

# **USHERS' GUIDE**

**St. Peter's Evangelical Lutheran Church Ushers' Manual**

**2009**

## **PURPOSE**

The purpose of this document is to provide the necessary guidelines for ushering in order to assist in and promote the worship of God. God has given the following instruction for the externals of public worship. Let it stand as our primary mission as we consider our ushering duties:

**"Let all things be done decently and in order." (1 Corinthians 14:40)**

## **WHAT CHURCH USHERING ACCOMPLISHES**

1. Creates and maintains order and decency in an atmosphere conducive to worship.
2. Church ushers act as "host" for God, not only in expressing the Church's welcome, but also in looking after the needs of all worshipers.
3. Ushers help everyone feel welcome. For visitors this means the elimination of all those things which make it difficult to go into a new place and face unknown situations. For the members of the congregation, it means that their privilege of membership and their presence in the church is made more precious and valuable.
4. Church ushering advances the cause of evangelism. Ushers do their part to assist visitors in meeting the pastor and members of the church.

## **THE IMPORTANCE OF USHERING**

If the purpose of ushering is to help prepare for worship, maintain order and decency, act as host for God, do the work of evangelism, then it is of great value to the mission of the church: "making disciples."

Ushering is a very important factor in the worship service. Its contribution is vital and far reaching. It influences not only the pastor, the organist, the choir, but the whole congregation. It may encourage a visitor to become a regular worshiper and eventually a member of the church.

An usher is an important person in the worship service, and has been chosen to do an important service. Without ushers, our worship service could not be conducted in the spirit of reverence and respect which is due our God. When we gather in church to worship God, we do so to receive His grace and blessings through Word and Sacrament and to offer Him our sacrifices of prayer, praise, and thanksgiving. Ushers are responsible for their part in the divine service, just like the pastor, the organist, and the members of the choir. When the ushers see to it that an atmosphere of reverence and order is maintained before, during, and after worship, it is done to the glory of God.

## **DUTIES OF THE HEAD USHER**

A head usher will be in charge of the usher team for each service. The head usher reports to the pastor for any special instructions for the current service. Team members are to contact the head usher when they are unable to attend. Ushers are to report to the head usher for their specific assignments and instructions.

The head usher may need to contact all the members of their team the day before the service to confirm their attendance. Have team arrive with adequate time to prepare. Meet in the Sacristy. The Head Usher may want to establish assignments before the team reports for duty. An 'Usher Assignment' form is available to help organize the service of the day.

It is the duty of the head usher to:

1. Unlock all doors and check all lights
2. Assign ushers to their post and establish specific duties for the day
3. Assist visiting pastor, when needed
4. Refer unusual situations regarding communion to a pastor

## **Special Services**

For the special services: Lenten services, Thanksgiving Day service, Christmas Day service, etc.:

1. Please check the timer for the bells so that they will not ring during the service  
(Timer is changed in the spring and fall for the time-zone change and is usually not an issue throughout the year)
2. Check with pastor for special instructions
3. Adjust duties to accommodate special requirements

## **PRE-SERVICE PREPARATION**

### **1. Communion Preparation**

- a) Fill trays of individual communion cups (on a normal Sunday, 2 ½ trays) \*\*\*
- b) Fill flagon to just below the spout opening
- c) Fill chalice about 2/3 full and cover
- d) Place one non-gluten wafer on the chalice lid
- e) Fill the primary pyx with communion wafers approximately half-full, using wafers from the secondary pyx. Add un-consecrated wafers to the secondary pyx ONLY.
- f) Put out clean linens
- g) Set communion table according to photograph in the Sacristy, leave uncovered. In addition to the placement of the items seen in the photograph, place the secondary pyx to the left rear of the stack of trays.
- h) Place plastic liners in individual cup baskets below the steps. Liners are stored in the Sacristy desk drawer, storage closet or wine cabinet. Check supply.

\*\*\* When preparing for communion, a partially consumed tray of individual cups should NOT be added to (to fill the tray). Rather, place the partial tray at the top of the tray stack, so that it will be used first. Also, use an opened bottle of wine in the refrigerator first. Additional bottles are in the cabinet above the sink in the utility room in the Sacristy. Communion wafers are stored in the refrigerator. Individual cups are in the cabinet with the wine. Use the filler bottle with the blue bulb to fill the cups. Fill the cups about 2/3 full.

