

USHER INSTRUCTIONS  
GOOD SHEPHERD LUTHERAN CHURCH  
FEBRUARY 2024

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 perform 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 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.

**NOTE:** If in doubt about anything, for instance some unusual event during the service, ask the pastor or assisting minister what you are required to do. Confusion during the service is not a good look!

**ALSO NOTE:** The following procedures are for two ushers. Differences for four ushers will be covered later.

**BEFORE THE SERVICE:**

Watch the Sheep Buzz or posted schedules. Contact the church office at least two weeks prior to the start of the month if you are aware of dates you will be unable to serve. It is your responsibility to find a replacement if you are unable to serve as scheduled.

Dress should be appropriate for a host or hostess representing the congregation. Business casual attire should be a guideline.

Arrive at least 20 minutes prior to the service start time. Ensure the Verger knows you are present.

Check the usher cabinet for the count sheet, operable lighter, and usher badges. Make sure there is a wick in the candle lighting wand. Please wear the badges.

Note that children's activity bags are present in the cabinet for use as needed.

Bulletins are in two baskets, one per service. Be sure you are handing out the correct one! They are usually placed by staff on the chairs to the right of the sanctuary doors. If not look in the cabinet or in the meeting room.

Ushers stand on either side of the sanctuary doors to greet arrivals and hand out bulletins.

If there is an acolyte, light the wand for them. If there is no acolyte, an usher will light the candles by proceeding down the center aisle, bowing, lighting the candles from right to left, and returning by the center aisle. During the closing hymn after all have recessed from the altar, reverse the process using the snuffer on the wand. Be sure to light the wick from the last candle to be extinguished.

Give assistance to the elderly or infirm as required.

If the service is crowded, help worshippers find a seat using the outside aisles. If overflow seating is necessary, chairs may be set up in the narthex. DO NOT block the side door. This is a fire code violation.

#### DURING THE SERVICE:

Seat latecomers at appropriate times. Generally, latecomers do not enter the sanctuary during times of silence, prayer, or during lessons and the Gospel. This also applies to anyone who leaves during the service. Ushers should open and close the sanctuary doors for all entrances and exits to keep them from banging shut.

Make a count of everyone in the sanctuary, include yourselves and the on-line recorder, and enter the count on the count sheet in the usher cabinet.

Make frequent checks outside the main entrance doors, down the hallway, and in the fellowship hall for anything unusual. If something is amiss, take appropriate action up to calling 911 or evacuating the sanctuary.

During the passing of the peace, enter the sanctuary with offering plates, which are normally on the small table to the right of the sanctuary doors. Extras are in the usher cabinet if needed. Start forward as the offering music starts, one plate per side, starting at the front row. Most people will hand the plate to the row behind them at the far end. Just make sure the plate gets to everyone. When finished, remain at the rear of the sanctuary until a minister approaches the front of the altar. Both ushers proceed forward and hand him/her the plates. Remain there until the plates are blessed and the minister moves away.

NO COMMUNION OR COMMUNION BY INTINCTION: Ushers bow and return to the rear of the sanctuary.

COMMUNION AT THE RAIL: Ushers remove the wood blocks from the rail. Usher on the right retrieves the cushion and both ushers place it in position. Repeat for the center rail. Ushers bow and return to the rear of the sanctuary.

NOTE: All bowing by ushers will take place in unison at the head of the center aisle abeam the first row of pews. Turn toward each other as you turn to retreat.

COMMUNION BY INTINCTION: Ushers remain at the rear until ministers and assistants leave the altar with the communion elements. They then proceed to the front and invite parishioners to commune by row. If there are two stations, rows on either side may be released simultaneously. If there is only one station, release rows alternately. Ushers will commune last and proceed to exit the sanctuary or remain at the rear as desired.

COMMUNION AT THE RAIL: Ushers remain at the rear until communion is distributed to those on the altar. They then proceed forward to release parishioners by row, 7 to 10 from each side per table. Note that the left side will take fewer people because of the altar cross. The left row starts at the center of the altar. Sides may be filled as they empty to promote a smooth flow. Be mindful of families that may wish to commune together. They may wait at the top of the aisle if necessary. Be sure to assist as required anyone who needs help. Ushers will commune last. When all have cleared, ushers will return the cushion and center rail to the right side of the altar, and replace the wood blocks. They bow and proceed to exit the sanctuary or remain at the rear as desired.

NOTES: 1) If the single packet communion elements are in use, ushers will pick up the baskets from the front pews as communion starts, and hold them so parishioners may take one if desired as they approach the altar or communion station. 2) NORMALLY, at 8:30, if the choir is present, they will commune first as a group, proceeding directly to the altar. Release of rows will be delayed until they are done. If by intinction, they will normally proceed down the outside aisle to the rear, then up the center aisle to the stations. NORMALLY, at 10:45, the choir and/or praise team will commune last. Ushers will commune

after them. Be prepared and react appropriately to changes on the fly! 3) Be sure you are aware of anyone who wants communion at their seat, and that the pastor is aware. Ministers will proceed down the aisle and administer this after everyone else has communed. Stand patiently at the front until they have returned to the altar, then proceed with replacing the cushion and rail.

