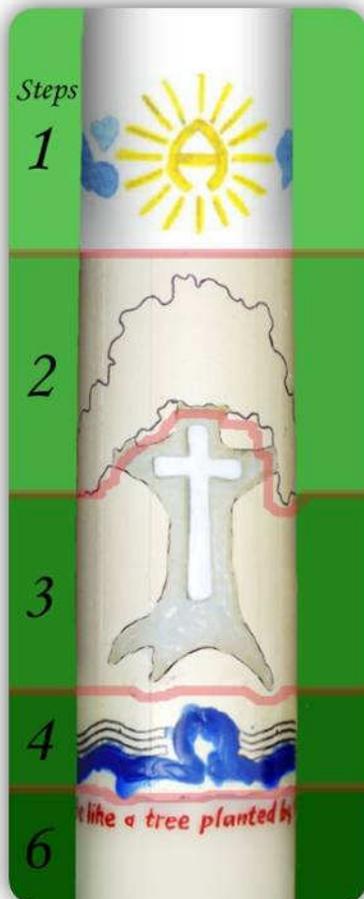
FINDING A CANDLE TO REPRESENT CHRIST IN YOUR CONGREGATION

Because the paschal candle represents Christ's presence in the midst of those who gather around Word and Sacrament, it is appropriate that the candle should fit the character of the people who gather and the place where they worship.

Finding an appropriate candle for your congregation can be as simple as exploring the options available through religious vendors, who offer a wide variety of candle designs ranging from simple to ornate.

Although some congregations purchase a new candle each year at Easter to represent the new life of Christ, other congregations keep the same candle for several years and use the decals that come with it to change the year markings.

Involving artists from your congregation to design a unique paschal candle can lead to a piece of liturgical art that is both aesthetically pleasing and personal to your church family. An artist in your congregation or a professional can paint a plain white candle with the personalized design. Congregations can also make a more vivid and lasting design by carving their design into the candle and filling it with colored wax. Although this method is time consuming, the steps are quite simple and yield a beautiful candle.



OUTLINE OF CARVING A PASCHAL CANDLE

1. Create a design that represents the character of the congregation and incorporates the three traditional symbols. You might hold a congregational contest.
2. Purchase a candle made of at least 51% beeswax. Cover it completely with vertical strips of masking tape and use carbon paper to transfer your design to the tape.
3. Choose one color of the design at a time and carve only that section one-eighth inch deep.
4. Melt spare wax and color it with bits of crayon. Then paint this wax into the carved-out space.
5. When the colored wax is cool, scrape it with a knife until it is flush with the candle surface.
6. Repeat steps 3-5 for each section of color in the design. Then carefully remove the masking tape.

MATERIALS CHECKLIST

See the next 2 pages for more detailed descriptions of starred (*) items . . .

- _ 51% beeswax paschal candle*
- _ Old 51% beeswax candle for practicing*
- _ Spare 51% beeswax (from old candles) for making colored wax*
- _ Candle-work platform*
- _ Scrap fabric to cover work platform
- _ Colored design
- _ Copy of design for transfer
- _ Masking tape*
- _ Carbon tracing paper
- _ Cardboard
- _ Work light
- _ Paper towels
- _ Comfortable chair
- _ Hobby knife*
- _ Larger flat blade knife*
- _ Scrap paper
- _ Crayons (64-96 crayon set, plus 16 crayon set) - Do not use “washable” crayons
- _ Cheap plastic paint brushes*
- _ Toothpicks or other disposable sticks for stirring
- _ Ruler
- _ Scissors
- _ Ballpoint pen
- _ Sturdy box for trash
- _ 4-6 metal $\frac{1}{8}$ cup coffee scoops*
- _ Apron / clothes that can get messy
- _ Non-coil hot plate*
- _ Propane torch



The first step to carving a candle is selecting an appropriate candle . . .

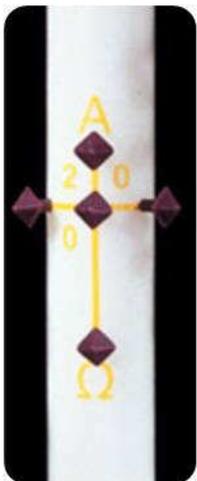
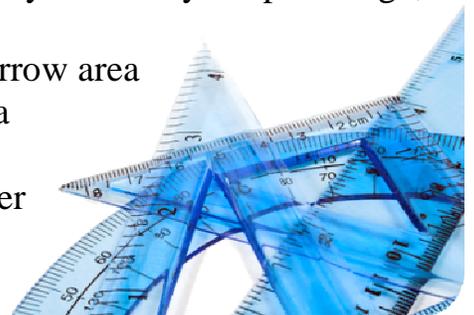
TYPE

- The ideal carving candle is solid 51% beeswax. It maintains its form, but melts well. Beware of craft stores, which tend to sell 100% paraffin candles that are not solid.
- It is recommended that you purchase a “blank” candle made by a church candle manufacturer. They are specially designed so that the wick and wax burn at an equal rate.



DETERMINING SIZE

- Most churches will want to keep the same size as the previous candle. To determine the size of your candle, download Cathedral Candle Company’s RightSizer™ at <http://www.cathedralcandles.com/downloads.cfm>. If you change candle sizes, you MUST change the stand (if it has a metal sleeve, you can change just that) and the follower on top to match the candle (see Appendix A).
- Consider how long you’ll use this candle. If you purchase a new one each year, you may want a smaller one to keep the price down. If you plan to use it for several years, buy a larger one that has more wax and will last longer. Both the diameter and height affect wax volume and thus, burning time (and cost).
- The diameter affects the viewable size of your design - thicker candles can accommodate wider and larger designs. Consider the viewable width to be one third the circumference of the candle (circumference = diameter x 3.1416). For anything beyond a very simple design, you should consider a diameter of at least two inches.
- Consider the width of the candle in the space. Will it be in a narrow area or at the entrance where a thin profile would fit better? Would a thicker candle be better at filling a large, open worship space?
- Consider the overall height of the candle and stand. Will it tower over the baptismal font? Will acolytes or anyone else be able to light it? How high is your ceiling?



WHERE TO BUY

- See Appendix D for candle manufacturers & church supply vendors.
 - Few candle manufacturers sell candles directly to a customer.
 - Order your candle *several* months before you need it. Some sizes take longer to get, most distributors have a lot of orders before Easter, and it gives you a chance to correct ordering mistakes. Always open the candle box when you receive it to make sure it is what you ordered and that everything is present.
- ← “Blank” paschal candles most often come with a cross decal already applied, so don’t worry if it comes like that. It’s simple to remove after peeling back a corner with a knife. The candle should also come with year decals and incense nails. Store the candle in a cool, dry space.

Outlined here are other materials that you need to get obtain.

Masking tape - Any size of masking tape will work, but it will be quicker to apply and easier to carve with wider tape (such as 2" wide). Wide masking tape can be found at hardware stores and most chain retailers. Use the standard tan tape, not blue or green painter's tape.



