

GRACE EPISCOPAL CATHEDRAL

Guidelines for Ushers

Selection

Cathedral Ushers have traditionally been selected from the role of mature adult members, who have demonstrated a desire and willingness to serve.

Purpose

Cathedral Ushers primarily serve to assist the clergy in the dignified and orderly conduct of services and other Cathedral functions. **Ushers are often the first individuals to be in contact with a Cathedral visitor, and in the role of greeting worshipers, a very important public relations service is performed.** The ushers provide a source of responsible personnel, familiar with the Cathedral and its activities, which may be called upon to serve at special events.

General Information

Team captains should contact the Verger about a week before their month is to begin. They will be informed of any "extra" services (non-Sunday 10:30) that have been scheduled, which need ushers in the coming month. Even when there is no offering collected, or "communion procession," an attendance count* must be taken for recording in the permanent service register. These services will also have an order of service to be distributed as the congregation enters. If a team captain is unable to procure enough ushers from his/her own team for any of these extra services, he/she may contact members of another usher team. Should this not prove sufficient the captain is to contact the Usher Chairman.

When you are to serve, arrive no less than 20 minutes before the scheduled service or event start time. Let your team captain know when you are present, so you can be assigned to a position.

If you cannot attend a service or event for which your team is scheduled to usher, notify your team captain in time for a replacement to be found.

Always wear a boutonniere when ushering, so you can be easily identified. Please remember to return it after the service.

It is appropriate for the ushers to be congenial with one another, with members of the congregation, and with new people as they arrive and are entering the Cathedral. While inside the Cathedral, it is the primary duty of the ushers to set the example for dignity and respect in the place of worship.

It is requested that ushers be especially conscious of the dignified and conservative nature of their service and that their apparel reflect this awareness. (During seasons other than summer, dark clothing is preferred, though not required.)

Ushers are responsible for removing service bulletins and other litter from the pews after a service. This clean-up also extends to replacing prayer books and hymnals in the proper places and generally leaving the Cathedral orderly and prepared for the next service. Please include the choir seats in the chancel when picking up. Please do not remove any bulletins or notes from the clergy seats or prayer desks.

*Double count attendance at every service: once from side aisles during Epistle reading or Sequence hymn; once from balcony during the sermon. Be careful to count the small, low heads of children and any infants.

Ushers should be alert for any emergency before, during or after the service. Ushers should become familiar with the location of fire extinguishers, the wheelchair in the narthex, the telephone in the kitchen, and first aid items under usher table in the narthex, so emergencies may be handled effectively and efficiently. They should note where doctors are seated in case their services are needed. In a medical emergency, be calm, deliberate and tactful.

One usher should be assigned to watch the altar party, in case there is an emergency in their area. Ushers should attempt to be aware of persons entering from the street during the service and check any unusual activity. These "visitors" are not all that infrequent. Any "restless" visitors leaving the service should be followed and assistance offered. Their knowing you are there and in eyesight will prevent them from making bad decisions. If confronted, explain they are welcome to worship with us but not to roam the building during the service. Two security checks of the lot and buildings should be made during the service - first at the lessons, and second at the Creed. The Captain will designate ushers to perform this service.

If any person disturbs the conduct of the service, the ushers should promptly act to remove the individual(s) in a firm, but polite manner. The clergy and vergers may provide guidance.

Procedures During the Service

The procedures described below apply to the 8:30 a.m. and 10:30 a.m. Sunday services, with specific differences being noted. Other services are to be handled with similar procedures.

The Cathedral sound system transmits to Personal P.A. receivers that are available to the hearing impaired, regardless of where the user is seated. One usher should pick these up from the microphone closet before the service to make them available as the congregation is arriving.

1. *Seating Before the Service.* All ushers are greeters. Offer a warm greeting to the congregation as they enter the Cathedral. An usher greeting outside the doors is desirable, weather permitting, and if the number of ushers is sufficient.

Other ushers will proceed to their assigned positions in the center aisle and side aisles at north end; one at each transept door; one at St. Nicholas door; one outside or in the chapel narthex to assist elderly and physically challenged. Their duties, prior to the beginning of the service, are twofold:

- i. Assist the members of the congregation to find seats upon entering the Cathedral.
- ii. Distribute service bulletins to the congregation.

The ushers are to move as necessary to perform these duties.

Note: The last pew on the West side will normally be reserved for use by the ushers during the service. However, ushers may sit with their family in another place as long as they stay alert to their duties, providing assistance as needed, handing out service bulletins to late comers, etc.

10:30 a.m. The Oblationers (Element Bearers) may be seated anywhere for the service. They should arrive to handle the vessels during the Peace or announcements. The flagon (wine) should be carried by the person on the West side and the ciborium (bread) carried by the person on the

East. This allows the deacons to receive these vessels for appropriate placement on the Altar. During the anthem, the Captain should confirm the Oblationers know what to do. Ushers should always check to see if Oblationers are listed on the service sheet. If the scheduled Oblationers do not arrive in time, two ushers are to perform this duty.

Regularly reserved seats are for Lectors, who should sit in the second pew on the East side, nearest the pace (center aisle).

The Vergers should notify the ushers when other sections are roped off, to alert them regarding the special group(s) for which these are reserved.

