

MEDORA COMMUNITY BIBLE CHURCH **The Usher's Manual**

THE MINISTRY OF USHERING

Any act of Christian service which helps direct men into fellowship with Jesus Christ is a ministry. "A doorkeeper in the house of the Lord is no small thing!" Ushers are ministers in the local church; make it a ministry not a job.

WHY USHERS ARE SO IMPORTANT

In churches, small and large, pastors more and more are relying upon efficient ushers for smoothness in handling the individual problems which relate to the congregation.

The usher is often the first official representative of Jesus Christ seen by people entering God's house. The attitude which the usher communicates to church members and friends helps set the spiritual tone for everything else which is to happen. As an official representative of the church and of Jesus Christ, the usher has an enormous obligation in helping lead people into readiness for learning, worshipping, and evangelism.

WHAT CHURCH USHERING SHOULD ACCOMPLISH

Preparing for worship. The first thing church ushering should do is to establish a setting appropriate for worship. The worshipers have to gather in church, they must be seated, hymnals and bulletins need to be supplied, and an atmosphere of worship must be created by seeing to it that the people assemble in an orderly way and that a spirit of quietness and reverence prevails.

Acting as host for God. The ushers act as hosts for God, not only in expressing the church's welcome, but also in looking after the comforts and needs of all the worshipers. Ushering is to help everyone feel at home.

Doing the work of evangelism. Visitors must be made to feel welcome and at home. Please give them a visitor's card in order that follow-up work can be done.

Promoting public relations. The ushers are the representatives of the general character of the church. Visitors receive their first impression of the church from the ushers. One of the purposes of church ushering is to make the visitors feel that the church is interested in them, that its members are kind and friendly.

YOUR ATTITUDE, CONDUCT, APPEARANCE, AND TRAINING

The Right Attitude. Ushers must have the right attitude toward their work and the right spirit. He should be glad that he is able to do this work and should be enthusiastic about it. Church ushering is a great privilege, because it is a service to Christ and His church. Anyone who is asked to usher may well feel honored that the congregation has considered him to be a man of such fine Christian character, ability, and judgment as to choose them for this high office. He should take as his motto the words: "I serve the Lord Christ" (Col. 3:24).

An Ambassador of Kindness. Kindness in conversation can be developed among ushers who try. Negative statements which tend to be judgmental and smack of criticism are the very opposite of kindness. Here are some examples:

Negative: "You cannot go in now!"

Positive: "We will seat you in just a moment."

Negative: "You're late; you'll have to sit in the back!"

Positive: "Since the service has started, we have a place for you near the back."

Negative: "You can't stand here in everybody's way!"

Positive: "Would you like to visit over here where people will not interfere with your conversation?"

Negative: "At your age, I suppose you need a hearing aid!"

Positive: "We have some good seats up front where everyone can see and hear the best."

Negative: "You teen-agers shut up!"

Positive: "Will you young people help us promote reverence in the sanctuary?"

Ushers should be careful not to place their hands on people of the opposite sex. Let kindness come from the heart instead of the hands!

Proper Conduct. The usher should be pleasant, kind, and hospitable. They should express love for all without distinction, remembering that everyone is precious in the sight of God, for "Christ died for all" (2 Cor. 5:15).

When duties require the ushers to be on their feet, they should stand erect and not slouch or lean against the walls and pews. At other times they should be seated in the congregation and engaged in worship. If they need to speak with the pastor while he is seated on the platform, try to do it during a hymn or greeting time. It is best to use a written note.

Personal Appearance. Ushers shall always appear in church clean and neatly dressed since they are serving in an official capacity. They should wear what is appropriate to the worship of God (a jacket and tie are recommended). The ushers should refrain from chewing gum while serving. Attention shall also be given to personal hygiene. This is all the more important since the ushers act as the representatives of the church.

