

**USHER GUIDELINES**  
**Good Shepherd Lutheran Church**  
**FEBRUARY 2019**

Ushers are ministers of hospitality. Their task is to serve all those who have come together to worship with quiet efficiency and authentic hospitality, enabling them to offer reverent worship to God and to enjoy the Christian community. Ushering complements and advances the mission of the congregation, for it makes both visitors and members feel welcome and wanted.

Ushering is one of the evangelism ministries of the church. How ushers do their task, how they deal with people, how they conduct themselves, their appearance, their sense of reverence, and their ability to convey authentic hospitality can have a great influence on the way people react to the church and to the mission of the church.

Ushers may also play an important role in the safety of the congregation. Being alert and aware at all times is crucial in avoiding disasters. Ushers are not, however, expected to be guards or defenders of the congregation.

**SCHEDULE:**

A computer program administered in the church office does scheduling. The schedule for the month is posted on our website at [www.gslutheran.org](http://www.gslutheran.org)

- Check the schedule to see when you are assigned to serve.
- If you know a month in advance that you are unable to serve for a specific date or dates, please do contact the church Office Coordinator and you will not be scheduled.
- If you cannot serve your assigned time, please try to switch with another usher. Call the church Office Coordinator with your replacement so that the verger can be informed.
- The church office can help if you can't find a replacement. Keep in mind, however, that there are approximately 30 Sunday servants each Sunday. Please make every effort to find your own replacement.
- You will receive an email reminder prior to a service you are scheduled to serve.

**BEFORE THE SERVICE:**

- Arrive at least 15 minutes before the start of the service, and let the verger know you have arrived.
- Check the usher cabinet in the Entryway for the count sheet, lighter, usher badges and walkie-talkie. Please wear the badges.
- Be sure that the children's activity bags are available. They are stored in the usher cabinet.
- Be sure that there are worship bulletins for the acolyte and crucifer at their seats.
- Two ushers stand at each side of the sanctuary entrance doors, greet arrivals and hand out bulletins.
- Close doors shortly after the procession, or if there is excessive noise in the narthex.
- Encourage people in the Entryway to be quiet prior to the start of the worship service.
- Assist anyone who may need extra help (e.g., handicapped, elderly).
- If seating becomes crowded, help worshipers find a seat, using the outside aisles. Extra chairs can be set up in the Entryway if required. NEVER block the side doors with chairs—that is a fire code violation.
- Determine if there is an acolyte. An usher will need to light candles if acolyte is not available. See Instructions for Lighting Sanctuary Candles.

## **DURING THE SERVICE:**

- Seat latecomers at appropriate times. The general rule is that latecomers never enter the sanctuary during times of silence, prayer, and while the lessons are being read. Latecomers may be seated during:
  - Prelude
  - Announcements
  - Hymns
  - Liturgical songs (e.g., Kyrie, Hymn of Praise)
- During the first hymn, collect any prayer request cards and give them to the pastor.
- Count all present in the sanctuary and nursery. Enter the count, date and service time on the clip board stored in the usher cabinet.
- At least one usher should remain in the Entryway during the service, and be alert to any emergencies, too much noise, etc.
- During the passing of the peace, ushers assemble at the back of the sanctuary. When the Pastor presents the offering plates, begin walking two-by-two to the front and receive the plates. The front two ushers receive their plates and move to the outside rows; the back two ushers move forward, receive their plates and turn to the center aisle. The plates are passed down alternating rows until the offering is completed. Watch to make sure plates are alternated and not sent down the same row from both directions. When the offering is completed, two ushers carry the plates to the pastor when the pastor moves into position in the center aisle. The other two ushers remain in position at the rear of the sanctuary.

### **Service without Communion:**

- Ushers remain in position, side by side facing the altar at the head of the center aisle, until the pastor has received the offering and moves away from the altar. Ushers bow, turn to the inside and walk to the rear of the sanctuary joining the other ushers.

### **Service with Communion:**

- Ushers remain in position until the pastor has received the offering and moves away from the altar. Ushers then move forward. One usher removes the wood blocks from the communion rail while the other carries the rail section to the center and places it to close the altar rail. Both ushers move the cushion to the center position. Ushers assemble facing the altar at the head of the center aisle, bow, turn to the inside and walk to the rear of the Sanctuary joining the other ushers.
- Ushers remain at the rear of the Sanctuary until communion is begun to be distributed to the assistant, acolyte and pastors, at which time they will assemble two-by-two and walk forward to positions in the center aisle and begin releasing rows of communicants to the rail. One usher is positioned at the front on each side of the center aisle to assist communicants to the communion rail. The other ushers are positioned on each side in the center aisle to release rows to commune. When the choir is present, they commune first and make up the first table. Rows from each side are released by the aisle ushers and are directed to the communion rail by the front ushers. The front ushers will send eight to ten people to the communion rail at a time on each side. The front usher on the right directs people to start at the wall and fill in to the center. The front usher on the left directs people to start in the center and fill in to the wall. Use the AC plug on the altar as a center reference. To keep the distribution moving smoothly it is important for the aisle ushers to release rows in a timely manner to keep the left and right sides filled. Be mindful of families and others that want to commune together; if there is not enough room to send them together, wait until the next table. If someone approaches the altar in a wheelchair, position the wheelchair at the front of the rail, and leave an empty space in front of the chair. Always be ready to assist the handicapped or elderly when required.

