

Saint Philip's Episcopal Church

Customary for Ushers

This customary establishes a basic framework and guide for people who serve as ushers at our church services. Duties assigned to ushers are intended to allow the service to run smoothly and with consistency from service to service.

Services in the Main Sanctuary

Arrive 30 minutes prior to the service.

The "Head Usher" (as designated by an asterisk (*) on the monthly schedule and the first name listed in the ushers assigned in the Sunday bulletin) will:

- Meet with the assigned ushers and ensure they have both their name badge and usher badge displayed on their clothing. The Head Usher will provide each usher with their assignment for the service. These assignments include, but may not be limited to:
- One usher, 30 minutes before the service begins, to move a wheelchair to the handicap parking area (weather permitting) to aid parishioner(s) access to the sanctuary. Depending on the number of parishioners needing wheelchair assistance, a second usher may be dispatched with a second wheelchair to assist.
- Two ushers assigned to hand out bulletins, one at each narthex entrance.
- At the Peace, one usher to carry a collection plate to each narthex to check the balcony collection boxes for parishioner donations. This collection must be completed before the elements are carried to the altar.
- Two ushers to carry the elements to the altar, followed by two ushers all to receive the collection plates
- For the Doxology, two ushers to carry two collection plates to the altar. On the first Sunday of the month at the 10:00 AM service, one usher to carry the food basket to the altar.
- For communion, assign ushers as prescribed in the "Communion" section of this Customary. One usher is assigned to move to the Gospel side (left side) of the sanctuary to ask parishioners to move to the center aisle for communion.
- Recruit additional usher(s), if necessary, from the attending parishioners
- Ensure that bulletins are located in each Narthex for the appropriate service. The Head Usher will check bulletins to determine what hymnal(s) will be used. If LE-VAS or WLP are called for, assign ushers to pass them out with the bulletins.

Before the Service

- For all church services, ushers are responsible for putting out and storing the handicap parking sign and red cones along Dry Street. On Sundays, the 08:00 AM service ushers will put the sign and cones out and the 10:00 AM service ushers will return them to their storage location.
- Weather permitting, open both Narthex doors and Nave doors to allow smooth flow of parishioners into the Sanctuary. In case of inclement weather, open outside doors for parishioners as they arrive. Ushers will ensure Nave doors are closed to prevent noise coming into the main sanctuary prior to the service beginning.
- The Head Usher will ensure one or more wheelchairs are made available at the Handicap Parking Area and that ushers are assigned to assist parishioners using these wheelchairs to gain entrance to the church. Wheelchairs may be brought through either of the narthex entrances. Parishioners in wheelchairs using the Bell Tower Narthex for entrance shall be seated in the left side (Gospel) side seating adjacent to the acolyte seating. Parishioners in wheelchairs using the Moore Street Narthex for entrance shall be seated in the right side (Choir side) outside pew seats. In either case, this allows better access to outside doors and prevents clogging the center isle during the recession from the altar.
- At least one usher will locate at each Narthex entrance to warmly greet parishioners as they enter. Pass out bulletins (and supplemental hymnals, if needed) as parishioners enter.
- Encourage visitors to sign the "Visitor Book" and invite them to introduce themselves to the assigned Greeter.
- Assist parishioners with food donations by placing them in the food basket(s). Remove items from plastic or paper bags (save bags to bring food to the food pantry).
- Assist parishioners (especially visitors) with finding a seat. Assist latecomers with feeling welcome and finding a seat. If the Sanctuary is crowded, invite arrivals to sit upstairs in the balcony.

During The Service

- The Head Usher will ensure both Narthex doors are closed and locked five (5) minutes after the service begins. Rope Stanchions will be placed in front of all

locked doors, preventing unintentional tripping of motion sensors that unlock the doors. Turn door signs over. Refer to the "Security" section of this Customary.

- The Head Usher will complete the attendance count card and place it with the host elements to be carried forward to the altar. The Head Usher may ask other ushers to assist in taking the count of clergy, staff, and parishioners in the Sanctuary.

- The Head Usher will review the list of parishioners who have volunteered to assist the ushers during a medical emergency or security issue to see if any of these volunteers are in attendance (refer to Safety and Security Policy and Procedures later in this document). The list of these volunteers will be kept at each Narthex entrance. The Head Usher shall make mental note of where these volunteers are sitting in the Sanctuary.

- All Ushers will remain vigilant for parishioners arriving late after the service begins. Late arrivals must enter the church through the Bell Tower Narthex doors.

- All ushers will remain vigilant for parishioners who may be experiencing a medical issue and be prepared to respond to that parishioner.

- All ushers will remain vigilant for external threats that may appear during the service. Any potential external threat will be reported immediately to the Head Usher.

Offertory

- Although four ushers are used routinely for carrying elements to the altar, it is encouraged that two attending parishioners be recruited (normally done by the Head Usher before the service begins) to carry the elements to the altar. At the signal from the Priest or Deacon preparing communion, the two parishioners followed by four ushers (2x2x2) proceed to the altar. The volunteer parishioners will carry the wine and bread (wine on left and bread on right), and the attendance card prepared by the Head Usher, and hand the elements and card to the attending Eucharistic Minister(s) (EM).

