

Usher Instructions

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. Be sure you have the bulletin for the correct service. (Different bulletins have the TIME for each of the services.)

You should check and see if collection plates and the bread and wine are on the table near the entrance of the worship space for use later in the service.

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 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 10-15 minutes before each service the center doors should be opened and ushers stand beside the doors in the Narthex.

Presenters. Presenters take the bread and wine from the rear table to the acolyte at the altar rail after the peace and just before the offering. The presenters for each service are listed in the bulletin; check for their presence and understanding of the task before the service starts. For any other special service, all worshipers are eligible to be presenters, if this has been fully discussed and agreed by them. The presenters should be given a cue when to take the items to the altar railing.

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 which go into permanent attendance records.

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

There are a number of ways to take the count. The following is suggested:

- a) Do it during the gospel reading or sermon so late-comers will be included.
- b) The usher on the organ side should include the choir and organist. The nursery should be a separate count, since it requires going to the Nursery.
- c) The usher on the opposite side should include the entire altar party (priests, acolytes and other participants in the service.)
- d) Assume that all children in church will be taking communion. Everyone else can be assumed to be taking communion unless the usher sees different.

- e) The communion number goes on the colored slip and is given to the presenters, who give it to the acolyte. All the data also goes on the white form that is placed on the office desk after the service.

Offering. Your duties to carry out the offering process start at the time of the Peace. At the Peace, get the presenters ready and give them the paper with the communion count. After you have the presenters ready they remain standing or seated near the doors during the announcements. After the announcements, the priest says the offertory sentence. When the music begins, the presenters take the bread and wine to the altar, reverence the altar and return to their pew.

Immediately after the presenters leave the altar, 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 to the main aisle. (Note - Some people give yearly and will usually shake their head if no one in that aisle is going to give at this time - so skip). Stand at the back until the music is completed and wait until the first bars of the offertory hymn, then approach the altar and give them 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 offertory hymn.

Communion. The organist, choir and musical soloists 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 persons 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 some 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.

One usher should stand at each door between the Narthex and Gathering Space to hand out the colored announcement sheets found on the table in the Narthex.

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 office desk.

Disposition of Offering. The counters take the offering plates soon after the service.

Thanks for being an usher!