

## **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.

**Narthex:** The area between the glass walls and the doors into the worship space. It is designed to be a place for people to prepare themselves mentally for the service.

**Reverence the Altar:** The altar is a symbol of the sacrifice of Jesus Christ upon the cross. We honor the altar by bowing our heads toward it.

**Communion:** We use wafers at the 7:45 and 10:45 services and naan bread at the 9 o'clock services. We also have gluten-free wafers available. If someone asks for one as they enter the church, make sure one is placed on the table to the side of the altar with the extra cruet and hosts. People should tell the priest that they requested one when they are at the altar rail.

**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. (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, EM's, and clergy.

Check to see that collection plates and the bread (hosts) and wine are on the table to the left of the entrance to the worship space for use later in the service. If the bread and wine are missing, alert someone on the altar guild or Fr. Marvin immediately. The presenters for each service are listed in the bulletin; check for their presence and understanding of the task before the service starts. All worshipers are eligible to be presenters if this has been fully discussed and agreed to by them.

If anyone needs assistance finding a seat or handling a wheelchair, ushers should render assistance. Ask if the person would like to have their walker or wheelchair brought to them at communion time or if they would like communion brought to them at their seat. Assure them it is no bother!

**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 gathering space, 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 in the Narthex.

**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. Persons 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 about 15 minutes after the service begins during a time when the congregation is seated so late-comers will be included. Please do so from the OUTSIDE aisles to be as unobtrusive as possible.
- 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 differently.
- e) The TOTAL count is written on the blank side of the colored slip and is given to the presenters, who give it to the acolyte. Fill in the data on the white form and place it on the office manager's desk after the service.

**Offering.** The offering process starts at the time of the Peace. During the Peace, get the presenters ready and give them the paper with the communion count. After the presenters are 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 (you may give them a cue if they are uncertain), the presenters take the bread and wine to the acolyte at the altar rail, 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 first pew in 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, 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, and musical soloists receive communion before the rest of the congregation. **If there is room at the rail after choir members have a place, let worshipers fill the rail.**

As soon as they leave the altar rail, 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).

**Keep the altar rail full. Do not make the priest wait for people to get to the altar. It is okay to have people standing and waiting.**

- a) If someone who would normally take communion is unable to go to the rail, let the priest know when you go up for communion and the celebrant and chalice bearer will bring communion to them.
- b) If all worshipers on one side of the church have finished, the usher should motion for people in line on the other side to go to the other side of the altar railing.
- c) Ushers receive communion last.

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

One usher should stand at each door between the Narthex and gathering space to distribute any handouts 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.** Check that the counters have taken the offering plates after the service.

**Emergency:** If someone falls or becomes ill, attend to them discreetly and determine if they need medical assistance. **911 should be called if they are bleeding, can't rise, or unconscious.** We have an AED with explicit instructions on its use.

## **SPECIAL INSTRUCTIONS FOR WEDDINGS, FUNERALS, AND BAPTISMS**

- Check that ropes have been placed on some front pews for family members. Remove them just before the family is seated. The ropes hang in the closets in the vesting rooms and should be returned once they are removed from the pews before the service.
- Often family members are appointed to be presenters or readers and will need to be briefed on their responsibilities.
- No offering is taken during these services (except in the case of baptisms when they take place during a regularly-scheduled church service).
- Family is invited to take communion before the congregation.

Thank you for being an usher!