- Standing at the altar rail, six (four) across, ushers will receive the collection plates from the EM. Once the ushers have received the offertory plates, all six (four) attendees will bow. The two parishioner volunteers will return to their seats via the center aisle. The four ushers will proceed down center and side aisles to pass the plates to each row alternately. The (four) indicates that only four ushers proceeded to the altar (no volunteer parishioners).

- As soon as announcements begin, the Head Usher will direct one of the other ushers to proceed to both Narthex entrances to collect offerings from the balcony offering drop boxes located on the stairs going up to the balcony. These offerings will be brought to the rear of the sanctuary and added to the other collections received prior to the Doxology beginning.
- Gather the offering in the back of the Sanctuary and at the signal from the Priest or as the Doxology begins to be played, two ushers, with one plate each, and (first Sunday of the month and the 10:00 service only) another usher following with the food basket proceed to the communion rail to give the collection plates to the EM(s), and when scheduled, place the food basket in front of the altar. Remain at the altar rail until the Doxology is complete, then bow and return to the back of the Sanctuary via the center aisle.

Communion

- As a result of COVID protocols and restrictions, the procedures for parishioners receiving communion have changed and will remain effective until further notice.
- Sunday, 10:00 service. Six ministry persons in formation will form in front of the altar and centered in front of the center aisle. Two Priest/Deacons will offer hosts. Two Deacons/Eucharistic Ministers (EMs) will locate on each side of the centered Priests. One will have a regular chalice to offer parishioners an opportunity to drink wine and the other will have a shallow chalice in which to dip the host. One usher will be assigned to notify parishioners seated on the left (Gospel) side of the sanctuary (near the acolyte seating) to move to the center aisle for communion.
- Two ushers will proceed to the front of the center aisle to wait for the ministry and EMs to center themselves for communion to begin. We normally call these ushers the Gate Keepers. There will be balcony parishioners and left side seated parishioners who will line up behind these two ushers. In order not to cause a traffic jam in front of the communion party, once the first parishioner in each line is directed to the serving ministers for communion, the two Gate Keeper Ushers will leave their position and return to the rear of the Sacristy via the outside aisles.
- The other two remaining ushers, normally called Herders, will follow the parishioners from the left side seating and balcony up the center aisle. Once the communion service begins and once they get to the front pews, they will act as normal Herders and begin to let parishioners out of the pews front to back for communion. All parishioners after receiving communion are to return to their pews/seats via the outside aisles.

- The Gate Keepers will be the last in line to receive communion and will have the responsibility for notifying the serving ministers if there are parishioners requiring communion be served to them in their pews/seats. These ushers will then escort the Priest or Deacon to their respective side of the Sanctuary to those parishioners who need communion delivered to them.
- Sunday, 08:00 service. Communion procedures for this service will have only one Priest/Deacon serving communion and two EMs with a shallow chalice and a regular chalice for wine distribution. One usher will be directed to notify parishioners seated on the left side seating to move to the center aisle for communion.
- Because this service may routinely have only three ushers serving, two ushers will move to the front of the center aisle and begin to direct parishioners to the minister for communion who have lined up behind them from left side seating and from the balcony. Once these parishioners have received communion, they will act as Herders and begin letting parishioners out of the pews front to back for communion.
- The two Herder ushers will be the last in line to receive communion and will have the responsibility for notifying the serving ministers if there are parishioners requiring communion be served to them in their pews/seats. These ushers will then escort the Priest or Deacon to their respective side of the Sanctuary to those parishioners who need communion delivered to them.
- Communion procedures for either of these services may be used for services other than routine Sunday services. Which one to use will depend on direction from the ministry on what communion process will be used.

At the End of the Service

- Remove rope stanchions at all narthex doors, open Nave doors and Narthex doors, weather permitting, during the closing hymn.
- Provide wheelchairs to those identified as using them to enter the church as soon as the service ends. During the final hymn, move wheelchair bound parishioners to exit doors to prevent parishioner restrictions for these persons.
- Ushers are encouraged to greet parishioners leaving the Sanctuary when a Priest or Deacon is not available.
- Walk the pews and seats (main Sanctuary and balcony) to collect all remaining bulletins and trash, and place in the trash and bulletin receptacles. Arrange hymnal and prayer books in the correct order (prayer books in center and hymnals on

outside, book spines should be on the left side). Balcony hymnals and prayer books should be stored under the pews.

- Head Ushers will check the balcony offertory drop boxes after the service ends and if any offerings are found they will immediately give them to the Vestry Person of the Day (VPOD) for safe keeping.
- Remove and store Handicap Sign and red cones (10:00 AM service).
- Make sure all Sanctuary Nave doors and outside doors are closed before leaving the church. Turn all door signs over to their original position. Refer to the "Security" section of this Customary. The Vestry Person of the Day is responsible for ensuring the church is safely secure after all clergy, staff, and parishioners exit the church after the service ends.