Hobby knife - For carving design outlines and removing material in thin parts of the design. Any hobby knife like this will work, but make sure it is quality and comfortable to hold.



Larger knife - This knife will be used for carving out large sections, but especially for smoothing out the finished wax. Part of the blade edge needs to be straight for smoothing, but not all of it. A wider blade will be easier to handle. It need not be expensive, but it should be of good quality, without a flimsy or loose blade. Lastly, consider how the knife feels when you hold it. Do not use a knife you will use again for cooking.



Spare candles / wax - Scrap 51% beeswax candles that have become too short. Some of the wax will need to be melted down for colored wax (this wax can come from handheld congregational candles). You'll want at least one pillar candle on which to practice hard parts of the design.



Coffee spoons - Several 1/8 inch coffee measuring spoons for melting wax. They must be metal. A flat bottom will be easier to set down when hot. They can be used over and over for multiple colors, but purchase at least four.



Paint brushes - Lots of them (one for every design color). Buy the cheap plastic ones found in craft stores and chain retailers.



Candle-work platform - 2 long platforms (such as 2x4 boards) placed parallel to each other for the candle to rest on so it doesn't touch the tabletop. See further instructions about what you need and to how to set this up on pg. 10.

Hot plate - The easiest and safest way to melt wax is to use a hotplate (single burner type). The hotplate should have a solid surface (not a coil), and have a control to adjust the temperature. Although it seems silly to purchase one just for this project, having what you need will make life much easier, and a perfectly acceptable one can be found for under \$25. Cover the *entire* unit with aluminum foil (not just the heating surface). You may wish to bend the foil back for access to the controls and to see the light that indicates operation.



TAKE THE TIME TO BRAINSTORM . . .



1) Think about elements you would like

- You should plan to include the common paschal candle symbols: A and Ω, a cross, and the year
- Look around in church supply catalogs or on the internet at different designs to get ideas of the possibilities. What design elements do they have? How do they incorporate and position them? What themes do you see?

2) Think about what images and themes you want

- Don't feel that your candle has to look like the others you've seen. Seeing what others candles look like is helpful, but also try to think outside of the box and make yours distinct. Try not to be too limited to just one side of the candle; consider how the design will wrap around that whole candle.
- Do you want bands to wrap around the top and bottom of the design?
- Would you like baptismal imagery (water, shell, etc.), Holy Spirit imagery (dove, flame, etc.), Eucharistic imagery (bread, grapes, chalice, etc.), nature imagery (sunlight, trees, plants, flowers, etc.), Jesus imagery (crown, lily, etc.)?
- Is there an image/logo your congregation uses on a sign or letterhead?
- What images match your congregation's mission or vision?
- Consider the style of artwork in your worship space. What do the paraments and banners look like? Do you have stained glass?
- Quickly sketch out all the images that interest you. If you have thoughts but aren't sure how to draw them, put those down, too. Put down as many images as strike you. When you're done, see what you feel moved to use, what others like, and what looks good together.

3) Thinking about the colors

- Decide what colors each element should have.
- Look at the worship space and consider what colors would match.
- Consider whether you want the colors to be bright, bold, light, or dark.
- Do you want the colors to match and flow into each other, or do you want the elements to contrast?

GENERAL WARNING

Caution and good judgment should be used when following the instructions in this guide.

It is possible that you might cut or burn yourself while carving candles. The author of this resource is not responsible for any injury resulting from candle carving. Please wear the appropriate safety equipment if you believe yourself to be at risk. The author is not responsible for candles or other property that are damaged during the carving process.

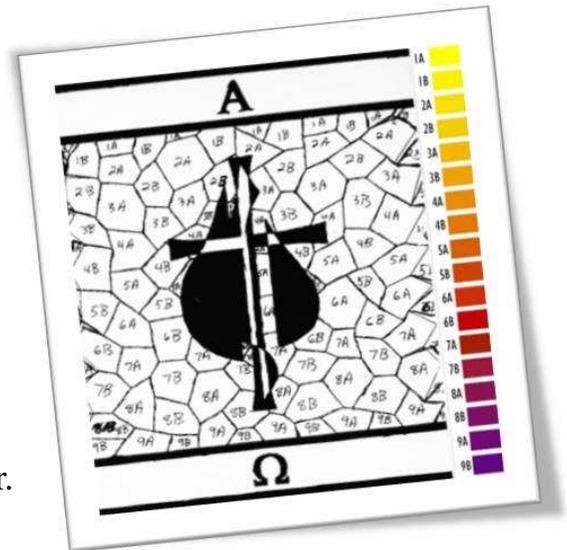


PUTTING IT ALL TOGETHER

- It's important to put the entire design together (sizing, arranging, coloring parts) before carving. Using a computer graphic program can simplify this process.
- When deciding on size and color, consider what people will be able to see from far away. Most people may never see the candle up close. It should look good and be recognizable up close and far away.
- When sizing the design, assume that people can see one third of the candle circumference from any angle. You can make a copy and roll it up to see how the design will look wrapped around the candle.
- If you don't use a computer, you can use a copier to resize the design.

FINISHING THE DESIGN

- You will need to have a full color design, whether it is printed directly from a computer, a printed outline colored in, or entirely hand drawn and colored. This color version will be the basis for coloring the wax, so it should be accurate before you start.
- You will also need a second copy of the design to transfer to the candle. This might be a simple outline printed or copied from the original sketch, or simply a copy of the colored version on which the lines are clear. This copy will be ruined after it is used.



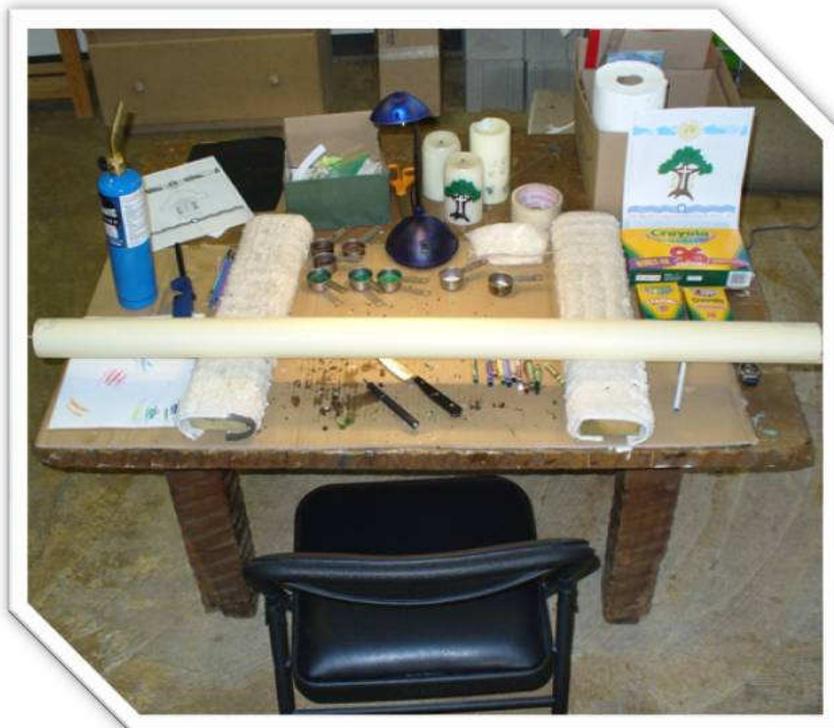
TRANSFERRING THE DESIGN

- Once the candle is prepared (see next page), wrap carbon tracing paper around the candle and tape it down. Trim the paper so that it does not overlap itself. Do not put tape in a place you will be tracing.
- Next, tape the outline copy of your design over the tracing paper.
- Then, trace over the lines of the entire design with a ballpoint pen using firm pressure, but not gouging, as this can tear the paper and dimple the candle.
- Once you remove the outline and carbon paper, you may wish to use a fine-tipped permanent marker to go over the entire transferred design. Some places may be faint and your lines can wear off as you work on the candle.



