

Worship Ministry

Usher Guidelines

Purpose

These guidelines provide information to assist a parishioner to participate as an usher in the Parish. The usher provides a friendly welcome to all worshippers, offers assistance and guidance as needed. An usher helps to ensure that the services run smoothly and ministers to the worshippers by greeting people as they walk into the sanctuary, assisting people with special needs, presenting the elements to the altar, and collecting the offering.

EMERGENCY or SECURITY PROTOCOL

The Ushers should be aware of any suspicious activity outside the church doors. If there is a concern, the issue should be raised to the Vestry Warden or Person of the Day. If necessary, call Fairfax County Non-Emergency number 703-691-2131. It is also recommended in a disaster or emergency, the Ushers should have a list of members of the congregation who are nurses, EMTs, doctors, or law enforcement, and to have a large first-aid medical bag available.

The ushers will take the lead in getting worshippers to safety in an orderly manner adhering to the evacuation plan.

Note there are no ushers at the 8:00 A.M. service.

STRUCTURE OF THE USHER MINISTRY

There is a lead usher appointed by the Rector. All potential ushers should have regular training. It is recommended that at least 3 times a year, the ushers get together to refresh the responsibilities.

Training of the ushers includes:

1. How do you greet and seat worshippers?
2. What are the physical action steps to presenting the elements to the altar?
3. What are the physical action steps required to collect offering?
4. What is the protocol to guide worshippers from the pew to the table to receive Communion?
5. How do you handle late comers that arrive during the service?
6. What are the procedures in emergencies – do we have a “What If” plan?

The Lead Usher:

1. Facilitates communication between the Rector and Vestry.
2. Recruits new members as needed through general and individual solicitation.
3. Instructs new members of the ministry and arranges for on-the-job training.
4. Prepares and maintains these guidelines and procedures on an annual basis, or as needed.
5. Maintains a current roster of all ushers.
6. Schedules ushers for regular and special services on a quarterly basis. These quarterly schedules are submitted to the Parish Administrator on the first of each month of the following calendar quarters in March, June, Sept and December.
7. Prepares and submits notices for the Sunday bulletin pertaining to the Usher Ministry.

Before you come to church, be prepared for the role of the usher:

1. Be clean and tidy.
2. Be aware that some worshippers have allergic reactions to various colognes, perfumes and the smell of smoke.
3. Take care to minimize hand lotion and creams due to allergies.

When greeting worshippers:

1. Smile
2. Have fresh breath
3. Make eye contact
4. Take initiative to greet

When greeting newcomers:

1. Refrain from asking “are you new?” or “is this your first time?”. Instead, watch for body language signs to indicate if the person is new or not. Additional signs of newcomers are:
 - a. Looking above heads for signage,
 - b. Asking questions like “can I take coffee into the sanctuary?”,
 - c. Walking slowly as they look around,
 - d. Tentativeness in entering the church or
 - e. Looking confused as if they cannot locate something.
2. Use the phrase, “Can I help you?”

Before the 10:00 A.M. church service, the ushers will:

1. Arrive at the church at least 15 minutes before the service begins.
2. Check the thermostat and the restrooms.
3. Make sure alms basins are in place
4. Ensure pews are tidy, and prayer books and hymnals are placed correctly in the pews.
5. Ensure tissue boxes and hand sanitizer is available.
6. Select someone to ring the bell at the start of the service.
7. Encourage members to wear their name tags.
8. Prepare the bulletins for distribution.

As worshippers arrive to the sanctuary door:

1. They greet each person with a smile and hand out the bulletins.
2. They also answer any visitor's questions and extend extra help in seating if appropriate.
3. If needed, they ensure the visitor has an escort to the Sunday School or Nursery.
4. Assist in the seating of worshippers as needed
5. Provide care for the needs of the pastor during the service
6. Maintain the decorum of the service according to the church's tradition
7. Watch for safety of the congregation and act as the line of first response to medical emergencies.

During the church service:

1. Greet latecomers and aide them in finding a seat if necessary. If the lessons are being read, they should wait until the lesson is completed before being seated.

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2. Count the attendees (including Sunday School, nursery kids and others at the service) and enter on account tab for the rector to be presented with the elements. This information is also used by the Rector for entry into the church records.
3. At the end of the creed, alert the Sunday School teachers to join the service during the Peace.
4. During the Peace, gather the elements and remain in the back until the offertory sentence, at which time the elements are taken to the altar with the account tab for the number of attendees.
5. After presenting the elements and the account tab, receive the offertory plates and begin collecting the collections pew by pew.
6. Remain at the back of the church with the offering plates until the doxology begins. One usher takes the offering plates and the other usher will take the basket of donation gifts to the altar. Place the offering plate in the collection plate and give the acolyte the donation basket (or assist if necessary).
7. While the Rector is offering the elements to the seminarian and LEMs, move to the front of the church to begin directing people to the altar rail. Stay at the end of the pew for the next released worshippers. Assess the number at the altar rail before releasing the next 13-16 people per side at a time. Ushers are the last to take communion.
8. Be ready to assist anyone in the congregation who might need help as it pertains to heat, cold or medical,
9. Be alert to the needs of the congregation who appears to need other types of assistance.

After the church service:

1. Ensure the sanctuary is tidy
2. Remove all bulletins, extraneous papers, etc. from pews and replace hymnals and prayer books in their appropriate place.
3. Be sure all kneelers are raised out of the way.
4. Return any Spanish language books to the book shelf at the rear of the church.
5. Gather any bulletins etc. from the back table and tidy up in preparation for the next service.
6. Collect the offertory plate from back of the altar for the tellers.
7. Remove any visitor cards and provide them to the Parish Administrator.