



Sunday Morning Ministries Guide

Ushers

History of ushering

In the Old Testament ushers were called "gatekeepers." Their ministry was so important that they were given living quarters at the Temple. According to I Chronicles 9, their duties included the opening of the temple every morning, the care and protection of all the precious vessels, the preparation of certain food items used in ritual sacrifices, and guarding the temple.

By the time of Christ, these gatekeepers had become known as the "Temple Guard." They were ordered to arrest Jesus, but according to John 7 they instead became interested in Jesus' message. However, according to John 18, the temple guards were part of the contingent that arrested Jesus in the Garden of Gethsemane.

Early in Christian history, the ushers became "porters" (overseers of the doors). When the church faced persecution, the ushers guarded the doors and took note of those who came and went, always guarding against spies. Later, when Christians could worship in the open, they also rang the bells. Today, ushers are involved with hospitality, worship, and evangelism.

Ushers, Ministers of Hospitality

Ushers are usually the first official representatives of the church that people meet when they arrive. The ushers' dress, attitude, words, demeanor, body language all speak a message to this worshipper. As God's servants to his people, ushers take care that nothing interferes with the awesome character of this encounter between God and his people at this time and place.

Ushers, Liturgical Ministers

Ushers are leaders. As such they reflect the devotion and reverence and joy of encountering God in our worship service. Ushers should not physically or emotionally absent themselves from worship. The Narthex is a "decompression chamber," a place where they rid themselves of the noise and busyness of the world and prepare to worship God in the sanctuary. Thus, an usher will take care in creating a quiet narthex. Furthermore, our worship is a convocation of the Royal Priesthood and the "Feast of Victory for our God,"

ushers, leading by example, should dress appropriately.

Ushers, Ministers of Evangelism

Ushers are "Exhibit A" for visitors. Some visitors are wary coming to a church and it takes very little to make their return their last return. If they feel authentically welcomed and helped by the usher, God has one less stumbling block to hurdle in bringing the Gospel to these people.

Duties

Before Worship starts

- Arrive to the church at least 15 minutes before the service is to begin.
- Check for neatness in the worship area.
- Check the bulletin to see if there are special events, special worship folders needed, or a door offering.
- If there is a baptism, reserve the two front lectern pews with the reserved sign (they can be found on the shelves).
- Make sure the bulletins are out, the guest book is open, the pew cards are tidied, each pew has pencils, and the registration pads are fresh (pens, cards, and pads can be found on the shelves).
- If there is any confusion as to what to hand out, see Pastor.

As the worshipers arrive

- Greet the people in a friendly manner. Don't be afraid of introducing yourself to strange faces, even though they might be lifelong members! By such a free and humble friendliness, we are exhibiting the truth that we don't put on masks here; but rather we are all brothers and sisters in Christ.
- Hand the bulletin to them and ask if they would like to be seated. If they would like to be seated, seat them as forward as possible and comfortable for them. Especially, seat the families with children forward; let them see the action up front. Take care to seat a new person next to a person that is mindful of others and who would be prone to be friendly and helpful if they get lost in the liturgy. The last five minutes before the worship service are usually deluged with worshipers—it may be impossible to seat them without neglecting the newly arrived.
- If the seats fill up, say a prayer of thanks to God! Then, get some folding chairs and place them in the aisle. Do not send them down to the lobby.
- If a worshipper arrives and asks if he/she can take communion, lead them to the sacristy if there is more than five minutes left before the service begins. But if there is no time, direct them to the welcoming paragraph of the worship bulletin. They do not have to be Lutheran, but they should believe those basic points outlined in the paragraph.
- If there is no one ringing the bell, please feel free to do so. The ringing of the bell is the responsibility of the caretaker.

Late Arrivals

- Greet them, hand them a bulletin, show them where the congregation is at the present moment in the order of service. Inform them that they will be able to enter at an appropriate time.
- The appropriate times are the announcements, the Opening Hymn, and the Hymn of Praise. Try to stop people from entering the sanctuary during Confession and Absolution or prayers.
- Ask if they would like to be seated or to help find an open space.

During the Worship

- The usher is the messenger between the pastor and the organist. He may use the phone to “buzz” you. If you need to contact the pastor, you may buzz the sacristy and the tape minister will relay the message to the pastor, or may come up to directly to the pastor, if it is very important.
- The ushers are given permission to regulate the temperature by setting up fans, opening windows, turning up the heat.
- If emergencies happen, take charge by ushering them out of the sanctuary and meeting their needs. If needed, call 911. Be aware of the AED.
- Feel free to reign in unsupervised children. They should not be wandering around the lobby. Ask the Elder of the Day (the man sitting in the lobby) to attend to the wandering child.

Taking the Offering

- As the offering begins, each usher should take his/her spot in the aisle and walk up in line with the other ushers. As the plate is passed back and forth, the two ushers in the inside aisle are responsible for counting the people they face. Remember to count the balcony—the usher bringing up the plate to the balcony should also count the balcony.
- After the plate has been passed, meet together in the narthex and tally the numbers. When the numbers are tallied, enter the number into the book (which is in the narthex mail slot, extreme right about head level).
- Two ushers holding all the plates will stand in the back waiting for the pastor to come to the center. As the pastor faces the congregation, come forward up to the kneeler and transfer the plates to the pastor.
- If there is communion, remain standing in the center aisle at the front pews. If there is no communion, exit down the center aisle.

Holy Communion

- The two center aisle ushers take positions at the center aisle immediately after they present the offering at the Altar.
- Admit the choir and the balcony first. Make sure that each table is filled. Try to have 12 people at each rail. Also, bring people up to the rail in a timely way so that the communion assistants are not waiting for people. Time is of the essence. Try to keep family units intact; however,

sometimes families will have to be broken up to meet the goal of having 12 people at each communion table.

- Offer to help the elderly and the handicapped to and from the communion rail. If they desire to commune in the pew, tell pastor as he communes you.
- After everyone else has communed, the ushers may commune.

After the Service

- Ushers do not usher people out. You can remain in the narthex greeting people as they leave. You may be asked to hand out materials as they leave.
- Clean up the area. Make sure the hymnals, pens, and pew cards are in their place. We use only pens. Eliminate all pencils. Ushers are responsible for the look and functionality of the pens.
- After the 10:30 service, please gather all used pew cards that did not make it into the offering plate and gather all registration pad names. Place these in the church office.