SETTING UP

- Choose a workspace that can get messy and be left set-up until you are finished with the candle. The table should be at a comfortable height when sitting. Cover it with cardboard to protect it from wax.
- Use 2x4 boards as a platform so the candle can roll at least one full revolution above the tabletop. Don't space the boards too far apart and do *not* put too much weight on the center of the candle when laying across them because it can crack. Cover the platforms with thick or folded cloth/towels to prevent them from making grooves on the soft candle wax. Try to keep the platform clean so wax flecks don't stick to the parts you've already completed.
- Obtain a small box for trash and line the bottom of it to withstand hot wax.
- You might lay out the crayons or sort them by color to help with color selection. Set out a blank sheet of paper to test crayon colors and mark what crayons were used to make a color.
- Display your color drawing so it's visible, but won't get messy.
- Have paper towels handy for spills.
- Keep children and pets away from the work area to avoid accidents.



PREPARING THE CANDLE

- When you're ready to work, take the candle out of its box and remove its wrapping.
- There may be a simple design decal on the candle. Use one of your knives to lift a corner of the decal and then just pull it off. Be careful not to scrape the candle.
- Tape strips of masking tape the length of the candle, slightly overlapping them. This is most easily done with two people. Try to avoid wrinkles where the design will be.
 - The tape will have the design and keep the candle clean and scratch-free. However, it's not thick and will not prevent dents (they are easy to make).
 - Mark the top (by the wick) and bottom so you don't put the design on upside down.
 - Choose and mark what will be the front of the candle. There's a manufacturer brand in the wax near the bottom that you'll want on the back.
 - Transfer the design as outlined on the previous page.

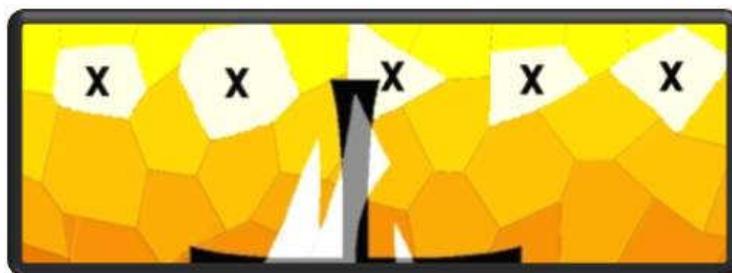




IMPORTANT REMINDER . . .

Before you carve into the final candle, practice *all* of the techniques on a spare candle. Try the whole process from carving to scraping several times with a simple, one-color design. The techniques are hard to master on the first try, and you cannot erase mistakes. Taking a little extra time to practice and getting the hang of it will pay off immensely on your final product. Even if you've carved candles before, it is helpful to practice if you have a particularly difficult section, or if you haven't carved in a while.

WHERE TO BEGIN . . . You can begin carving on any part of the design. However, keep in mind where your hand will rest when working on other parts so that you don't damage them. The middle of the design is often a good place to start (remember you can flip the candle around). If you have a delicate part in your design, you may wish to work on that part last to avoid damage.



WHAT TO CARVE AT ONCE . . . Generally, it is good to carve out all sections of particular design component that are the same color simultaneously (see the example above right). When that color is completed, move on to the next. It can be faster to carve out and apply wax for several colors at once, but they *cannot* be touching, and this is best done only with experience.



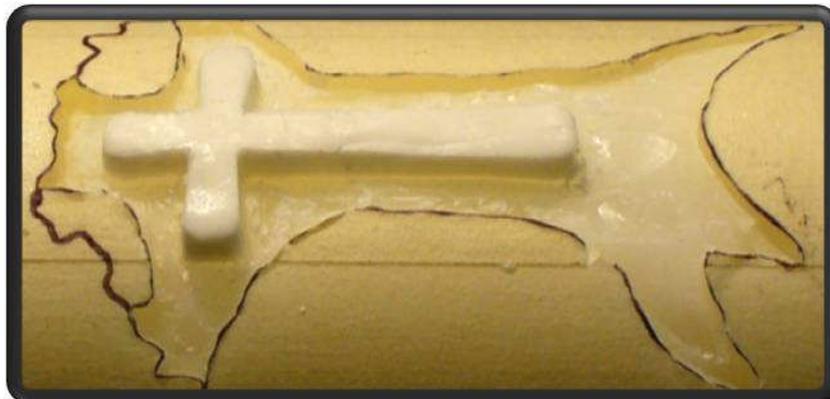
LARGE SECTIONS . . . If there's a section surrounded by several other colors (such as the cross and dove at right), you should carve out and fill *all* of the sections around the large objects first. This allows you to have a smoother edge to the large object than if you were to cut each section of the other colors from the edge of the already completed large object.



FRAGILE SECTIONS . . .

If carving out all sections of one color will leave a thin line of candle wax (that won't later be filled with another color), it is best to carve each of these sections separately. Thin pieces of wax can easily break off. Even if reattached, they will be lighter in color than the regular candle wax. Each water line in the candle to the left was carved separately. Although text poses a similar problem, this really can't be applied to it.

DEPTH . . . The entire section you carve out should be just under one eighth of an inch (3mm) deep. The carved out section does not have to be perfectly smooth, but should be uniform in depth. Shallow spots may cause the color to be lighter in color or chip out easier.



OUTLINE . . . Begin by carving the entire outline of a section with the hobby knife. The cut should be slightly deeper than the depth of the whole section. **Keep the knife at a 90 degree angle to the wax.** If the knife is tilted even slightly, the edges of the section will not exactly follow the lines from the design, or the section will have a haze around it when the colored wax is painted. This angle is imperative when carving text or thin lines.

MEDIUM TO LARGE SPACES . . . Once you have used the hobby knife to carve the outline of the section (described above), use the tip of the larger knife to carve out a ring all the way around the section. The point of the knife should follow the outline at the appropriate depth, but do not let it drift outside the outline because you could accidentally chip out wax outside of the section you are carving. Once you've established this margin all the way around the section, use gentle force with the larger knife to slice out the bulk of the wax inside of it. If you try to pry out a lot of wax at a time, it will require a lot of force and you risk pulling out wax outside the lines.