2. Seating late arrivals. At the start of the procession all ushers, except the usher assigned to a transept position, will proceed to the rear of the Cathedral. The procession may enter from the narthex, or either of the transepts. Those not taking the count will hold all late arrivals in the narthex, until the clergy are halfway up the pace. Ushers may then seat latecomers during the time it takes for the altar party to arrive in the sanctuary. Note: Latecomers will be seated near the rear from either of the side aisles. DO NOT use the center aisle during this period.

Count of late arrivals: One usher will be responsible for the late count that they will report to the Captain.

An usher near the procession entrance point will count the entire procession, including the clergy. The usher will close the doors after the procession has passed through and will proceed to the narthex. (The side aisle should be used.) Note: The entrance procession may come from the narthex or the East transept. On those occasions, the usher performs these same functions.

Count of Congregation

Ushers assigned to take the count will do so during the Epistle reading or Sequence hymn, not before. Another count will be taken from the balcony during the sermon. Be sure to count any children in the pews. Return to the narthex and give the count to the Captain. The captain will record the highest count of the two. The Captain will give a count slip with the total, to one of the ushers to give to the acolyte at the chancel steps, when the ushers arrive to receive the collection plates. Please do not forget to hand the count slip over.

8:30 a.m. Two ushers will conduct the count. One will count the acolytes and clergy, as well as the congregation in the West side pews. The other usher will count those seated in the East side pews.

10:30 a.m. Ushers will conduct the count as follows:

- i. Procession to include: Acolytes, choir and clergy.
- ii. West side pews
- iii. East side pews & late arrivals
- iv. Recount all in attendance and adjust total (not each section) if necessary

IMPORTANT: The count must include all persons present, including nursery and children's chapel. Be sure to count the children's corner in the rear West side.

Collection

The number of ushers taking up the collection will vary between

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four and eight, depending on the size of the congregation and will be determined by the Captain. During the exchange of the Peace, the assigned ushers will form single file, half in each side aisle. Upon signal of the Captain, the ushers will step off together and remain in step. There is no rush. A

slow, full stride, dignified cadence is desired. The two files will meet and form a single line directly

in front of the chancel steps. The Captain will give the count slip to an usher, who will give it to one of the acolytes when they have received the offering plates. After receiving the plates, ushers on the West side turn to the right, those on the East side turn to the left. They go directly to their collection stations as assigned by the Captain. Ushers should handle the plate firmly, cautiously, and keep their eye on the contents to avoid spilling.

Note: The first Sunday of each month is "Food Sunday". A basket of food is carried by an usher walking directly following the Oblationers. The Verger will explain the routine on these days. The ushers with 2 collection plates will follow the children offering, food basket, Oblationers, and Verger. *Note:* At festal liturgies, the normal procession is led by a crucifer and torch bearers during a hymn added after the anthem.

8:30 a.m. Prepare to go up for the plates before the offertory sentence. Process up the pace. The server will deliver the plates to the chancel steps. When complete, the collection is immediately brought forward and handed to the server at the sanctuary gate. The red velvet bags are not needed at this service.

To avoid congestion only two ushers will take the offering to the sanctuary gate following the collection. Each usher carries only one plate holding one velvet bag. This may be altered for extra large services. The Captain will designate ushers to handle this procedure.

After the Presentation, the ushers will return to their pew at the rear of the Cathedral using the side aisles. The outer-most side of the East and West Transept doors are to be opened as the ushers leave following the Presentation.

Communion Duties

8:30 a.m. Two ushers will be stationed at the chancel steps to offer assistance as needed. Two greeters are positioned at the outside steps to assist people after communion.

10:30 a.m. The verger may request two ushers to stand at the chancel steps if too few acolytes are present.

During the Service

Ushers may sit with their families as long as they stay alert to their duties and any emergencies. All ushers will participate in the entire service to the extent possible. Ushers should be absent only to make security checks. At the end of communion, the acolytes will be the last up the aisle to receive at the rail.

Following the Service:

- Move offering from sanctuary into the vault. Note: The bag can be locked improperly. If you're unsure, please ask the Verger for assistance.
- One usher is to be present at each exit to assist the congregation.
- One usher is to be available in the narthex to assist the clergy.
- Remaining ushers straighten up as discussed under General Information section above.
- Ushers should close all doors and windows before leaving the Cathedral.
- Ushers should take down the flags and hang them in the narthex after the 10:30 service.
- Return hearing assistance receivers to the microphone closet. These are about \$150 each, so we don't want them walking away.
- Return boutonnieres to the box in the narthex.
- Move empty red velvet bags from vault to the narthex.
- Collection plates not brought forward at the Presentation, should be returned to the sanctuary. They are stacked under the West credence table.

REMEMBER: The first impression visitors receive on coming to church is usually from the ushers. Everyone, including children, appreciates a friendly reception.

Rev 091910

Usher guide summary

Arrive at least 20 minutes before the service time.

Captains check with Verger about possible special needs or adjustments

Set out receivers for hearing assistance – return to mic closet afterwards

Distribute service bulletins

Count all in attendance, whether the service includes communion or not.

Make security checks through buildings and lots when security staff is absent

Take up collection and present collection at Altar, unless special instructions received.

Pick up and straighten in pews and narthex after service.

Close all windows and take down flags for storage in narthex