#### AFTER THE SERVICE:

Ushers should open the sanctuary doors as the recession starts. One usher will remain at the door with an empty basket to retrieve bulletins. The other usher should make sure attendance pads and books are arranged in each pew, and pick up any other papers or items that have been left. Note that sometimes people leave items if they plan to return. One usher will retrieve the collection plates, place the proceeds in the manila envelope on the table to the right of the sanctuary doors, and place the envelope in the marked safe slot in the hallway by the church office. After the late service, collect the attendance sheets and place them in the church office IN box. Ushers may then proceed to the fellowship hall for coffee and donuts to celebrate a job well done!

#### FOUR USHER PROCEDURES:

For certain services expected to be crowded or that have special procedures, four ushers may be assigned. The second two will be used primarily for the offering and communion; other tasks requiring only two ushers may be delegated as necessary. Avoid crowding one another!

**OFFERING:** Ushers will proceed to the front two by two, everyone with a collection plate. Someone needs to make sure the plates are all there. The first two ushers will walk in front of the pews to the outside aisles to the first occupied row of pews, and start their plates toward the center. The second ushers will start their plates from the second row toward the outside. Alternate until reaching the last row. Plates will be taken by the center aisle ushers, two plates each, to the altar in accordance with "two usher" procedures. All ushers remain in the sanctuary unless other duties (a peek outside, for instance) are required.

**COMMUNION BY INTINCTION:** Two ushers will stand in front of the first pew, not blocking the aisle, to assist as required. These ushers will hold the basket of single packaged communion elements. The other two ushers will release rows as per "two usher" procedures. All ushers will commune last. Rear ushers must be aware of anyone who needs to commune at their seat.

**COMMUNION AT THE RAIL:** Front ushers will stand as above, and control flow from the head of the line to the altar. Rear ushers will release rows into the lines on the respective sides of the center aisle. It is desired to have a short line at all times to expedite the communion process.

**NOTE:** Christmas Eve Candlelight service procedures are covered separately.

**SOUND SYSTEM:** Staff will normally turn the sound system on and off. If required to do so, the controls are in the box nearest the outside wall at the rear of the sanctuary on the left side as you face the rear. Connect the cable to the receptacle on the left and turn the large orange switch on the upper right ON. All other controls are preset. Reverse the procedure to turn the system off. The narthex volume is controlled by the knob located to the right of the meeting doors.

#### HEATING/COOLING PROCEDURES:

The thermostat is on the rear sanctuary wall opposite the sound system. If the sanctuary is too hot or cold, the temperature may be adjusted by pressing the UP or DOWN arrows on the right of the LCD display. The Temporary Hold temperature will move and the system will automatically select cold or hot air to match the temperature you have selected. No further action is necessary; the temperature will return to the previous value after a set time.

## EMERGENCY PROCEDURES:

NOTE: Procedures herein are secondary to any emergency guidance issued to the entire congregation.

**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. Make them comfortable as possible and offer reassurance and support. Loosen ties or tight collars.

If required, one usher should call 911 using either a landline or cellphone. Give the address and the person's sex, age, and chief complaint. Remain on the phone with the 911 operator.

Keep aisles and doorways clear for the Emergency Responders.

Inform the pastor if he/she is not in the immediate area.

**FIRE EMERGENCY:** If the fire alarm sounds 911 will automatically be called. If smoke or flames are confirmed the congregation should exit out the nearest exit, including the door to the left of the altar. One usher should be at the main or side outside door to guide everyone to the far sides of the parking lot.

If possible, check to ensure the building has been vacated.

Keep the driveway and main entrance clear for emergency equipment.

If there is no obvious smoke or fire go to the glass enclosed box labeled "Fire Alarm Control" on the wall adjacent to the main entrance doors. Open it with the key which should be in the lock. If the key is not there it will be in the church office BEHIND the door on a hook marked "fire alarm."

Look at the lights on the Fire Alarm Control Board. One green power light should be lit. If any other is lit, if it says a location followed by the words "Pull Station" most likely someone has pulled one of the pull stations open. Check that location!

Follow the directions on the bright green paper inside the fire alarm control box to stop the alarm. When resetting the pull station you will need the key that was used to open the box.

If the alarm is definitely false, call 911 and cancel the emergency equipment.

**TORNADO EMERGENCY:** If the tornado warning siren sounds during threatening weather, open both sanctuary doors and direct members down the hallway to the lower level. An usher should be at the top of the stairway to give assistance to anyone who needs it. If possible check the building to ensure everyone is accounted for. Those unable to use the stairs should shelter in the administrative hallway, away from windows.