VERY SMALL OR THIN SPACES . . . Cut the outline as usual (at exactly 90°). Then use the tip of the *hobby knife* to carve out the wax. The tip of this knife can break or fling wax, so be sure to cut out wax, not pry it out. Make sure that thin spaces have *all* the wax removed. It is easy to leave little chunks or slivers that will make your color blotchy.

CARVING NEXT TO ALREADY COLORED SECTIONS . . . Work very carefully because colored wax chips out very easily. Also, make sure that no remnants of the tape are left between the colored and carved out sections.

PREPARING WAX FOR COLORING

- It will save time and grief later on if you shred a large quantity of wax (from the stumps of old candles). Smaller pieces will melt more quickly and evenly. Make sure the wax is not dirty with tarnish or ash. Store it in a clean container that you can seal when you're not taking wax out (such as a Ziploc bag or Tupperware).
- When you put the wax in a melting cup/scoop, make sure there's absolutely no wick or blue tarnish (from brass accessories). If you notice any while melting, remove it with a knife or just discard the melted wax and start over.



MELTING WAX *(See below for an alternative method using a propane torch)*

- Turn the hotplate on to a *low* setting and let it warm up while you prepare to work.
- Put shredded wax in a scoop and place it on the hot plate. Plan ahead, it will take a while. Only wax touching the scoop will melt, so the clump in the middle makes it look like it's not melting. Don't crank up the heat; you can burn the wax (especially the crayon), and it won't speed up the process much. The heat should be just enough that the wax slowly melts. If the wax is boiling, it is way too hot. You'll get a feel for the right temperature with experience. Also, remember that the metal scoops will be hot.
- As the wax pieces melt, they will fill less space, so you'll need to add more wax as it melts down. However, you should not fill the scoop more than 3/4 full with plain wax so you have room for chunks of color. Most of the time, half full of wax is plenty, but it depends on the size of the area covering and depth you carved. If you're painting huge areas, you may need a bigger scoop to melt wax in.
- To save time, you can put several scoops with plain wax on early to have them ready.



Using a propane torch: Some carvers prefer a propane torch for heating wax because it's faster (planning ahead with the hot plate can achieve the same, if not faster, speed). To use this method, adjust the flame to a low burn. Hold the handle of the metal scoop between your fingers so that it's *above* the blue visible part of the flame. Constantly move it around, making sure to heat the sides as well as the bottom. To avoid scorching, you'll need to stir the wax and take it off the flame frequently. When it's hot enough to paint, set it down to use it. Return it to the flame when the wax starts to clump. Avoid boiling the wax, as well as dripping wax into the nozzle. **Always use caution with a constant open flame!**

COLORING WAX

- Before you start adding color to the wax, have an idea of what crayons you'll need to achieve the color you desire. Make a mark on a piece of paper to make sure a crayon is the color you think it is.
- Once the plain wax in the scoop is completely melted, begin adding bits of crayon to color it. The crayon will melt much faster if cut into small pieces or shredded.
- Allow the crayon time to melt. It will help if you stir the wax with a stick or the back of a paintbrush. Stir the mixture until the crayon is completely mixed in and the color uniform. Use a different stirrer for each new design color.



- For a mid-tone color, a half-full scoop of wax should have at least a quarter inch of crayon to color it. If not enough coloring is used, the wax may dry somewhat hazy or transparent. There is nothing wrong with having more color, though *entirely* too much crayon can result in it melting out of the candle in the sun. Lighter colors will require more crayon than dark ones. Wax for thin lines or text should have more color added to appear fully opaque.
- Start with a good chunk of the crayon closest to the color you want to achieve, then use other colors to tint it and lighten/darken it. You'll need a lot of light-colored crayon to alter a color, whereas dark crayon will alter the color in *very* small quantities.
- Work in small increments until you achieve the right color. You can always add more color, but you cannot remove color if you add too much. If the color just isn't working out or you alter it too much, you can always just pour it out and start over.
- Keep in mind the color won't be as bright when it dries. However, if it's still too bright even when dried, use some gray crayon to make it more subtle.
- Wax will dry slightly darker than when it's melted. Always test the color of the wax on the masking tape of your candle near where it will be used to see that its color when dry matches what you want and the colors around it. The test wax should be thick enough to be opaque.
- You might make marks with each crayon you use on a sheet of paper to remember how you achieved a color in case you need to remake or have a similar color elsewhere in the design. However, know that you will never achieve the exact same color twice.
- If a white section is desired, you should color wax with white crayon, as the candle wax is not completely white. A lot of white crayon will be necessary.
- If you want several similar colors (e.g. for leaves in a tree), you will achieve the best results if you make all the colors at the same time with the same base color, then tint them separately. Colors can be kept warm on the hot plate or reheated if necessary.



CHANGING COLORS

- Usually, you will carve and paint one color at a time. However, sometimes you might do two or more colors at once. For this reason, you have several scoops.
- Sometimes it is good to keep a color in the scoop (warm or cool) until the surrounding colors are carved and painted in case it chips out or your knife slips.
- Do not discard colored wax you have finished using. Always keep it until the candle is completed (and even throughout its use) so you can touch it up later if needed.
- The easiest way to save the wax is to wait until it cools *completely*, at least 20 minutes. It is likely ready when you hear a “clink” (wax separating from the metal).
- To remove the wax, squeeze the scoop on all sides and push on the bottom. Flip the scoop over and bang it on a hard surface (but nothing you don’t want to dent). Sometimes it will get stuck at the rim of the scoop and might need to be pried out (be careful that you do not break off the tip of your knife). If it is really stuck, bang it on the *bottom* a few times, flip over and try again. If it is still stuck, slightly heat the bottom and sides, and use a stick to swirl it until it moves freely and comes out. Do *not* discard the wax that got melted, but instead pour it on top of your disc of wax because it contains the pigment that settled to the bottom.
- If you have similar colors, you should scratch a mark in it to distinguish it from others.

CLEANING SCOOPS

- Once the majority of the wax is out of the scoop, you still need to clean out the residue so it doesn’t contaminate your next color.
- To clean the scoop, put a few chips of clean wax in the scoop and heat it, making sure the sides get hot. Swirl it around and dump it out into the trash box. Immediately use a folded paper towel to wipe out the scoop (be careful, it is very hot). Repeat this process a second time. You’re ready for a new color.



REHEATING WAX

- Avoid heating, cooling, and reheating the wax over and over again. If done too much, the color can change slightly. Any wax that is reheated may never be *exactly* the same.
- If you will be reheating wax reasonably soon after it is used, it is easier to just keep it warm than to reheat it from a cold chunk of wax.
- Make sure to use the same paintbrush or a new one when painting with reheated wax.
- Reheated plain wax will also look a bit different than the original wax of the candle.