Usher Training. Church ushering requires instruction and study. Ushers must know what to do and when and how to do their work. They should realize the possibilities of improving themselves and of doing things in a better way. In the service of God only the best is good enough. The usher is to yield himself to the Lord to do His work in the best possible way.

THE TECHNIQUES OF USHERING

Meeting People. The basic requirement in meeting people is genuine friendliness. The ushers friendliness, like sunshine, must help to warm others hearts. He must make visitors feel welcome and at home. A smile helps if it is sincere. It is the genuineness and sincerity of friendliness that counts.

First time visitors should be shown the location of cloak rooms, restrooms, and nursery. A word of introduction to one or two church members may be the difference between anxiety and happy adjustment with the new visitor.

It is important for ushers to call people by name and shake hands with them. The ushers must make it a point to remember names, especially the names of visitors.

Sometimes it happens that people's feelings are hurt. If an usher has made a mistake, he should apologize and, if possible, correct the matter. If he was not at fault, he should express regret and explain his action. In doing this, he should remember that "a soft answer turneth away wrath" (Prov. 15:1).

Controlling Crowds. On special occasions the ushers are often confronted with the problem of handling a crowd. Unless they are prepared for this situation and know how to handle a large number of people who all want to enter the church at the same time, there will be disorder and confusion.

A sufficient number of ushers must be on hand, so that two or more ushers are stationed at every entrance into the church. Ushers may also be stationed down the aisles. It is wise to have extra ushers on hand for special work. If extra chairs must be brought in for an overflow crowd, the head usher must see that this is done by others and not be those who are already on duty.

Seating the Worshipers. The usher should arrive 10-15 minutes before service time (30 minutes if it is a special service). The usher takes his supply of church bulletins and begins seating responsibilities with the arrival of the first worshiper.

The ushers will seat people as near the front and center as seems appropriate. Back seats always can be filled with people coming in later. Be attentive to the needs of those with either hearing or seeing problems. Keep teen-agers out of the back rows. It is the poorest technique to seat the sanctuary from the back to the front. If someone insists in being seated near the back, it is better to have them in the rear than not to have them at all.

When persons arrive at the head of the aisle to be seated, the usher will give them a friendly recognition and then suggest his plan for seating them. For instance, he may say, "I would like to seat you about halfway down." Or, "I have two seats on the aisle." People tend to respond with cooperation to a suggestion. However, if an usher falls into the trap of asking people, "Where would you like to be seated?" he is in trouble.

The usher will walk slowly down the aisle stopping at the pew where the people are to be seated and forming a little gate into the seating area by placing his hand on the back of the pew in front. If the usher walks too fast, people will lag behind and feel very much alone. Usher gives a bulletins to the worshiper with a smile and a handshake along with his welcome. An usher never points to a seat and sends people off down the aisle by themselves. He shows them to their seats, personally.

The ushers should know at all times where empty seats are available. While they usher in one group, they should be thinking about where to seat the next. They should never let people stand in the aisle while they are hunting for a place to seat them. If the attendance is large, they should fill every pew before opening up an overflow section or bringing in chairs.

Since the seating habits of people tend to be established, learn these arrangements. Prompt, direct seating of people in their usual place is an indication to them of the usher's awareness. Seating visitors next to regular churchgoers with a word of introduction is helpful to new people.

Small children, persons who are ill, latecomers. Small children and people who are ill should be seated in the rear. This will eliminate to some extent disturbing the congregation when children are noisy and parents have to take them out. If conditions make it impossible for small children to be seated with their parents, they should have proper supervision. Both children and young people should be kept out of the balconies and all other places that are somewhat secluded.

Children should learn very early that it is not permissible to wander in and out from the front seats of the sanctuary. This is especially true if the children come from non-church homes and are seated apart from supervising adults. Ushers must treat these children very kindly but they cannot be allowed to disturb the service. Seat wandering children in the back; when one child leaves the service, it tends to start a procession of others.