**Note: The altar is reserved for God's Word and Sacrament. Nothing but the Altar Bible and communion elements are to be placed on the altar. There are NO exceptions to this rule.**

### **2. Altar Logistics**

- a) Post Hymn numbers according to sheet
- b) Check riser status
- c) Check to see if offering is to return to altar or if it is to be held back
- d) Check candle configuration
- e) Check offering bags – make sure (4) are out
- f) Provide ice water for pastors
- g) Set up fans during summer months
- h) Check wicks on candle liters and check wick supply

### **3. Narthex Logistics**

- a) Make sure bulletins are available for ushers
- b) Make sure communion cards are available for members
- c) Open windows when necessary
- d) Check sound system
- e) Check bells – only necessary if special service (different time than usual)
- f) Check for adequate restroom supplies
- g) Shovel and salt walks when needed

### **4. Candle Lighter**

- a) Light side candles 20 minutes before the service. Approach altar with candle lighter already lit. Light the right candelabra from the center out, then the left candelabra from the center out. When exiting, step down, square off to the altar and respectfully bow. Exit to the right.
- b) Light communion candles during the offering. Refer to 'Offering' section for instructions.
- c) During Advent and special services, other candles may need to be lit.

## **PRE-SERVICE WELCOME**

### **5. Greeter**

- a) Greet people coming through main doors
- b) Direct them to the coat rack, if visitor
- c) Invite visitors to stay around after the service for fellowship (wherever that may be)

### **6. Usher**

- a) Usher people to a seat according to their preference
- b) Hand out bulletins, as needed
- c) Collect communion cards, as needed, and return them to the narthex desk

When the service has started, ushering and non-usher periods are to be observed. People may be ushered into church during the hymns and canticles, and other parts of the service as the congregation sings. No one should be allowed to enter while the congregation is engaged in confession, prayer, when the choir is singing, or when the pastor is reading the Scripture or Liturgy.

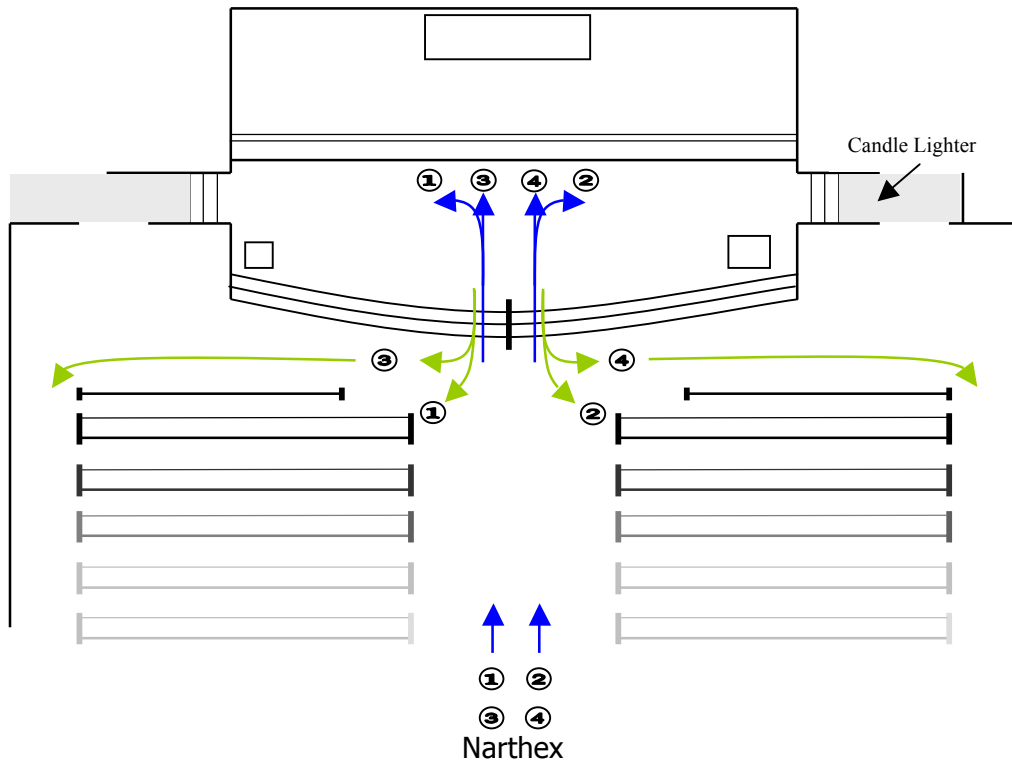
## OFFERING COLLECTION

### 7. Attendance Counter

- Count total number of attendees including children, pastors, ushers, choir, organist, etc. Count should be done prior to the offering. Record the number at the narthex desk.