PRIMING WITH WAX

- Before beginning to paint, make sure that the wax is very hot and well mixed.
- Begin by using a paintbrush to coat all the edges of the carved section. Make sure to get wax into all the cracks and crevices. Taking the time to do this step first will help prevent air bubbles that can leave light spots and even holes in your wax when you smooth it out later.
- Then completely coat the bottom of the section.

FILLING THE CARVING

- Once primed, build up layers of wax in the carved section using the paint brush. Sometimes it works better to pool it in with the brush, rather than brushing it in. If you repeatedly brush wax in the same spot, the weight of the brush will create troughs in the wax you have already painted. If you have multiple sections of the same color, you can alternate between sections to let it cool between layers (beware of turning the candle because hot wax can drip out).
- Don't wait for a layer of wax to cool completely before putting more on. If you wait too long, the new hot wax won't re-melt the surface of the wax already applied and make as good of a bond. This could result in the wax flaking out easier when you try to smooth it out later, requiring you to attempt to patch it.
- If you get bristle marks or poor spreading, the wax is probably not hot enough. If it takes a long time for your wax to cool and building it up requires a lot more waiting than applying, the wax is probably too hot. Experiment with the temperatures to find what works best.
- Make sure that there are no air bubbles. If the wax appears light or translucent, there may be an air bubble, which could create a flawed finish. If necessary, poke it out and fill it back in.
- If painting in a very narrow space (such as a line or text), heat the wax a little more and press it in with dabbing strokes. However, be careful not to damage remaining thin pieces of the candle (such as the center of an "O"). This is the most important time to avoid air bubbles.



MOUNDING THE WAX

- Build up the wax until it bulges a little above the surface of the candle (see picture at left).
- Be especially certain that the edges and any troughs in large spaces are higher than the candle surface.
- Don't worry if wax overlaps the tape or if it isn't perfectly smooth. However, a smoother finish will make it easier to smooth out and shape it in the next step.

FLUSH FINISH - *The most clean and crisp finish.*

The colored wax is scraped flush with the rest of the candle so that the whole candle is completely smooth.

The design will look like it is actually part of the candle.

If you want to make this finish *glassy* smooth, scrape each part the entire length of the carving to remove most of the knife marks. When the candle is completely finished, move a propane torch *quickly* across the design. Be very careful--if you overheat it, the wax will sag and you will totally ruin the carving. *Always* practice this on a carved scrap candle first.

You can achieve a marbling of colors in a section by using the bumpy technique described below. However, do not pull back the tape at the beginning. Then, once the wax is completely cool, carefully scrape it until it is smooth. You will also need to use similar colors.

****Don't use both flush and raised finishes on the same candle. Consider which best matches your design.***

RAISED FINISH - *Sticks out, giving a 3D look.*

In this finish, the wax is built up and scraped into shape. The wax protrudes from the candle surface and doesn't have to be flat. This technique requires more advanced planning and sculpting practice. While it can make a candle really stand out, it may not look good on every candle in every worship space.

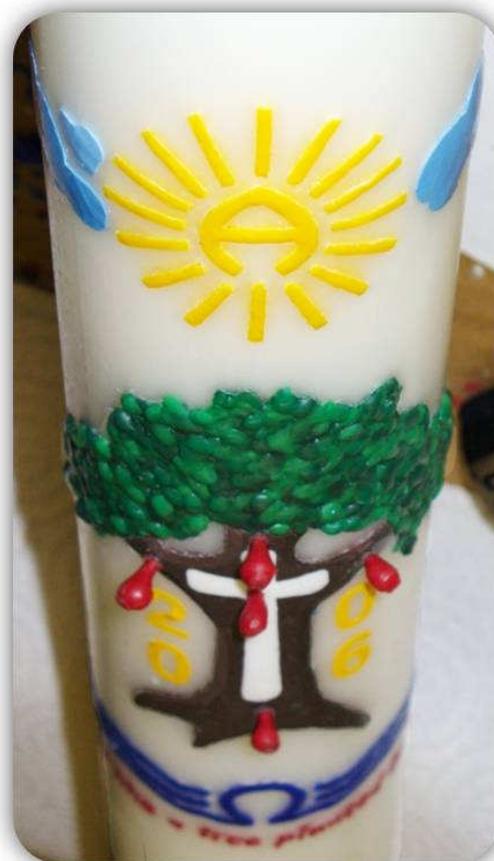
Special Technique: Bumpy (picture below)

Mix and heat three or more similar colors that you want to make up the bumpy section.

Prime the entire carved area with one of the wax colors, making sure to fill the edges and corners. Then, pull back the tape immediately around the section.

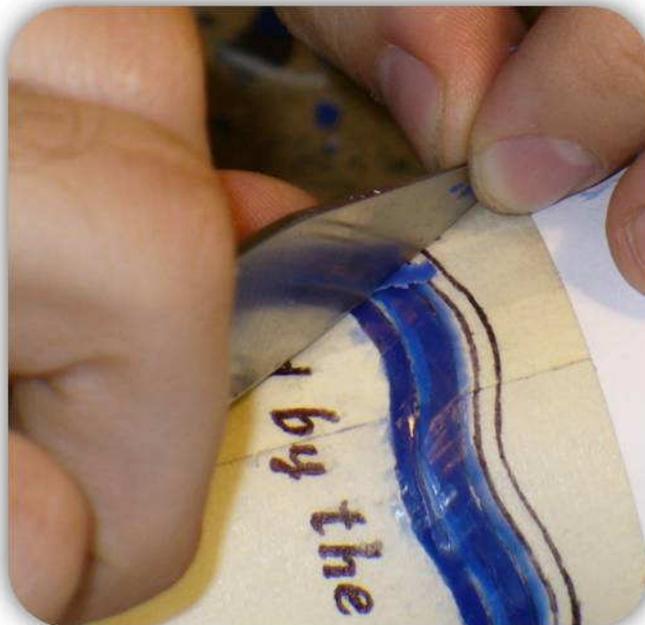
If you want the colors to be distinct, make alternating colored bumps away from other bumps that have not yet cooled.

If you want the bumps to flow into each other, place a different colored bump next to a bump you just placed that is still molten.



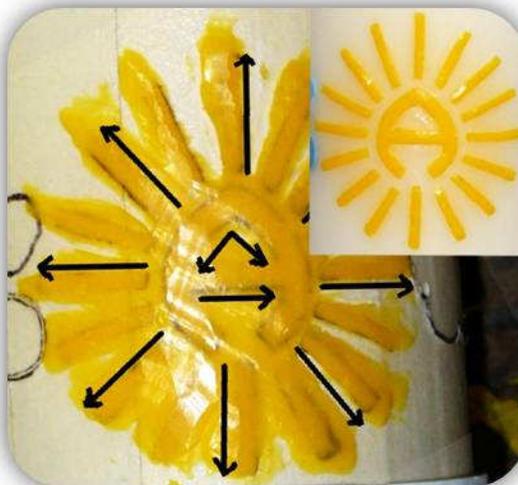
HOLDING THE KNIFE AND THE SCRAPING MOTION

- ◆ Hold the blade of the knife near the handle with your writing hand. Place that thumb behind the blade to apply pressure. Then, take the tip of the blade between the thumb and forefinger of your other hand to give yourself better control.
- ◆ Hold the knife at a slight angle away from your body, and push away from you with your thumbs. Do not exert pressure with your hands. Let the sharp edge and gentle pressure of your thumbs do the work.
- ◆ Use gentle pressure to take off only small amounts of wax with each movement of the blade. If you use too much pressure, you can break off bumps and pull out deeper wax.
- ◆ Keep your knife sharp and clean of wax.
- ◆ Do *not* clean the knife by heating it in the flame of a propane torch. The high heat can ruin the temper of the blade and the knife will no longer hold a sharp edge.