Latecomers should be seated in the back part of the church during the singing of the hymns, so that they can be ushered in without causing disturbance. Do not take them to the empty seats in the front of the sanctuary unless they request it.

YOUR DUTIES

Before the Service.

Be on time -- fifteen minutes before the service starts. Check the temperature of the church and turn on the lights wherever it is too dark. An usher will be responsible to maintain a comfortable temperature in the building during the services.

The ushers should make sure that the hymnals are in place and that anything needed for special occasions is provided. When these preliminary duties have been done and the worshipers begin to arrive, the ushers should go to their stations and carry out the work assigned to them.

The ushers shall open the doors into the church for both the Sunday School Hour and Worship Service. They should give a church bulletin to everyone.

Parking.

The larger the church the greater the problems of parking. It is the responsibility of ushers to help direct people with parking their vehicles before the service and to occasionally check the parking lot during the service for any problems. An usher should also help supervise the parking area after the conclusion of the service.

Nursery.

Always instruct parents with small children before service regarding the Nursery. Childcare is provided downstairs for the Sunday School Hour and Worship Services. During the Sunday School Hour, children from infants until two years should be directed to the Nursery. Those who are two and three years old meet in the Toddler Sunday School classroom. During the Worship Services, children from infants through three years should be directed to the Nursery.

During the Service.

People may be ushered into church during the hymns, but no one should enter while the congregation is engaged in prayer or when the choir sings, or when the pastor reads the Scriptures.

Needs of People.

All of the ushers must remain on duty throughout the service. All who are not assigned to special work should be seated in the sections where they are in charge and be actively engaged in worship with the rest of the congregation. There they should watch out for the needs of the people. They should not fail to give those a bulletin who come in and seat themselves without the assistance of an usher. They should be concerned when they see someone who does not have a hymnal or is unable to follow the service. The unpardonable sin of a church usher is inattention.

Hearing Devices.

At this time, hearing devices are not available.

Disturbances.

All disturbances—crying babies, children walking around in the aisle, people playing with youngsters, whispering, giggling, talking, etc., must be taken care of immediately and not allowed to continue. If young children continue to disturb the service, it will be the responsibility of an usher to direct them to the Nursery. A worshipful atmosphere must be maintained at all times.

Handling of "Characters."

Drunks, panhandlers, and other types of characters sometimes drift into churches. These situations must be handled with Christian kindness, but firmness, without involving the pastor.

Climate Control.

The control of light switches, heating and ventilating devices, as well as the transmission of emergency messages, shall be taken care of by an usher. One person must be in control or there will be confusion.

Nursery.

An usher is also responsible to check in at the Nursery to receive a pager. Should it come on, he will proceed to the Nursery to see what is needed and then respond accordingly.

Receiving the offerings.

One of the functions of doorkeepers in the Old Testament was to receive the collections from the people (II Kings 22:4; Jeremiah 35:4; I Chronicles 9:19; Ezekiel 40:45, 46). In receiving the offerings, the ushers selected for this purpose should know how to do so without attracting attention to themselves.

During the processional, the ushers can walk in step and keep abreast as they proceed from the rear of the sanctuary to the front; they should stop in line with the first pew. Keep your eyes away from watching people give. Look at the next row and smile!

If an offering bag is dropped by a worshiper while receiving the collection, it is the job of the usher to retrieve the funds and handle the situation while the ushers proceed with their collection.

Counting attendance.

Another duty of the ushers during the service is to count the attendance. Take this count in as inconspicuous a manner as possible. Do not use your finger or count out loud. The count should be given to the head usher.

After the Service.

The final amen is the cue to the ushers for all doors to be opened and preparations made for helping the people leave the church. This must be orderly and as noiseless as possible. The Children's Church workers should also be informed of the conclusion of the service.

If the pastor greets the people at the door, some of the ushers should be near him in order that he can refer visitors to them for introduction to other members.