### 8. Offering Team – (5) Ushers

- Confirm whether the collection is to be returned to altar or if it is to be held back
- Collect offering according to the offering instructions
- Candle Lighter lights Christ candles.
- Deposit offering directly into safe if held back (to be done with at least two people present).



The Offering process requires five members of the Usher Team. During the recital of the Creed, four Ushers will gather in the narthex. The Candle Lighter will prepare in the Sacristy (to the right of the chancel area). After the Creed, the ushers will proceed, two-abreast, down the center aisle to receive the offering baskets from the pastor. Ushers 1 and 2 will each take a basket and move to the side to allow Ushers 3 and 4 to receive their baskets. At this time, the pastor will nod to signal their dismissal. The two ushers on the inside (Ushers 3 and 4) will turn inwardly, proceed down the chancel steps and move to the outside aisles. Ushers 1 and 2 will follow behind Ushers 3 and 4 and move to the center aisle. The collection baskets are then passed through the pews in an alternating pattern. The ushers should avoid having people in the pews walk the baskets in order to pass them along. In cases where a pew is not full enough for the basket to be passed end-to-end, the usher should receive the offering and hold the basket for the next pew. Once all the ushers have completed the collection, they will gather in the narthex and prepare to return the offering to the pastor. In some cases, the offering will be held back. It's important to establish whether the offering is returned to the pastor or if it's held back before the collection process begins.

**Candle Lighter** - Wait until the pastor is finished preparing the communion table and is seated. Approach altar with candle lighter unlit. Stop in front of the step, square off to the altar and respectfully bow. Approach the altar, ignite the candle lighter from the right candelabra, light the Christ candle on the right, then the left. Return the candle-lighter to the Sacristy. Return to the chancel and put the communion rail in place, then position the cushion. Now, square off to the altar and respectfully bow. Exit to the right. Note: Hold the candle-lighter horizontally to prevent wax from the wick to drip inside. After extinguishing the wick, move the wick back out to prevent it from

getting stuck inside.

## COMMUNION SERVICE

### 9. Gate

- a) Controls the flow of communion recipients to the rail
- b) Assists people up steps, as needed

### 10. Puller

- a) Invites communion recipients from the pews
- b) Controls the number of recipients
- c) Directs them to line up behind the Gate

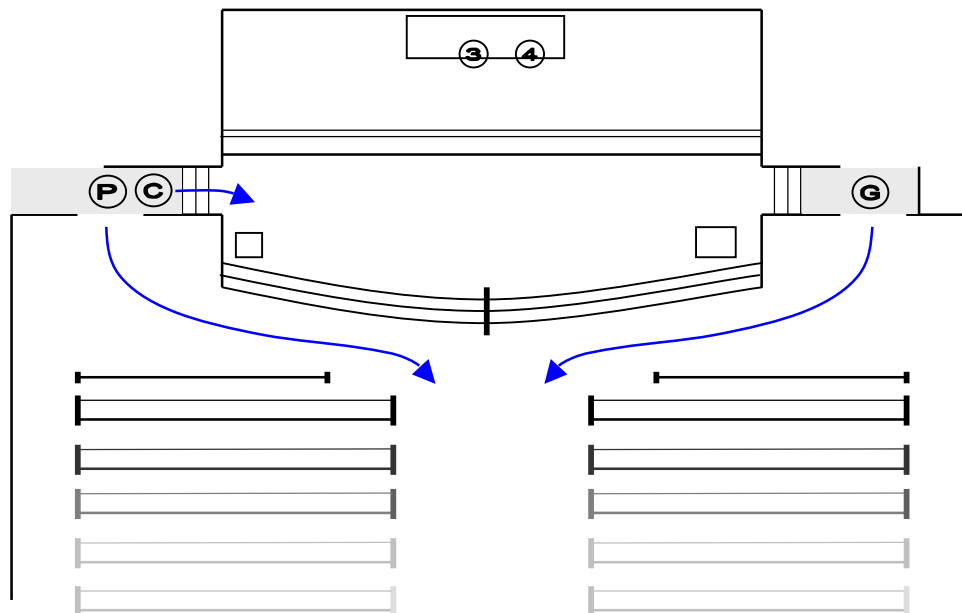
### 11. Catcher

- a) Stationed at the bottom of steps to assist people when exiting the chancel.
- b) Enters from the left to be first to receive communion, then assists

