

MONTHLY HEAD USHER

Head Ushers will be recruited in advance by the Usher Coordinator several weeks or months before your service month. Your first responsibility will be to recruit a team prior to your first Sunday service. The Usher Coordinator will have a list of people who have served as ushers in the past, or you may know of people who would be willing to serve. The Coordinator also will have a list of new members. It is a good practice to have one or two newer members serving as ushers each month. This gets the new members involved quickly in church activities and gives them a chance to meet some current church members. The Session has expressed a desire to have a mix of ages and genders in our usher teams. The Usher Coordinator is available to assist in putting together your team.

Generally, you will recruit eight ushers for the month. If some people know they will have some absences, you may wish to recruit extras for stand-ins. It is also acceptable to draft people to fill in on Sunday morning if you find yourself short-handed. Encourage your team to read the usher instructions on the church website prior to their first service. The requirements for ushers are that the person is to have completed Confirmation class and be a church member.

Occasionally the month will have special or additional services, for example, Christmas Eve services. The Head Usher of the month in which these occur will be responsible for recruiting the ushers for those as well. On those occasions, you may need to recruit additional ushers specifically for the event. In contrast, on a few occasions, the regular ushers will be replaced by special purpose teams. For example, on Scout Sunday or Youth Sunday, these groups will provide all the ushers. Be aware of when these events take place and advise your ushers that they will not be serving on those Sundays.

You should arrive a minimum of thirty minutes prior to the service. Check that the doors are opening from the sanctuary into the Narthex. Check inside the cabinets on the right hand side to ensure that you have eight offering plates and that you have the box of usher carnations. If some offering plates are missing, they may be in the church office or in the workroom or the vault. Check for the stacks of bulletins. If they are not in the Narthex, they may be back in the Chapel or in the office. If you are requested to do so, place any "Reserved" signs on the designated pews. They are in the narthex right cabinet. Check the hearing aids, extra batteries are in the left narthex cabinet.

As your ushers begin to arrive, have them pin on an usher carnation then either assign them a position or let them choose a spot. You will need one usher at each of the three entrances to the Sanctuary passing out bulletins and you will have one usher at each of the outside entrances to the church. These outside ushers are to assist people entering the church, particularly the front door usher, who may give assistance to people exiting their autos. You can place two ushers inside the Sanctuary on either of the outer walls to provide any general assistance that may be necessary and if the attendance is heavy, to help later arrivals to find empty seats or to give a bulletin to anyone who may have missed picking one up as they entered the sanctuary.

The inside door ushers should be aware of the hearing aids that are placed in boxes on the cabinets on either side of the Narthex. Most of the people who require them already know where they are. The head usher should also be aware of whether the supply of bulletins will be sufficient. We usually have enough bulletins printed and available but occasionally if it appears we may start to run short, you might instruct your door ushers to ask couples to share. Occasionally choir members on their way to the loft or sometimes other members may hand you an offering envelope. Simply take it and place it in an offering plate inside the cabinet at your first opportunity.

Once the service begins, close the sanctuary doors. Late arrivers will continue for several minutes after the service begins. Try not to have anyone opening doors and entering the Sanctuary during any prayers or devotions that may be taking place at the time.

Sometime prior to the closing of the Sanctuary doors, the Head Usher will have asked some of his ushers to assist him in the headcount attendance. The easiest method is to ask ushers to count a section each. As you face the Sanctuary, number the pew sections right to left as 1,2,3, and 4. After the Sanctuary doors have been closed, the usher assigned to

each section will stand to the rear of the Sanctuary and , to the best of their ability, count the heads in that section. Either the Head Usher or another usher assigned this task should go to the choir loft and get a count of the choir, the ministers, and include the ushers. The counters will return the Narthex and give their section counts to the Head Usher who will combine the sums and enter the total in the white attendance book located in the cabinet on the left side of the Narthex. You may still have late comers after the headcount; simply add that number to the total.

The ushers may then take their seats in the pews if they wish. Instruct them when to return to the Narthex in preparation for the offering collection. Generally, during the Concerns and Celebrations following the sermon gives sufficient time. One usher or the head usher should remain in the Narthex during the service for security reasons.

Once the ushers have returned to the Narthex, appoint two of them to be lead ushers. Get them lined up in two rows and pass out the offering plates. Be sure that the lead ushers know where to stop in the front of the sanctuary (at the far end of the front pew) and that all ushers know which aisle section they will be covering. At the end of the Lord's Prayer, open the center sanctuary doors (inward) – wait for the ministers to announce "...as the ushers are coming forward..." and send the ushers down the center aisle. Immediately close the doors behind them.

When the ushers have completed the collection, they should come back into the Narthex through the two side doors. Once all have returned, consolidate all the collections into two plates, and choose two ushers to take the plates back up front. There is a light switch on the left labeled "Ready"; this signals the organist that the ushers are ready to return. Open the center sanctuary doors inward and wait for the beginning of the Doxology before the two ushers go forward. Close the doors behind them. The two ushers will walk down the center aisle, and stand on the floor in front of the chancel during the Celebration of Giving and Prayer of Dedication. After the Prayer of Dedication, return to the narthex using the center aisle.

Ask the ushers to help clean up the sanctuary after service by picking up bulletins, collecting the attendance sheets, returning hymnals to the racks and generally straightening things in the pew racks. You may assign specific ushers to a section or let it take place spontaneously but be sure that all sections have been swept before everyone leaves. Personal items left behind and attendance sheets go to the receptionist desk located in the office hallway. The bulletins/inserts go into the recycle bin in the chapel.

The head usher will ask one other usher to assist in collecting the offering at the end of the service. Generally, the minister comes down the center aisle after the benediction. There is a brief time after this but before the aisle becomes congested that two people can make their way to the front table to collect the plates. Take both plates back to the vault room in the office. The key to the vault is hanging on a hook on the computer server stand. Plastic envelope bags are on top of the safe, place all contents of the collection plates into this bag, and use the felt tip pen to write the date and "2nd Service", peel off the protective strip, seal the bag, and place it in the drop slot in the front of the floor safe. Relock the vault door, replace the key and return the offering plates to the narthex. Don't forget to remove your carnation and put it back in the box.

The first Sunday of each month is scheduled to have communion service. We currently are practicing two ways of distributing the elements. On some occasions, we are having the worshipers go to the front of the sanctuary to receive the elements. Ushers have been asked to assist in this by helping direct the traffic flow in the aisles. The head usher will choose four ushers to stand at the left side of each section (facing the pulpit) and starting at the front row, indicate when each row should move out and up to the front. Pace the flow of people so that the elders distributing the elements are not swamped with people. Ushers should join the line after the last pew in their section. The traditional method is to have elders distribute the plate and cups to the members in their seats. In this case, no action is required by the ushers. The head usher will be notified by the church office if ushers will be required to assist with communion.

Be prepared to handle special or unusual situations, although they seldom happen. Note where you might find extra folding chairs or where to find the wheelchair if necessary. Be prepared to send an usher to the office or to call 911 if the need arises. Try to handle the situation to the best of your ability with a minimum of disruption.