

Usher Instructions – 10:45 service

This is basic information about usher duties at St. Timothy's Episcopal Church. It is detailed for the 10:45 a.m. service, but other services with fewer people may have some variation.

Before Service Starts. Ushers should arrive early - at least 15 minutes before the service starts. Bulletins are on the table in the Narthex (look in the workroom if they're missing). Be sure you have the bulletin for the correct service. (Bulletins have the TIME for each of the services on the front.) Place a sufficient number of bulletins on the chairs around the altar for acolytes, Eucharistic Ministers, and clergy. If large-print bulletins have been provided, offer them to parishioners you believe would find them helpful.

Ushers stay in the back of the church during the entire service to give late comers a bulletin, help people find a seat, and to assist anyone in need.

If anyone needs assistance finding a seat or handling a wheelchair, ushers should render assistance.

Doors. Ushers should try to keep doors to the worship space closed as much as possible before the service to prevent the distraction and interference of noise from the Narthex, as well as to keep any music rehearsal from spilling out to the Gathering Space. About 15 minutes before each service the center doors should be opened, and ushers should stand beside the doors into the church.

Counting. Ushers are responsible for counting the number of people in church at the service. This has two purposes: a) It tells the priest how many persons will take communion, and b) it supplies the numbers that go into permanent attendance records.

All persons are included in the count - ushers, priests, organist, choir, acolytes, other service participants, children, and teachers. People in the hallway and gathering space should be included if the usher believes that they will eventually join the service.

The following is suggested:

- a) It's best to take the count during the gospel reading or sermon so late-comers will be included. Please do so from the OUTSIDE aisles or the back of the church to be as unobtrusive as possible.
- b) The usher on the right (organ) side should include the choir and organist. The usher on the left side should include the entire altar party (priests, acolytes, and other participants in the service.)
- c) Assume that all children in church will be taking communion. Everyone else can be assumed to be taking communion unless the usher sees differently.

- d) The total count is written on the colored slip and placed in the offering plate. Fill in the data on the white form and place it on the counter in the workroom after the service. [Note: Given St. Timothy's sanctuary's excellent acoustics, any communication with your fellow usher should be done in a whisper so as to not be heard by other parishioners.]

Offering. After the announcements, the priest says the offertory sentence. When the music begins, the ushers pass the collection plates. Begin by walking up the outside aisle and passing the plate to the small group of pews on the front outside (going front to back) and then go the main aisle. (Skip a row when everyone in the row indicates they have nothing for the plate.) Stand at the back until the offertory is completed and wait until the first bars of the Doxology (Praise God From Whom All Blessings Flow), then approach the altar and give the plates to the acolyte, reverence the altar, and leave the altar railing area. The ushers do not remain at the railing during the singing of the Doxology.

Communion. The organist, choir, musical soloists, and video streamers receive communion before the rest of the congregation. When they have finished or as soon as there is some room, ushers should direct worshipers by row to the communion rail; rows on the front outside first and then down the main aisle (same sequence as when taking the offering).

- a) Keep the altar railing full. Do not make the priest wait for people to get to the altar. It is okay to have people standing and waiting.
- b) If someone who would normally take communion is unable to go to the railing, let the priest know when you go up for communion.
- c) If all worshipers on one side of the church have finished, the usher should motion for people in line to go to the other side of the altar railing.
- d) Ushers receive communion last.

After Communion. Ushers should return to posts at the doors. Open doors at the beginning of the recessional hymn.

After the Service. Ushers should return hymn books and prayer books to pew racks and gather up bulletins and other papers left in pews and by the doors, as well as the altar area. Used bulletins and extra bulletins should be placed on the counter in the work room. The attendance form should be placed on the workroom counter.

SPECIAL INSTRUCTIONS FOR WEDDINGS & FUNERALS

- Check that ropes have been placed on some front pews for family members. They are hanging in the vesting room closets. Remove them just before the family is seated.
- Usually family members are appointed to be presenters and will need to be briefed on their responsibilities.
- No offering is taken during these services.
- Family is invited to take communion before the congregation.

Thank you for being an usher!