

## Usher Responsibilities

Revised July 15, 2009

Ushers are extremely important in conveying friendliness and hospitality to worshipers—both regular worshipers and guests. You set the tone by often offering the first welcome and what you do contributes immensely to the orderliness of the service. Families are welcome to usher together. It is recommended that at least one parent usher with any children from 3<sup>rd</sup> grade to Confirmation. **If you cannot usher on a particular day for which you signed up, please contact the head usher for that service so that an alternate can be secured.**

The head usher for each service is chiefly responsible for delegating some of these responsibilities.

### Before the Service:

- Arrive 15-20 minutes prior to start of service. Report to the head usher in the narthex.
- Turn on lights in the Sanctuary, if necessary. The switches for the main Sanctuary hanging lights are located in the circuit box outside the Sacristy. The panel in the narthex controls the spot lights and is also used for dimming those lights.
- Turn on, or adjust, fans, heat, windows, etc. as necessary. The switches for the fans are located in the Sanctuary near the exit door to go to the Sacristy. ***Do not run fans in cold weather.***
- Retrieve bulletins and attendance slip from church office. Make sure there are bulletins on the table at the west entrance to the Sanctuary near the Sunday School rooms.
- Make sure offering plates and hearing devices are ready in narthex. They can be retrieved from the small office across from the main office. One offering plate should be available to the choir.
- Put on nametags.
- Fill water glass at pulpit from a cold-water fountain. Make sure the glass is clean with fresh water for each service. You may use clean cups from the Lounge kitchen but make sure they do not have lipstick on them!
- Make sure guest book is open to current page.
- Tidy up the narthex. Remove or arrange any papers that make the space look messy.
- Check for and remove from Sanctuary miscellaneous papers.
- Tidy up hymnals in Sanctuary. Hymnals with plastic pockets in the front cover (those that have a green mark on top) belong in the chair sections of the Sanctuary. Hymnals in the chairs should be stored with the bindings down.
- Make sure all pews and hymnals (those with the plastic pockets in the front) have any necessary pew cards, sharp pencils, etc.
- Assign collection aisles to ushers—with most experienced in side aisles.
- Greet and distribute bulletins to all those who enter the Sanctuary. Station at least one usher at the west entrance near the Sunday School rooms. On days when children's liturgy guide is used, make sure all children get one.

### Greeting and receiving the congregation:

- Greet by name when possible. If you don't know someone, introduce yourself by name and get other person's name. Shake hands if offered.
- Escort worshiper to pew whenever possible, particularly guests. Escort regular worshipers to their regular seats. Encourage persons with children to sit towards the front so the children can see better.
- Before the choir processes they usually gather in the last rows of the Sanctuary. Usher people away from these rows or urge people to sit further to the front.
- Assist any disabled people.

- Be alert for guests. Have them sign the guest book. Encourage them to attend post-service fellowship. Try to introduce them to an existing member of the congregation.
- Be alert for guests that may need assistance in finding where to hang coats, where the nursery is, where the restrooms or water fountains are, where the Fellowship Hall is, etc.

### **During the Service:**

- Toll the bell as a call to worship at the beginning of the service—either immediately following the prelude or at a signal from a Pastor.
- Head usher will assign one person to take an attendance count. All adults, children, choir, organist, lay personnel, and pastors are to be included in the total count. Record the attendance on the form slip and include it with any cards or slips that worshipers may fill out and return these to the secretary's mail box in the office.
- Be alert for security reasons.
- Know where the defibrillator and fire extinguishers are.
- Usher and direct latecomers into the Sanctuary at appropriate times—preferably NOT during a prayer or in the middle of a reading. It is best to enter the Sanctuary when people are beginning to sit or stand, or during a hymn.
- Collect offering at appropriate time. Better to have experienced ushers in side aisles. Make sure you collect any offering from the balcony. \*\*
- Toll the bell during Lord's Prayer. Use the long rope to strike clear, solemn tolls throughout the prayer.
- On All Souls' Day, a single tolling of the bell is struck after each name of those who died is read.
- Direct people to communion. \*\*\*
- Two ushers need to stand beside the carts that hold the cups. Change trays when necessary. Be alert to whether we are kneeling at the rails or communing at stations and direct people accordingly. Assist anyone needing direction.
- During the announcements or immediately after the service, hand out welcome packets to guests.