### 12. Counter

- a) Counts the number of people who receive communion. This person can be the Gate, the Catcher, or an usher stationed in the back

The communion process is best served with at least three members of the usher team (Gate, Puller, and Catcher). An additional usher in the back can help count and control the flow of the choir when attending communion. The primary three will gather in the Sacristy before the Lord's Prayer. After the Lord's Prayer, the Gate will take a position at the curtain to the right. The Puller and Catcher will take a position at the curtain to the left. At the third "Lamb of God" the curtains are opened and the lights are turned on. The Gate and the Puller meet in the center and face the chancel. The Catcher takes a position in the chancel in front of the rail on the left.



When the congregation is finished singing, the Puller invites the first group of communicants (12 to 14) from the left-side pews and directs them to the chancel where they will line up in front of the rail. It is important to count the Catcher and usually the organist (coming in from the back) in the first group. Note: During the Advent season when the Christmas trees are present, limit the number to 10 or 12. When the pastor dismisses the first group, the Catcher takes a position at the bottom of the steps

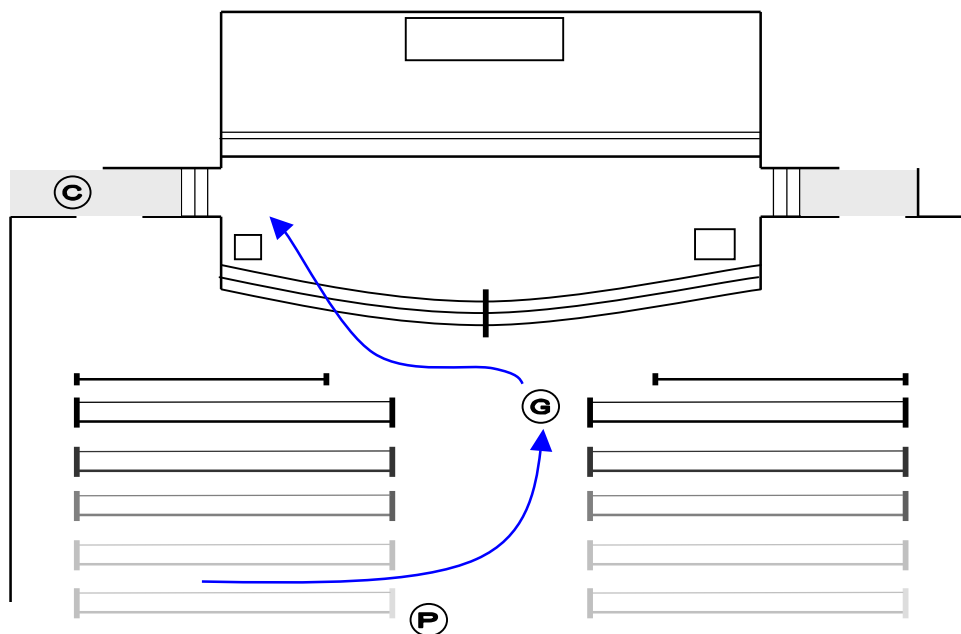
to assist those who may need help. The process continues as follows:



The Puller invites a new group of communicants about at the time the third person at the rail is served the chalice. It helps to pull a little sooner as you move to the back pews or if you anticipate difficulty getting people lined up in time. 12 to 14 can fit at the rail. Do your best to keep families together and avoid overfilling the line.

The Gate should always line up in the aisle opposite the pews from which the Puller is drawing people out. This provides more room to maneuver. The Gate opens and motions the line to approach the rail AFTER the pastor gives the sign of the cross. It's a good idea to watch for overfilling. If it looks like the line is too long, the Gate may need to cut it off in order to prevent overcrowding at the rail. Keeping in eye-contact with the puller can help to communicate any problems. Once the communicants have passed through, the Gate returns to the closed position.

Often times the Puller may need to invite communicants from both sides of the aisle when he reaches the back. This is not a problem if it's required to fill the line. When it is time to switch to the pews on other side of the aisle, the Puller will come in behind the last person and the Gate will move over. The process flow is then reversed. The Catcher moves to the other side through the back passage at this time.



The ushers fill in at the end of the last line. The Gate ends up at the far left and the Puller ends up to the right of the Gate. After the pastor gives the sign of the cross, the Gate pulls the cushion to the left and the Puller removes the center rail section and places it on the floor to the left, behind the rail. The Gate exits left and the Puller exits right. The curtains are closed and the lights are turned off.