After the service the ushers should make an effort to speak to the people, call them by name, and leave them with a friendly remark, such as, "We were happy to have you with us today and will look for you again next Sunday." Continue to help usher the congregation as they leave by opening the outside doors.

The ushers will also help supervise the parking area after the service concludes. Be careful of children running in front of vehicles. Supervision should also be given to the children's play area.

ADDITIONAL

Funerals.

In a church funeral, ushers often are needed for seating the mourners. Ushers will be under the general supervision of the mortician. He will pass on to the ushers any special information on seating arrangements desired by the family.

Organization.

Church ushering cannot be carried out efficiently and effectively in a congregation unless it is properly organized. The pastor of the congregation will be in communication with the head usher concerning any difficulties or changes in procedure.

EMERGENCY SITUATIONS

The ushers should always be prepared for any emergency that may arise. They are KEY in not conveying any panic! All ushers are to be familiar with emergency procedures. The following shall be used in the event of an emergency:

ILLNESS

If someone becomes ill during the service, the ushers should help the sick person as quickly and quietly as possible. If medical personnel are in the congregation and it seems necessary, contact them for assistance. In the event of serious illness (difficulty breathing, unconsciousness, etc.), call 911 immediately.

FIRE EVACUATION

Call 911 immediately and begin evacuation.

Access the location and extent of the fire. Ushers should know the location of all fire extinguishers, first aid kits, telephones, flashlights and tools. An usher will be responsible to see that the gas and electricity have been turned off.

Evacuation:

To evacuate the congregation in an organized and orderly fashion, one person will be in charge. That person will then instruct the ushers on which EXITS to be used. **Concentrate on evacuation.** Do not waste time with the extinguishers.

The location of the fire can determine the evacuation plan. In general, use the closest and safest EXITS. An usher will be responsible to evacuate the nursery and any children in Children's Church. Children will be taken to the backyard of the parsonage until parents arrive.

Ushers will evacuate the remaining congregation by sections through the closest exits. This will be done in an orderly fashion. Ushers will then direct the congregation away from the building. Parents of small children should be directed to the backyard of the parsonage.

Once outside, stay a safe distance from the fire and fire equipment. It is best that no one reenters the building. After the building is clear, the ushers will double check, if possible, to make sure everyone is out. Ushers will only go back in twos. Other ushers account for people outside.

TORNADO-SEVERE WEATHER

If severe weather threatens during a service, one usher will be in charge of monitoring the radio reports. The Ushers will then direct the congregation to evacuate to the basement if necessary. Flashlights should be accessible in case of loss of electricity.

Evacuation:

The congregation will proceed to the basement via the stairs. Extra assistance may be needed for the elderly with the stairs.

All individuals should first be ushered into windowless rooms and the fellowship area. All individuals will remain in the basement until an ALL CLEAR report is given.

TEN POINTS TO REMEMBER

1. **Your work is important.**
2. **You serve the Lord Jesus Christ.**
3. **Be on time.**
4. **You are a part of the worshipping congregation.**
5. **Do your work quietly.**
6. **Be friendly and courteous.**
7. **Follow the wishes of the pastor and the governing board.**
8. **Notify the head usher promptly if you cannot serve.**
9. **Try to improve yourself.**
10. **Attend ushers' meetings.**

AN USHER'S PRAYER

"May I, dear Lord, in church today, fulfill my assignment in a Christ-like way. Make me efficient in what I do, effective in what I say, understanding by the way I feel about people, and helpful in the attitudes I have toward them. Make me a co-worker with the pastor, the church musicians, the teachers, and most of all, Lord, with Thee. Save me from hurtful words and harmful deeds. Make people glad they came to our church today because the Holy Spirit ministered to their needs through the sermons and prayers of the pastor, through the music of the organist and singers, through the explanations of understanding teachers, and through the ministry of ushers like me.

In Christ's Name, Amen."

**"And whatsoever ye do, do it heartily, as to the Lord,
and not unto men for ye serve the Lord Christ."
(Colossians 3:23, 24)**