



**Saint James Episcopal Church  
3400 Calumet Street  
Columbus, OH  
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**Bless, O gracious Lord, your servants called  
to minister as ushers in your Church, that  
with sincere devotion of mind and body they  
may offer acceptable service to you; through  
Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.**

## THE MINISTRY OF THE USHER

*Dear friend, when you extend hospitality to Christian brothers and sisters, even when they are strangers, you make the faith visible. They've made a full report back to the church here, a message about your love. It's good work you're doing, helping these travelers on their way, hospitality worthy of God himself!*

*(3 John, vss 5-6)*

The ministry of the usher is largely one of hospitality; indeed, hospitality is a way we make our faith in Christ visible to others. The usher is usually the first person someone (whether new or a "regular") sees when arriving for worship. Your ministry of welcome and hospitality will begin to set the tone for their worship experience that day. Your presence alone may meet their need for a godly connection - perhaps it's been a difficult week for them or one full of joy. In any case, you are the one who will meet and greet them first in the name of the Lord and extend a hand or offer a smile that says, "it's good that you are here."

To support your ministry as usher, these guidelines and instructions are offered. In particular, the following are areas where the ushers' services are needed.

- 1) Before the service
- 2) Attendance
- 3) Gathering the Offering
- 4) Presenting the Offering
- 5) Assistance to the Communion Rail/Altar Rail Gates
- 6) After the service

Also included in this guide are instructions for the ministry of the first usher on hand and that of all ushers, as well as general instructions.

## **DUTIES AND EXPECTATIONS**

### **Before the Service**

- Take a moment to pray when you arrive at church, thanking God for your share in this ministry, and asking God to bless the people you will meet and to use you as an instrument of Christ's hospitality.
- Check the pews and racks before the service.
- Materials from the previous services need to be removed.
- Be present inside the front door to provide the service bulletin and/or booklet and offer a friendly face. Newcomers (especially non-Episcopalian ones) may be self-conscious, so be a low-key helper to these.
- Choose two people (or children with their family) to be oblation bearers (to bring the bread and wine forward at the offertory)

### **Attendance (prior to the Offertory)**

- Count everyone on the altar side of the communion rail (choir, clergy, acolytes).
- Count everyone in the pews (expect your count to change with the arrival of late-comers).
- Count all children in the nursery.
- Record the numbers on the attendance slip and place the slip on top of the offering plates as they are accepted by the acolyte. If there is no money offering, place it in the box of wafers that will be brought forward as it is helpful to the celebrant to know the number.

### **Gathering the Offering**

- At the Offertory, gather the money offering. The acolyte will move to the front of the altar in order to give the alms basins to you. Come forward to accept them, offer a slight bow of acknowledgment to the acolyte, and then gather the money offerings beginning with the front pews and working your way toward the back of the nave.

### **Presenting the Offering**

- When the acolyte stands in front of the altar ready to receive the gifts, send the oblation bearers first with the bread and the wine and follow them with the money offering.
- Offer a slight bow of acknowledgment to the acolyte once the offering(s) have been received and return to your place.
- Occasionally there may be additional offerings (UTO, Hope Chests, canned food, etc). Please facilitate their presentation at the same time as the other gifts.

### **Assistance to the Communion Rail**

- Stand at the chancel steps to direct and assist people to the altar rail. Be aware of those who need physical assistance. Some people actually want you to take their arm. Be prepared if one should stumble.
- Send up the communicants about 15 at a time for communion. It is more acceptable to have one or two people standing in front and waiting for space at the rail than to have an area of the rail vacant for more than a few seconds, especially when we have a large number of communicants.
  - > Start at the front pew on the Gospel side. When the Gospel side is complete, send up the communicants from the rear to the front on the Epistle side.

- > Possible exceptions: At weddings, funerals and very special events, send up the family/special guests first. Ask the celebrant prior to the service for instructions.
- Note if there are persons wishing communion to be brought to them at their seat. The ushers will be taking communion last and can inform the priest at that time.
- Return to the rear of the nave. If a member of the congregation is receiving communion at the pew, ushers will wait until the return of the priest and Eucharistic Minister before returning to the rear of the nave.

#### **Altar Rail Gates**

- When there is a thurifer, s/he will close and open the gates.
- At the 8:00 a.m. mass (or when there is only one acolyte), the ushers will close the gates immediately after delivery of the alms basins to the acolyte and then will open them after receiving communion (last).

#### **After the Service**

- See that the church is cleaned up after the service. Remove any inserts (music cards, etc) that are to be reused. Place them on the office counter after the service.
- At all times be aware of newcomers and visitors who may need direction to the Lamborne Room for coffee hour, or other areas of the church buildings. Escorting them to the Coffee Hour or where they need to go (or finding someone to do so) is more valuable than servicing the pews; you can return later to put the pews in order.

### **First Usher on hand:**

- Arrive at least 20 minutes before the service.
- Special printed inserts have usually been placed into the programs. Check to make sure this need has been met.
- Check in the office for any special programs or notices.
- Pass out programs, answer questions, etc.
- Count the congregation and record on a slip of paper to be delivered to the Priest at the presentation of the gifts.

### **Either or Both Ushers**

- Gather the money offering.
- Receive communion last.
- If a member of the congregation is receiving communion at their pew, ushers shall wait until the return of the priest before returning to the rear of the nave.
- If needed: see that the church is cleaned up after people have left. Remove used service bulletins and/or booklets from the pews and take to the office.

### **General Instructions**

- Special directions regarding changes to the normal requirements should be given to the usher counting attendance.
- Remember that we all need assistance, so if you notice that something has not been completed properly take the necessary steps to make the correction.
- Please study and keep these instructions for reference.
- If you will not be able to serve as scheduled, please call another usher to replace you.
- Be aware of any concerns that should be related to the rector and inform her of them.



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