SMOOTHING THE WAX

- ◆ Make sure the wax has completely cooled (including below the surface) before scraping
- ◆ Begin by smoothing out any large bumps or large bulges on the raised wax.
- ◆ As you smooth the bumps, you might make ridges as the knife moves up and down over bumps. Be careful that these do not dig too deep. Remove ridges by scraping perpendicular to the direction of the ridge.
- ◆ Smooth out the wax and slowly reduce the bulge until you can see the tape and outline of the carved section through the colored wax.
- ◆ Once the wax is smoothed out and you can see the tape through the wax, proceed very carefully.
- ◆ Scrape along all the edges of the carved section until you reach the tape, alternating directions as needed to avoid creating ridges.
- ◆ You should scrape along the “grain” as much as you can (see picture at right). This will help you get down to the level of the tape without scraping too far or pulling up the tape (some tape may come up, which is okay).
- ◆ Keep doing this until there is no longer any colored wax hanging over onto the tape. If any hangs over, layers of wax may be ripped off when you remove the tape.



Continued on next page . . .

FINISHING

- ◆ Once you have found the edges, shape the area between the edges with long strokes. For a flush finish, scrape until the center is the same height as the edges.
- ◆ When you are close to the final level, use lighter pressure, barely scraping the wax to create a smooth finish. You may have to look at it from different angles in bright light to tell if it isn't smooth.
- ◆ Be careful not to scrape the center too far, making a dent in the middle of the section.
- ◆ Be sure to take into account the curve of the candle; the section should not be flat, but rather rounded.



FINISHING A RAISED DESIGN

- ◆ For larger spaces, scrape away the wax overlapping the tape. Lightly scrape the edges themselves down close to the tape. Make the center part flat or rounded as you desire. A raised design, like that in the picture, may look better slightly rounded. You can even add further detail to the wax by carving lines and shapes into it.
- ◆ For very thin lines or text, scrape the edges down to the tape as carefully as possible. If you scrape lightly, the tape thickness will help give it a slight protrusion when you pull it off.
- ◆ Do nothing for a section made with the “bumpy technique.”



OTHER IMPORTANT NOTES

- ◆ If a wax layer flakes out, you scrape too deep, or you find an air bubble, stop scraping and reheat that color of wax. Make sure it is mixed very well. When it is *very* hot, paint it onto that space, overlapping the areas around it. Make sure to use the same or a new brush. Let this cool completely and resume scraping, careful not to pull the new wax out.
- ◆ An entire section can be carved out and completely redone if the color is wrong.
- ◆ If two colors in the design will be touching, smooth the first color out, but do not finish scraping down to the candle surface until the colors around it are also ready to be finished. Then, scrape them down to the surface at the same time. This will provide a smoother surface and prevent you from scraping the wax too far when you scrape the adjacent color.
- ◆ Be aware that you will have to refine the finish of flush designs after removing the tape.

REMOVING TAPE

- Make sure that there isn't any wax overlapping the tape before pulling it off.
- From now on, you must keep your workspace impeccably clean, especially the platform (you can put paper towels over it if need be). Any little bit of gunk will stick to the bare candle.



- Be *very* careful when removing the tape.
- Begin with the top layer of tape (last one applied and not overlapped by other tape). Start at the top and *slowly* remove tape at an angle. Check the candle surface to see if the tape is pulling off flakes of candle wax (you might not be able to stop this).
- Tear off the long piece of tape a few inches above the design to make it more manageable around the fragile areas.
- You can choose to either remove each strip the whole length of the candle, one at a time or remove all strips up to the design, then focus on just the design.
- Be gentle removing tape from the design area, so as not to pull off any painted wax.

- You may need to use your knife to lift up the edge of the tape (be careful not to gouge any wax with it).
- Once you've pulled off all the big pieces of tape, look for places where little bits are still attached (e.g. in the middle of O's). You might have to use the tip of your hobby knife to extract these little bits.
- Use a knife to remove any tape or adhesive residue that is stuck against or underneath any of the wax you painted in.

TOUCH-UP

You'll have to do touch-ups after the tape is removed . . .

Repaint and scrape any sections that flaked off when the tape was removed.

Scrape the edges of the colored sections (and the entire design area if needed) flush with the candle surface if you desire the flush finish. The tape prevented it from being perfectly flush the first time, and leaving it will make the finish appear less crisp and clean.

Remove any spots where colored wax seeped under the tape

Clean off any flecks of scraped wax.

Smooth out with a knife any places where the plain candle wax has flaked or cracked (see picture at right).



PREPARING IT FOR THE STAND

Inserting - Hold the candle perfectly straight when inserting it into the stand. If you don't, you'll scrape off a little wax. Over time, you'll end up taking off a lot and the candle will begin leaning.

Bottom Hole - If there's a bolt or screw head sticking up in the bottom of the sleeve the candle slides into, make a corresponding hole in the bottom of the candle with a drill or knife.

Taper - Make a slight taper (less than ¼ inch) at the base of the candle to help you guide it into the stand. →



Groove - Measure the height of the sleeve or hole in the stand. Then make a good-sized groove on the back of the candle slightly longer than your measurement. This prevents the wax from creating a seal that traps air when inserting the candle and a vacuum when removing it.

Lubricate - Use a *small* amount of butter or margarine to lubricate only the portion of the candle that will slide into the stand. It will make inserting and removing the candle much, much easier, and surprisingly won't become gross over time.

Last Resort - If you still have a *very* hard time slipping the candle into the stand after trying all the techniques above, lightly scrape the surface all the way around the candle the same length as the groove. Be careful! If you remove too much or scrape unevenly, the candle will lean, and it can't be fixed.

SHINE THE CANDLE

If the tape left residue on the candle, use a cloth towel to rub it out, though don't rub the design. Once the candle is *completely* finished and clean, place a section of pantyhose over your hand and rub the entire length of the candle (gently on the design) to remove the dull finish.

