

Christ Evangelical Lutheran Church Guidelines for Ushers

You have been asked to serve as an Usher. If the presiding minister and assisting ministers lead the liturgy from the front, you help make it happen from the back. This means that you will be serving as a special minister at CELC in several ways. First, you are a minister of hospitality. You (along with the Greeters) will be among the first official representative of CELC that people meet upon arrival for the worship service. In that sense, you are the first proclaimer of the Word of God and you are God's household servants. Your task is to insure that nothing interferes with the subsequent encounter between God and those who are worshipping. Secondly, you are a liturgical minister even though you are not behind the pulpit or serving communicants at the altar. What are seemingly little things are not at all trivial. For instance, you will be intimately involved with the Lord's Supper, the second central part of the liturgy's structure which includes the offering, the offertory and the communion. Third, you are doing evangelism ministry of the church. How you do your tasks, how you deal with people, how you conduct yourself, your appearance, your sense of reverence and your ability to convey hospitality – all of these have a great influence on the way people react to the church and to the mission of the church.

Tasks Before the Liturgy:

- Arrive 20 to 30 minutes before the service, neatly dressed, in a good frame of mind and wearing a smile. Make sure you take the usher name tag from the offertory table and put it on. Spot check the worship space, making sure that old bulletins and other litter have been discarded and that everything is in neat order.
- Check the offertory table to insure that the offering plates are in place and that there are information cards available for guests. Make certain that you have two extra people to help with the receiving of offerings during the gathering of gifts and offerings. Make sure that the bread and wine have been placed on the altar by the Altar Guild.
- Check worship folders and with pastor and/or the organist for service sequence and any changes. Make sure there are some large print worship bulletins.
- As worshipers arrive, you should be stationed at the front entrance offering greetings and assistance to all. Quiet, gentle, cordial welcomes with smiles help to create a reverent yet loving mood for all who enter. Some people like to visit before they enter the main worship area. Yet please be mindful of those people who are already seated and are prayerfully preparing for worship.
- Worshipers usually only require a bulletin from you, but do be prepared to help those who are first timers or perhaps are handicapped and need assistance in finding a seat. The requirement for bulletins has been changing so check in with

Harriet or the Worship and Music Chairperson before the service to get instructions. With most everything being projected on the screen, there may be little to handout. There always will be hard copies of announcements (normally sent via email to the congregation), large print service bulletins for those who have difficulty reading the projection screen, and the musical scores for those who read music and wish to follow the notes. A gentle reminder to congregants as they enter that the service is projected on the screen will help allay concern that they don't have a bulletin in their hand as they go to the pew.

- The Education Team usually makes available a handout (*Celebrate*) for children. Insure that each child receives one. There are also "quiet bags" hanging on a pole which are available in the Narthex for children and they should be offered.
- You should close the doors to the sanctuary once the service begins.
- Monitor heating cooling, ventilation and lights. Keep the sanctuary comfortable before and during the service.

Tasks During the Liturgy

- Ushers are worshippers and you should therefore participate fully and actively in the worship service. As worship leaders, ushers should provide worthy examples of reverence and hospitality
- During introductions by the presiding minister, you should insure that the visitors have a visitor registration card and pen after they are introduced.
- Count all of those in attendance including pastor, assistants, choir members and yourself. Record the attendance on the paper on the clip board inside the offertory table in the back of the church.
- A general rule for seating latecomers is that they should never enter the worship area during times of silence, confession and forgiveness, prayer, and while the lessons and Gospel are being proclaimed. They may be seated at other times.
- The ushers should give the children's Sunday School classes a "5-minute warning" for joining the parents in sanctuary as soon as the sermon ends. The teachers need to have a few minutes to prepare the children for re-entering the church service at sharing of the peace. The best way to do that and not interfere with the worship service is to walk out the front door and proceed to the Fellowship Hall from the outside of the church
- The Gathering of Gifts and Offerings is a significant time within the liturgy and should not be trivialized by careless, casual or chancy procedures. It needs to be remembered that worshippers are responding to the Gospel and to their baptism in a very profound and personal way – they are offering themselves and their tithes

to God. You should proceed down the aisle to the front, and begin passing the offering plate row by row, without turning your back to the altar and without visiting with worshipers as they gather the offerings. You should always face the altar and slowly back down the aisle, turning your head to glance down the row. After the gifts have been gathered, the ushers should form at the rear of the center aisle. One of you will carry the offering plates to the altar. At the altar rail, the offering plates are carefully handed to the assisting minister. Following this, you will bow your head and return to the back of the sanctuary.

- During Communion an important role for you is that of providing assistance to those communicants who are physically handicapped and to those visitors who may not be aware of procedures. Communion Assistants go first to prepare themselves for serving. You should check with the organist regarding the time for the choir to commune. When the servers are nearly finished communing, begin ushering worshippers to the center aisle (approximately 8 to 10 per side) starting with those in the cave area, bringing them down the south side aisle and then up the center aisle towards the altar. Please note that as of April 2010 we have started continuous communion. In this case the Pastor will offer the communion blessing only after all have communed. Therefore each communicant will receive communion and then leave the altar railing on their own allowing for a continuous stream of communicants. The ushers should insure that there is a continuous flow up the aisle. Alert the pastor to any worshiper who will need to be served in the pew. It is customary for ushers to be among the last worshippers to receive communion. This is modeling the role of servant.

Tasks After the Liturgy

- Be ready to assist and greet people as they exit. Be especially attentive to all visitors, introducing yourself and others, and being sure they are introduced to the pastor.
- Straighten the chairs in the sanctuary and make certain all papers and other litter are picked up. Return bulletins to the offertory table in the back of the sanctuary so they can be reused for the next service.

Thank you for your willingness to help with this important ministry. If you find that you are unable to fulfill duties due to absence or illness, please call the church office at 932-2394.