

## PROCEDURES FOR USHERS - CONGREGATIONAL CHURCH UCC

Revised Dec., 2008

**Purpose:** The ushers help assure orderly and sufficient seating in the sanctuary, assist participants with special needs, distribute worship materials and respond to requests from the minister. In addition, they are responsible for several details of the worship service such as candles, bulletins, joys and concerns and the offering.

**Arrive 30 minutes before the service, e.g. for 10:00 a.m., the ushers should be at the church by 9:30 a.m. (by 8:30 a.m. between Memorial and Labor Days).**

- If someone has never ushered before, please check with an experienced usher to determine if that person has guidelines and instructions.
- Wear an identifying USHER badge along with your personal name tag. These are generally kept in the drawer of the desk.
- The head usher should check the candle inserts and light the candles 10 minutes before the service begins. You will find matches on the shelf below the lectern.
- Turn on the lectern and pulpit microphones (a red light glows on the mic to indicate it is on) and do a sound check.
- Before the service, come into the minister's office and do a sound-check with the lapel microphone.
- Double check: altar flowers out (from sacristy) – place near lectern or altar table; notice if there is a baby announcement in bulletin; roses are sometimes in the refrigerator located in the kitchenette. Also check piano which should be uncovered (hang cover in sacristy on dowel behind door); recover after service.
- For the 10:00 a.m. service, doors to the Sanctuary remain closed until the choir is finished practicing; people may enter and seat themselves quietly during that time, if they wish. Make sure they have a bulletin. When the choir finishes their practicing, the doors to the Sanctuary are opened and people may be ushered to their seats.
- Large print bulletins and hearing aids are available for those who need them on the shelf near the narthex bulletin board.
- Seating the congregation: Generally it is better for you to escort people to their places in the pew than simply to pass out bulletins at the door - even for those who seem to know where they want to sit. Those who know where they want to sit will sometimes dispense with your services, but it is correct to seat everyone. People with infants should be made aware - courteously – of the nursery at the foot of the central staircase (if parents want to keep their children with them, that's fine, too). The last row of chairs at the back of the north side is reserved for those in wheelchairs, or with walkers or who need the arms to help them stand up. Offer assistance as appropriate.

- The Sanctuary doors remain open through the service unless there are specific reasons to close them. Latecomers may be seated during a hymn or other sung response by the congregation or during the interlude as the children are dismissed. Visitors who are unfamiliar with the church should be escorted by an usher. After the children leave, please close the nametag board. Count the congregation, including those in the chancel, narthex and the choir. Attendance slips are on the bulletin board or with the bulletins. Place slip in offering plate.
- Joys and Concerns. When children are called to the chancel area for Children's Time, ushers go forward and position themselves near the front of side aisles. As the children leave for Sunday School, follow, cover all three aisles and collect any joys or concerns that may be passed to the ends of each pew. One usher should then bring the notes forward and give them to the minister.
- Receiving the offering: when the minister or lay reader announces the offering, ushers should come forward walking two abreast; the first two become the center ushers as you line up, four abreast, at the chancel steps. The center ushers take the plates from the minister or lay reader, hand them to the other two ushers and then all turn in unison and proceed to the aisles, receiving and returning the plates at the end of every other aisle.
- When the offering has been received, gather at back in the center aisle and wait until the Doxology begins; then proceed to front in the four abreast configuration. Stop at the bottom of the steps and either the minister or lay reader will take the plates from you. Ushers may want to take their bulletins with them in order to read the prayer of dedication. You will recess at the end of the prayer of dedication. After the prayer of dedication on communion Sundays (and any other occasion when there is not room on the communion table), offering plates are carried back to the narthex (and subsequently, the office.)
- After the offering is taken, ushers may sit in the sanctuary, either together or with their families, except for the head usher. That person remains in the narthex through the service in case of latecomers, visitors, and emergencies that might arise. The head usher should remain where the minister can catch his/her eye if need be.
- The fans are generally not used during the service unless it is extremely warm and the air is very still because they tend to create a strobe light effect that is uncomfortable for worshippers seated in the front north side of the sanctuary.
- The counters will collect the offering plates after the service.
- Extinguish the candles after the postlude is complete and a majority of attendees have left the sanctuary.