ENSURING A GOOD LIGHT

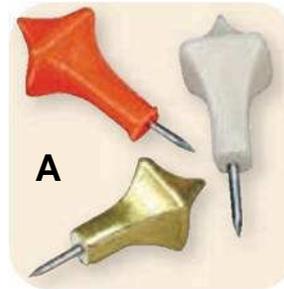
Tradition suggests that a paschal candle not be lit before the Easter Vigil. However, it is wise to light it once before trying to light it during a service. A wick that's never been lit is harder to light, and it can even be drowned by dripping wax from another candle (remember that for unity candles, too). The symbolism is hurt more by a candle that has trouble lighting or never lights.



Paschal candles have incense nails inserted into the center and four points of the cross to represent the five wounds of Christ: the crown of thorns on his head, one nail in each hand, a spear pierce in his side, and one nail in his feet.

A. STANDARD COMPANY NAILS

Nails included with paschal candles from major manufacturers. Incense is embedded in the wax. A variety of colors are available.



B. COMPANY MADE NAIL

“Light of Christ” nail made by Will & Baumer.



C. COMPANY MADE ROSETTE

Handmade “rosette” nails are made in a variety of colors by Marklin Candle Design.



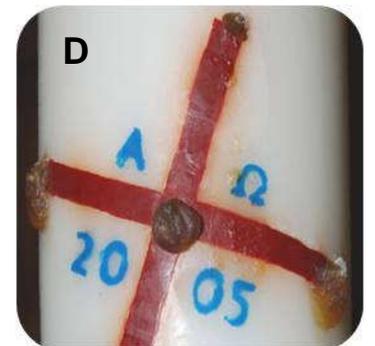
D. NAIL WITH VISIBLE INCENSE

Create “authentic-looking” nail with visible incense. First, insert a wire brad (tiny nail) into the candle with pliers. Then roll around a piece of malleable incense between your warm hands until it becomes soft (not all incense is malleable). Combine pieces of incense if needed. Pinch off the amount you want for a nail and then form it into a ball around each nail. Try to make it so the head of the nail still shows through to emphasize Christ’s suffering.



E. INCENSE MIXED IN WAX

Make your own custom incense nail to match any color so it fits with your design. Melt plain wax in a metal scoop. Add powdered incense (flakes or ground chunks). Add crayon to achieve the desired color.



Dip the head of a wire brad (small nail) into the hot wax. Pull it out, hold it horizontally, and spin it between two fingers until the drop of wax hardens on it. Keep repeating this process until the head is the size you want. Always let the wax on the nail cool completely before dipping it again. Stir the wax very frequently. This procedure will take a bit of practice. Make several more nails than you need so you can pick the best ones and have extras in case you need to replace any of them. These nails are fragile. Before inserting them, make holes by using pliers to push a nail (without wax) into each spot on the candle. Brace the wax with your fingers when gently pulling it out so you don’t pop out any wax. Insert the final nails by pushing on the end with your thumb only. You might break one or two.





FIND THE EDGES

Use a marker to outline the tape edges of a section after it is carved out to make them easier to find when scraping.

COVER YOUR WORK

You may want to tape paper over any large parts that are already finished to protect them if you have a lot of carving left to do.

USING A PROPANE TORCH

Turn the knob on the propane torch just slightly to open up the flow of gas. Quickly light the propane with a match. Do NOT let the propane flow for more than a few seconds without lighting it. The visible part of the flame should be blue. Beware, part of the flame will be invisible, and extends beyond the blue. Once lit, turn the knob on the propane torch to achieve the smallest constant flame possible. You don't need all the heat that a propane torch can put out, and it may actually scorch your wax if up too high.



YEAR NUMBERS

If you only use the candle for one year, carve that year into the wax. However, if you will use it several years, you may want to use decals.

Many candles come with decals, but if you want a specific color, you'll have to search for them in craft stores or make your own. Water-applied decals look better with a flush finish. Self-adhesive

decals (essentially stickers) look better with a raised finish. Use a knife to help place it where you want it.



FURTHER HELP

To see what others have done, or for more information about paschal candles, visit the *only* website dedicated to this liturgical art: <http://www.candlecarving.info>.

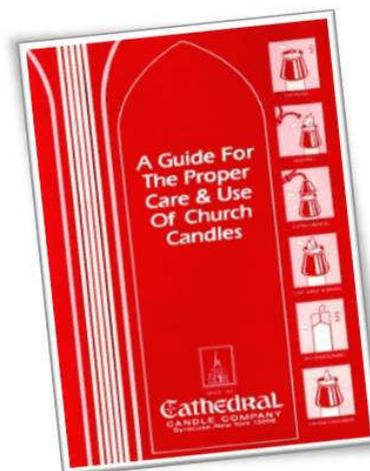
If you have questions about designs or techniques, feel free to e-mail the author at candlecarver@gmail.com.

If there was something you didn't understand in the manual, or if you've learned other tricks along the way, please contact us and let us know. We're always looking for ways to improve the method and the means of sharing it, so we'll consider them in our next update.

CARE AND USE OF CANDLES

Cathedral Candle Company provides a 4-page “Care and Use Guide” for candles. It may be downloaded for free at their website: http://www.cathedralcandles.com/use_care.cfm (the downloadable PDF is at the right side of web page).

Will & Baumer provides a one-sheet summary of tips for candles that is really handy for posting in church sacristies. Download it at their website: <http://www.willbaumer.com/candleuse.jsp> (the downloadable PDF is at the bottom of web page).



RECONDITIONING WICKS

- Wicks that become too long will curl and need to be trimmed. A good sign that a wick is too long is that the flame releases a lot of smoke (though smoke could also indicate a draft).
- Wicks are easier to work with when warm (light the candle briefly, then extinguish it).
- If a wick curls and becomes embedded in the wax and the wax is still warm, gouge it out and trim it. However, if the wax has solidified, follow the same method as described next.
- If a wick becomes too short, gets broken off, or is flooded by wax, use a knife to trim the wax all around it. It is easiest to trim when the wax is still warm or heated by a propane torch. It's often better to scrape the wax off than try to cut it off (avoid cutting off the wick you just exposed). A serrated table knife works remarkably well for this.

USING FOLLOWERS

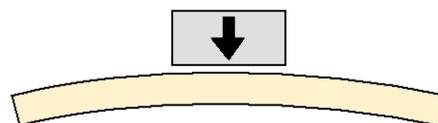
- Followers must be clean to function well. Remove any wax from a follower, inside and out, before placing it on a fresh candle.
- When positioning a correctly-sized follower on a candle top, give it a quarter twist with slight pressure. This will "seat" the follower so that it will seal properly.
- Once a follower is seated, especially after the candle is lit, don't break the seal. If the seal is disturbed, liquid wax can leak from underneath the follower and damage the candle.
- If wax leaks out, take off the follower and remove the wax from it. Remove drips from the candle sides and trim the top of the candle until flat. Seat it as described above.
- If candles don't burned long enough each time, they will tunnel such that the follower sits on a hollow cylinder of wax. Not only does this hide the flame, the sides might melt and leak and the wick can become encased with wax. If minor tunneling occurs, push down on the follower when the wax is still warm (be sure the wax level does not rise above the wick). If the build-up is significant, you'll have to trim the candle and reseat the follower.