## **DURING SERVICE**

1. Participate in the worship service. As an usher you are still attending church to worship God. You should participate (as much as possible) in the entire worship service. Don't count attendance in Balcony during the sermon. Above all, quiet and order must be maintained among the ushering staff.
2. Be alert to the needs of the congregation (emergencies and disturbances). The usher-in-charge should acquaint the ushers with the location of emergency equipment. The nearest unlocked phone is in Pastor Schaefer's office. Know where first-aid kit is. The oxygen is in the closet on the left just before going downstairs. Know where the fire extinguishers are located.
3. Assist parents with small children, as needed

## **AFTER SERVICE**

1. One or more ushers should be available to speak to visitors in the narthex
2. Straighten hymnals and Bibles and pick up bulletins from pews
3. Empty the wine left in the chalice into the ground
4. Rinse individual cups by filling the bag with water and pour into the ground
5. Put the wine left in individual cups in the refrigerator
6. Empty the wine left in the flagon into the ground
7. Put open wine in refrigerator
8. Put wafers in refrigerator
9. Put flagon, chalice, empty trays, filler bottle, etc., in the kitchen for Alter Guild to clean
10. Leave linens on Altar
11. Extinguish candles
12. Remove hymn numbers unless needed for second service
13. Record communion count on attendance sheet at the narthex desk
14. Turn off lights, including all rest rooms
15. Lock all doors. (Please do not leave until secured)
16. Put attendance sheet and communion cards on Narthex desk
17. Leave ceiling fans on all the time
18. Prepare basement for Monday service during the summer

# Usher Assignments

## DUTIES OF THE HEAD USHER

- ☐ Unlock all doors and check all lights
- ☐ Assign ushers to their post and establish specific duties for the day
- ☐ Assist visiting pastor, when needed
- ☐ Refer unusual situations regarding communion to a pastor

### Special Services

For the special services: Lenten services, Thanksgiving Day service, Christmas Day service, etc.:

- ☐ Check with pastor for special instructions
- ☐ Adjust duties to accommodate special requirements

## PRE-SERVICE PREPARATION

### Communion Preparation

- ☐ Fill trays of individual communion cups (2 ½ trays normally)
- ☐ Fill flagon to just below the spout opening
- ☐ Fill chalice about 2/3 full and cover. Place one non-gluten wafer on the lid
- ☐ Fill primary pyx approximately ½ full with communion wafers from the secondary pyx
- ☐ Fill the secondary pyx with communion wafers
- ☐ Put out clean linens
- ☐ Set communion table according to photograph in the Sacristy, leave uncovered
- ☐ Place plastic liners in individual cup baskets below the steps. Liners are stored in the Sacristy desk drawer, storage closet or wine cabinet. Check supply.

### Altar Logistics

- ☐ Post Hymn numbers according to sheet
- ☐ Check riser status
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- ☐ Check candle configuration
- ☐ Check offering bags – make sure (4) are out
- ☐ Provide ice water for pastors
- ☐ Set up fans during summer months
- ☐ Check wicks on candle holders and check wick supply

### Narthex Logistics

- ☐ Make sure bulletins are available for ushers
- ☐ Make sure communion cards are available for members
- ☐ Open windows when necessary
- ☐ Check sound system
- ☐ Check bells – only necessary if special service (different time than usual)
- ☐ Check for adequate restroom supplies
- ☐ Shovel and salt walks when needed

## **POST-SERVICE DUTIES**

- ☐ One or more ushers should be available to speak to visitors in the narthex
- ☐ Straighten hymnals and Bibles and pick up bulletins from pew
- ☐ Empty the wine left in the chalice, flagon, and individual cups into the ground.
- ☐ Rinse individual cups by filling the bag with water and pour into the ground
- ☐ Put open wine in refrigerator
- ☐ Put both pyx in refrigerator
- ☐ Put flagon, chalice, empty trays, filler bottle, etc., in the kitchen for Alter Guild to clean
- ☐ Leave linens on Altar
- ☐ Extinguish candles.
- ☐ Remove hymn numbers
- ☐ Record communion count on attendance sheet at the narthex desk
- ☐ Turn off lights, including all rest rooms
- ☐ Lock all doors. (Please do not leave until secured)
- ☐ Put attendance sheet and communion cards on Narthex desk
- ☐ Leave ceiling fans on all the time.
- ☐ Prepare basement for Monday service during the summer