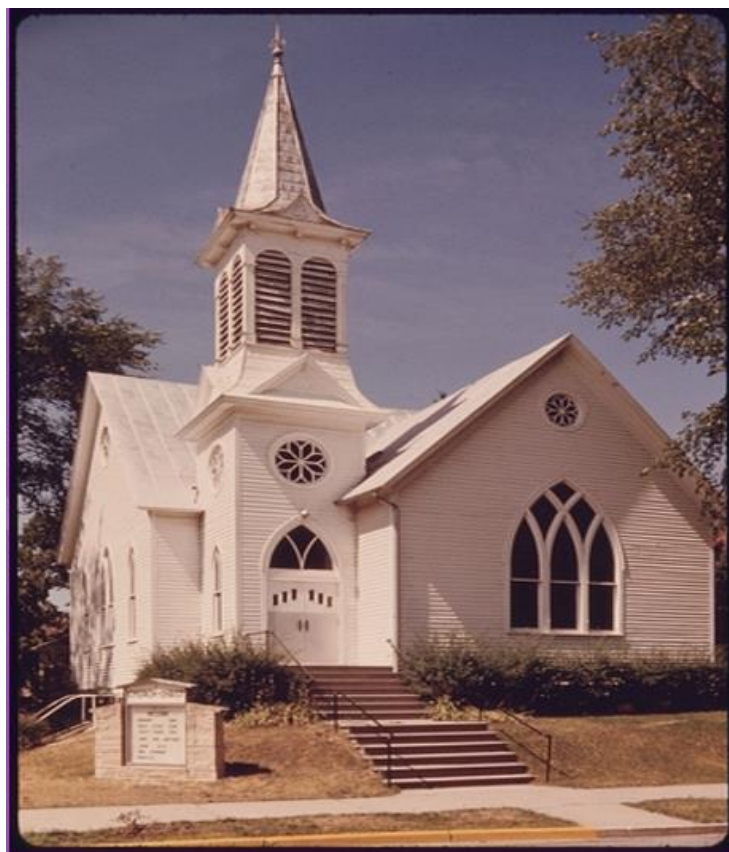


USHERS: CREATING AN EXTRAORDINARY WELCOME



Usher Ministry Guidelines

Overview of the Usher Ministry

Thank you for serving the church in this important ministry, we cannot say enough on just how important this role is to the church.

Church ushers serve with a special extraordinary welcome by providing a warm and safe atmosphere to usher in God's presence. The Usher Ministry serves the people and creates an atmosphere for hospitality. Ushers are, in simple terms, "doorkeepers for the house of the Lord."

Ushering provides an opportunity for you to give God's best. If you think that ushering is simply taking someone to their seat and collection the offering on Sunday morning, you may need to broaden your thoughts. At many worship services, ushers set the tone for welcoming. Ushers provide the friendly smiles, warm greetings and communication that demonstrate Christian love from the moment guests appear on the congregation's doorsteps.

For a day in thy courts is better than a thousand. I had rather be a doorkeeper in the house of my God, than to dwell in the tents of wickedness. – Psalm 84:10 (KJV)

The First Person Guests May See

An usher or greeter may be the very first person newcomers meet face to face. In other words an usher or greeter may be the first point of human contact for a visitor or guest. A smile, handshake or a simple kind word may be the sign that guests need to see the joy of being a Christian. Although there are many duties of the usher, practicing hospitality should be one of the priorities.

Usher Appearance

Be presentable and dress well for God's house. Where it would be preferred that one wear a coat and tie, dressing for the business office is acceptable. Never be attired in T-shirts, shorts or revealing clothes. Wear shoes and not slippers.

Why Welcoming Does Matter

When preparing for Sunday morning worship service, sometimes congregations underestimate the value of welcoming. Sometimes we tend to lose our focus and we are worried about whether there will be cookies after church at coffee hour while possibly overlooking the possibility that visitors may be seeking a place where they can find hope, peace and a spiritual connection. If more congregations were to recognize the value of a smile and a friendly hello, they would more likely communicate the love of Christ in a compelling way that more effectively reaches strangers in the midst of the church family.

For someone to experience God's love through a person's action can be more meaningful to first time visitors than anything that was said during the entire worship experience. This is because first time visitors are often looking for the signs of what makes a worship experience different than going to a baseball game or a club meeting.