CLEANING UP WAX SPILLS

- If wax splatters, it might come off by just rubbing it with your hand. If there is a pool of wax, pry it up with a fingernail (not a knife). Use a plastic scouring pad dipped in very hot water to remove any stubborn wax (dispose of wax-filled water outside, not in the sink).
- If spilled on linens, peel or scrape off the wax, then carefully pour boiling water through it.

STRAIGHTEN A LEANING CANDLE

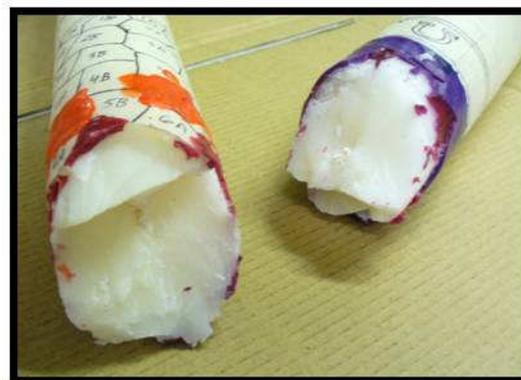
- It is natural for tall candles to lean over time. The weight of the wax puts significant stress on the somewhat pliable wax lower in the candle, and it can bow under its own weight. Taller candles lean more than shorter ones. Warping can be almost eliminated by making sure the candle and candle stand are not leaning. It also should not sit in direct sunlight (especially during the summer) or in front of heating vents.
- If you need to straighten the candle, let it get warm for a long period of time (e.g. in a warm room). *Never* heat it with a flame, put it in hot water, leave it in bright light, or put it in front of a heater. It must be evenly warm throughout the candle.
- If only slightly bent, lay the candle on a solid surface (like a counter) so the candle arcs upwards. Then *gently* push down on it. Use slow and even pressure so that it bends. Do not force the candle, especially if it is cold, because it might crack. You may also carefully roll it back and forth to make sure it is straight all around. You may not be able to do this with incense nails inserted or if the design is not flush. Be careful! You can break the candle.
- If the candle is significantly bent or not responding to the method above, set it on a flat surface (without the follower) against a wall in a very warm area. Position it so that it arcs upwards. Brace the candle so that it doesn't fall/roll away from the wall. Then place a hymnal or other weight on top of it and let it remain like this for however long is needed (which may be a week or more).
- You may have to cut off the base of the candle (2-3 in.) if it is the source of the lean.



CANDLE SURGERY

Large cracks - If strained (e.g. by applying too much force to bend it), molded candles (most candles) can crack along their seam. If the crack is significant, there may not be anything you can do. In these cases, your only hope is to put a bolt or other anchoring device with heads on each end into the candle. If a candle splits after being mounted on a spike, chances are good it will never mount securely again. *Always* pre-drill a hole for a spike and *never* force the candle onto it.

Fractures - If a candle gets dropped, sometimes a piece may shear off. Gather all the major pieces. Use a propane torch to heat the surface of the fracture on the candle itself. Heat it until it's tacky, but don't overheat it and cause it to drip. Then, stick the piece onto it and press very firmly. Once the pieces are together, paint plain hot wax over the seams and scrape it smooth when cooled. It's unlikely this section will ever look perfect again, and it will be more fragile than before.



Dents - If a candle receives a small dent, often the best approach is simply to smooth out the edges to disguise it. If the gash is significant, you can brush hot wax into it and then scrape it smooth, but it will not blend in perfectly.

STANDS

- A candle can attach to a stand several ways
 1. Fit into a hole drilled in the stand
 2. Fit into a metal socket/sleeve
 3. Fit onto a spike - a spike must be very large and requires pre-drilling the candle to avoid cracking - it is very highly discouraged if it can be avoided
- Metal sockets work better for new stands because they are manufactured to the precise diameter. The play in a drill bit can make a slightly imperfect hole and lead to a leaning candle.
- If drilling or purchasing a socket, use the exact measurement of the candle; you can trim the bottom of a candle to make it fit, but a hole can't be made smaller.
- Metal sockets can be purchased from religious suppliers (Southeast Church Supply and Marklin Candle Design, listed on the next page, have the largest selections) or metalworkers.
- Metal sockets should come with a hole in the bottom. There are two types:
 1. A threaded hole that you screw onto a bolt embedded in the top of the stand
 2. A smooth hole through which you drill a screw into the top of the stand



FOLLOWERS

- A follower is a necessity for paschal candles.
- Followers are also sometimes called “burners”
- They keep a candle burning evenly and prevent wax from dripping down the sides. They use gravity, “following” the candle down as the wax liquefies beneath it.
- Followers are manufactured to a specific size and weight to match each individual candle diameter, so it is important to use the correct one.
 - Followers come in glass and brass. Glass are less expensive and much easier to maintain. However, they quickly develop a black residue and can easily be broken. Brass followers are hard to damage and typically fit candles better, but they are significantly more expensive and have to be maintained like any other fine metal. Both types should contain wax equally well if fitted properly.
- When choosing a type and style of follower, remember to consider the style of the candle stand and what types of followers are used on other candles in the worship space.
- Brass followers are constructed with a variety of shapes and finishes.



CANDLE MAKERS - Makers of both blank and decorated paschal candles.

Individuals typically can't order direct from most manufacturers. Use a religious vendor like those listed below.



Cathedral Candle Company

<http://www.cathedralcandles.com/>



Will & Baumer, Inc.

<http://www.willbaumer.com/>

Dadant and Sons, Inc.

<http://www.dadant.com/religious/>



The Candle
Carving Site

does not endorse

any of these companies or

receive any compensation for

providing this information. It is

provided for your convenience

only. All of the companies listed here have proven records of quality products

and service. However, always use your own best judgment when making purchases.

Marklin Candle Design

<http://www.marklincandle.com/>

Manufactures and distributes own candles and accessories



RELIGIOUS SUPPLIES DISTRIBUTERS



Augsburg Fortress

<http://www.augsburgfortress.org/>



Boric Religious Supply, Inc.

<http://www.boricreligious.com/>



Cokesbury

<http://www.cokesbury.com/>

Southeast Church Supply

<http://www.churchproducts.com/>



Marklin Candle Design

<http://www.marklincandle.com/>

Manufactures and distributes own candles and accessories

CUSTOM-MADE CANDLES - Does the carving process look to be too much for you?

THE CANDLE CARVING SITE

Visit www.candlecarving.info and use the **“Contact Us” page** to see if there are any experienced candle carvers willing to work with you on your custom project. These people carve candles as a hobby and/or spiritual discipline, not as a profession.



Marklin Candle has a customizable candle product line called “Moment Mark” for special occasions such as weddings, births, and memorials. For product information, visit them at <http://www.marklincandle.com/products/?c=1>. Marklin also accepts more specifically customized orders. For more info, visit <http://www.marklincandle.com/products/custom.php>.

Use this space to add your own thoughts, tips, and notes you want to remember . . .