- When two ushers are used for communion, each usher is positioned in the center aisle to release rows to commune. As rows are released direct them to the left and right altar positions outlined above.
- Ushers commune in the last table. This is an indication to the pastors that everyone has been communed. Alert the pastor to any members who need to have communion brought to them in their pew.
- After the last table is completed, one of the front ushers removes the center rail and returns it to the right side of the altar and places it on the floor while the other usher removes and replaces the cushion in the same area. Remember to replace the wooden blocks. Both ushers return to the head of the center aisle facing the altar, bow, turn to the inside and walk to the rear of the Sanctuary.

#### **AFTER THE SERVICE:**

- After the congregation leaves, walk through the Sanctuary, pick up any bulletins left in the pews, straighten the hymnals and Bibles and pick up any other papers or articles left on the floor or in the pews. Extra service bulletins are recycled and the basket is returned to the usher cabinet. After each service, remove the completed sheets from the Who's Who in the Pew pads and place them in the Office Coordinator's box.

#### **EMERGENCY PROCEDURES:**

##### Medical Emergency

- Make contact with the individual to see what help is needed. Ask people to move to allow more space for the individual in distress.
- It is not advisable to move the individual, but do make the individual as comfortable as possible, and offer support, comfort and assurance. Loosen ties or tight collars.
- If required, one usher should call 911 by using one of the church phone lines located in the Sunday School Coordinator's Office and the kitchen. Landlines can be tracked for location by 911 while cell phones cannot. When calling 911, state the individual's age, sex and chief complaint.
- Keep aisles, doorways, and the front drive clear for the Emergency Response Team.
- Inform the pastor about what is happening.
- There is an AED by the front door and members trained in their use may be on site.

##### Fire Emergency

- Communicate with other parts of the building via walkie-talkie. The Sunday School Superintendent carries a walkie-talkie and one is also located downstairs.
- If the fire alarm sounds in the building, it will sound like loud horns blowing.
- If there is smoke or fire, the congregation should exit the building via the nearest door. One usher should guide those seated in the front of the Sanctuary out the door at the left side of the altar. The rear Sanctuary doors and sliding panels should be opened for those seated toward the rear of the Sanctuary. One usher should stand at the Sanctuary doors and one at the outside doors to guide people outside and to the lower parking lot.
- If possible, check to see that everyone has vacated the building.
- Keep the front drive clear for Fire Equipment or emergency vehicles.

##### Tornado Emergency

- Communicate with other parts of the building via walkie-talkie. The Sunday School Superintendent carries a walkie-talkie and one is also located downstairs.
- If there is a tornado warning siren, open both doors and the sliding panels at the rear of the Sanctuary. One usher should direct members down the hallway to the Education Wing stairway leading to the lower level. Another usher should be positioned at the stairway to assist as needed. If possible, check the building to insure all are in a safe location. Wait out the storm on the lower level away from

windows. Individuals unable to go down steps should wait out the storm in the Administrative Hallway, away from windows. Close all doors in the hallway.

#### Armed Intruder

- Be alert and aware of anything that seems unusual. Alert staff. Call 911 if deemed necessary using the phone in the Sunday School Coordinator's office or the kitchen. Landlines can be tracked for location by 911 while cell phones cannot.
- Periodically scan the parking lot for unusual activity.
- Communicate with other parts of the building via walkie-talkie. The Sunday School Superintendent carries a walkie-talkie and one is also located downstairs.
- If there is an incident, the congregation should exit the building via the nearest door. One usher should guide those seated in the front of the Sanctuary out the door at the left side of the altar. The rear Sanctuary doors and sliding panels should be opened for those seated toward the rear of the Sanctuary. One usher should stand at the Sanctuary doors and one at the outside doors to guide people outside and to the lower parking lot. In an emergency, you may create exits by breaking out windows.
- No one knows how they will react in the event of an armed intruder. Ushers are not expected to serve as guards or defenders of the congregation at the expense of their own safety. Do what you are capable of in the moment.

#### **INSTRUCTIONS FOR LIGHTING SANCTUARY CANDLES:**

- If there are no acolytes available, an usher will light the candles by walking down the center aisle approaching the altar, bowing before at the altar rail, lighting the candles, starting on the right side of the altar, and returning down the center aisle. During the closing song the candles are to be extinguished in reverse order.

#### **SOUND SYSTEM PROCEEDURES:**

- An 8:30AM usher should check the sound system to make sure it is turned on. The system panel is located on the left side rear wall of the sanctuary, facing the narthex. Open the wooden panel. Turn the large orange switch in the upper right hand corner on. Open the metal panel. The power light should be on. If it's not, turn it on. Attach the hanging antennae to the upper post on the left side of the panel behind the wooden door.
- DO NOT make any adjustments to the controls.
- After the 10:45 AM service the sound system power should be turned off.

#### **HEATING AND COOLING SYSTEM PROCEEDURES:**

- The thermostat in the rear of the Sanctuary controls the heating and cooling system. The most effective way to control the heat and air conditioning in the Sanctuary and Entryway is to make sure that the front outside doors are not propped open.