### **After the Service:**

- Clean all pews—recycle bulletins left in pews or pew racks.
- Gather up attendance sheets, guest sheets, etc. and place in secretary's mail box.
- Empty water glass at pulpit.
- Check for lost items and if any are found, bring to the administrator's office and leave a note.
- Turn off lights, fans, sound system, shut windows, etc. if necessary.
- Two ushers remove offerings to the drop safe.
- Clean hearing aid ear pieces with an alcohol wipe.
- Return the attendance count slip to the Administrator's box in the office.

If during the service something irregular should require your attention, handle it with tact and common sense. If someone gives you a prayer request, pass it along to a Pastor. If someone requires medical assistance, direct someone to call 911 if necessary and in the meantime, find a doctor or nurse from the congregation to help. (Alden Tetlie, Holly Waalen, Pauline Hendrickson, Nancy Swanson, Phoebe Worthington, Bernice Davenport, Paul Odenbach, Nancy Struthers are some of these people.) ***Do not overlook the defibrillator in the upper narthex in the event something looks like cardiac fibrillation. The machine itself will instruct you; it will not "fire" unless it is necessary; this means you cannot harm someone by using it.***

\*\* Collecting the offering:

Each usher carries two offering plates and works with a partner. Proceed together down the main aisle and begin collecting in the transepts, starting from the back. Then work back up the nave until you return to the narthex. Consolidate the offering into four plates and at the offertory hymn, two ushers are sent forward to deliver the offering to the acolytes.

The procedure is for the first usher to pass his/her plates down one pew each with the next usher passing his/her plates down the next two pews, to be received by the partner. If the middle of a pew is empty, hold out a plate but do not pass it.

\*\*\* Directing worshippers to communion:

Two ushers release the people from the pews and two ushers administer the cups. Usually those who release will go down the side aisles and those overseeing the cups will proceed down the main aisle.

Ushers who release the people should start in the transepts. Always release people from the east side of the row. When pastors and communion assistants begin to partake of wine, release the people from the front row and direct them to the cabinets with the cups. The ushers administering the cups should direct people either to the communion rail or to stations. Try to keep at least 10-15 people ready in line.

After the transept rows have been released, proceed to the main aisle in the nave. Release from the front rows first. Whoever works back to the last pew first should release people from the balcony.

For ushers administering the cups, gently direct people when there is an opening. Do not rush anyone. Try not to separate families.

Note any in the congregation who are unable to go to the front for communion. Alert the pastors to those people so that they can commune them from where they are sitting.

Ushers commune last.

**Please be aware of the following items dealing with safety –**

- Do you know where the fire extinguishers are? There is a red sign on the wall above each one. Remember “PASS” – Pull the ring, Aim at the base of the fire, Squeeze the handle, and Sweep across the base of the fire from a low angle.
- We have First-Aid Kits in the Nursery, in the Main Office, and in the Kitchen. Again, red signs near the doors of these rooms highlight these locations.
- Telephones are in all offices as well as in the kitchen. Do not hesitate to call 911 in the event of a medical emergency, a fire, an accident, or a misbehaving or suspicious person in the building.
- If the fire alarm sounds, or any other indication of fire, smoke, or gas smell, evacuate the building immediately. This is critically important, as many people tend to sit and wait to see what happens.
- Don't be afraid to use the defibrillator if you think someone may be having a cardiac incident. Open it and follow the instructions it gives. Have someone call 911. The defibrillator cannot hurt anyone; it will not administer a shock to someone who does not need it.
- Do not under any circumstances allow matches or other fire-starters to be left within reach around the building.
- Be sure all exits are clear and usable. Please check this at the start of your morning's service.

Thank You for your service; and Thank You for keeping everyone safe!

## **Glossary:**

Chancel: the elevated area in the front of the worship space, where the altar is located.

Narthex: the main entrance hall of the church building which leads to the worship space.

Nave: the section of the worship space where the congregation assembles for worship.

Pulpit: raised reading desk for the biblical readings and for preaching.

Sacristy: a room in the church building used for storage and preparation of vestments, vessels, linens, and other liturgical items; also used as a vesting room.

Sanctuary: that part of the chancel which immediately surrounds the altar.

Transepts: the lateral arms of a cross-shaped church, usually between the nave and the chancel.