Why Usher Training Does Matter

As Christians, we are called to "make disciples". As a congregation reaches beyond its walls to invite others to experience the joy of worship, the usher and greeter's role become even more essential. Christian hospitality often starts with the greeter or usher. Knowing what matters to visitors and how to anticipate the needs so that they can experience a worship service of excellence is the benefit of the training.

Usher training is an investment in creating an extraordinary welcome. At the end of the training, ushers should:

- Know why welcoming does matter
- See how their role impacts the worship experience
- Learn the duties of the usher and lead usher
- Be equipped to train others

An Extraordinary Welcome

We're people of God's extraordinary welcome. When people first come to a congregation, they wonder, "Is this a friendly, welcoming church?"

Can you describe your church as being one that welcomes with extraordinary hospitality? There are community groups and clubs that offer a welcome, but what stands out for Christians is that we have experienced God's extraordinary welcome and we want to share it with other people. Our own personal experience as people who have been welcomed by Christ inspires us to have the vision and courage to offer hospitality to people who may or may not know Him.

On Sunday morning, who are your guests? How do we know who God sent to our doorsteps? That is why it's so important to welcome them, especially strangers.

We don't always know why visitors appear on our doorstep on Sunday morning, but we do not know that we are all God's children. We are the beneficiaries of an extraordinary welcome. God's welcome includes much more than a friendly hello at the doors of the church. As we explore the role of usher, can you imagine what an extraordinary welcome looks like?

For I was an hungred, and ye gave me meat: I was thirsty, and ye gave me drink: I was a stranger, and ye took me in... - Matthew 25:35 (KJV)

Early Moments Matter

Research studies indicate that people make up their minds whether they will return to a church within the early moments of a visit. Some of these studies indicate between 4 to 8 people decide on whether they will return. How welcoming your church appears may make a difference in whether a complete stranger returns the following week. Those early moments does matter.

Think about this and then think how those early moments really does matter.

What Do Ushers and Waiters Have in Common?

Being an usher in a church is sometimes compared to the responsibility of a restaurant waiter. Why is this? Both roles are responsible for the experience. Waiters are responsible for the dining experience while ushers are responsible for the worship experience. For example, a good waiter anticipates diners' needs and ensures the hospitality from the moment they enter the restaurant. From the usher's perspective, a grate usher anticipates the needs of worshippers and shows Christian love from the moment people enter the church.

Think about more things ushers and waiters have in common.

Usher Safety

Maintaining a safe environment and maintaining control of a crowd is an important aspect of the ushering duty. Whereas, ushers are not church security, ushers should be observant of the environment and cautiously investigate suspicious behaviors. Using those cellular camera phones to record events and calling 911 can be helpful.

Ushers should insist that adults and kids maintain a proper decorum in and on the church property, including smoking, drinking, and bad behavior.

Ushers should report noteworthy incidents and accidents to the Pastor. Reportable incidents include all injuries, difficult interactions with people, and crimes. Be sure to read and understand the church safety policies and ask if you have any questions.

Ushers Duties and Responsibilities

See the Usher Job Description for a list of responsibilities and duties before the service, during the service and after the service.

Ushering Best Practices

Concentrate on the people. Seat the people as near the front pews as it seem appropriate. The back seats can then be filled with latecomers. If people insist on seating in certain places let them be.

Be alert to available seats and be ready to lead worshippers to the vacant seats. Approach with the phrase “May I show you to a seat?” with a smile. Never usher worshippers to their seats by waving your hands.

Do not allow worshippers to enter the church sanctuary when prayers are being said from the pulpit. Politely tell them to wait at the entrance until after the prayers are over.

Humility is key in an usher. Ushers are required to be punctual and time conscious as they are required to be at church far earlier than the rest of the congregation.

We should always offer to seat people, and while you are doing this, introduce new guests to someone and hopefully thy will offer to come and sit with them. Don't just offer them a seat, but finds someone that can sit with.

Once service begins, especially when Pastor is teaching, it does not matter who it is, ushers need to seat everyone. People come in and look for their friends and wander around and it is horribly distracting. Seat them. Tell them that in order to help cut down on distractions, you want to help them be seated.

Please ask guests that have children if they would like to see our nursery and take them and introduce them to the nursery staff. Let the decision to leave their children in the nursery be theirs.

DO NOT...

- Chew gum in church
- Force a hug when greeting
- Separate families when seating them
- Point when seating guests
- Raise your voice at anyone including children