Services in the Chapel of the Cross

Services held in the Chapel of the Cross can include Sunday early service, funerals, weddings, and holy day services (8:00 AM Sunday service will normally use Rite 1). Most of the usher customary procedures remain the same. The major difference is that there are only two ushers needed. These ushers are responsible for the following:

- Greet worshippers warmly outside of the Chapel. Invite them in and give them a bulletin.
- The doors between the Chapel Narthex and the Nave should remain closed whenever possible to maintain quiet and temperature in the Chapel.
- The collection plates are located in the back of the Nave and should be processed to the altar by ushers at the appropriate times during the service.
- During the offertory collection, one usher should pass the plate on each side.
- At communion, one usher should be on either side of the center aisle to release rows to receive communion.

Funeral Services

- Arrive 1 hour prior to the start of the service. Ushers may be asked to arrive earlier due to large attendance or special circumstances.

- Coordinate with clergy to determine if copies of the funeral bulletin need to be placed in the Fellowship Hall for family members. All bulletins and readings will be located in the main church Sacristy before the service.
- Install/remove Handicap Parking sign and red cones on Dry Street.
- Greet “family ushers” (if any) and assist them in procedures and assignments.
- Be attentive to guests outside of the church who may not be sure of where they should proceed.
- Coordinate with clergy to determine how the family will receive communion. (This procedure should also be followed for baptism services).
- If there is interment in the Memorial Garden:
 - Provide directions and assistance, if needed, to family members and guests moving from the church to the Memorial Garden.
 - After the service, store materials (table, silver bucket, and spade) used at the grave site in the Chapel Annex (old parish hall).

Security

Ushers will be part of the Saint Philip’s evolving security policies and procedures. These security measures are intended to counter potential threats from harmful intrusion into church services. As part of these security measures, the following routine usher assignments and responsibilities are assigned. All narthex doors are locked preventing outside access. Usher will open both narthex doors 30 minutes prior to the service beginning and will either prop the doors open or in inclement weather have one usher open doors for parishioners as they arrive. The VPOD is now responsible for opening narthex doors to let ushers in when they arrive at the church 30 minutes in advance of the service beginning.

- Five (5) minutes after the service begins, all narthex doors will remain closed and locked.
- Place velvet rope stanchions at the locked doors to preclude persons from activating the magnetic lock motion sensors.
- Signs currently exist on both Narthex doors that direct late arrivals to go to the Bell Tower when they are permanently closed for the service. Ushers only have

to turn them over to comply with this procedure. After the service is over, the Head Usher will ensure these signs are rotated (turned over again), with the blank information side out.

- The Head Usher will assign one usher to monitor the Bell Tower Narthex door to allow late parishioner arrivals to enter the church. Common sense judgement will be used to determine when a suspicious person(s) is denied entrance to the church. The Head Usher should be notified immediately when this situation arises.
- Parishioners who desire to leave the service early will be allowed to do so. Ushers will be required to move the velvet rope stanchions to allow parishioners to exit the church service early (in either Narthex).
- During the recessional, ushers will remove all velvet rope stanchions.

Safety and Security Policy and Procedures.

The Saint Philip's Episcopal Church Safety and Security Committee (SSC) is responsible for developing policies and procedures for emergencies that could occur during a church service or activity. Once these policies and procedures have been approved by the Executive Committee and Vestry, ushers are responsible for adhering to these policies and following the procedures identified in the following categories.

- Medical Emergencies. Ushers provide the first response to medical emergencies in the Sanctuary. The Head Usher, with the assistance and advice of any medical professional in attendance, will make the decision to conduct one or more of the following actions:
 - Aid the parishioner in place.
 - Move the parishioner to one of the Narthex areas for treatment.
 - Use the emergency First Aid kit or the Automated External Defibrillator (AED) to assist the afflicted parishioner. Both are located in the Bell Tower Narthex near the water fountains and fire extinguisher.
 - Call 911 for immediate medical assistance.

- Advise the clergy with a recommendation to suspend or cancel the service in order to attend to the afflicted parishioners (This will be done by the Head Usher, walking directly to the altar and advising the presiding Priest or Deacon.)

- Church Evacuation. The serving Priest or Deacon may direct that the church be evacuated due to various emergencies that occur. All ushers will be trained to assist in the Evacuation Plan. The ushers' main effort will be to assist parishioners in an orderly and calm exit from the church. The following procedures apply:
 - Open all exit doors, both Nave and outside doors.

 - Assist those parishioners who are wheelchair bound, who are walker assisted, and those who need aid to walk.

 - The Head usher will solicit help from those parishioners who have previously identified themselves to help during an emergency.

 - The general plan is to allow parishioners to leave by pew row, starting from back to front. Seating sectors will evacuate, as follows:
 - Choir side parishioners and choir members should exit via the Moore Street Narthex
 - Gospel side parishioners, acolytes, and clergy should exit via the Bell Tower Narthex
 - Balcony seated parishioners should exit via the Moore Street Narthex

- Church Lockdown. The term "lockdown" for this Customary means that all exterior church doors are locked, and no person would be allowed to enter or leave the church. The serving Priest or Deacon may direct that the church be locked down. This action is usually reserved for external threats existing to clergy, staff, and parishioners residing inside of the church.
 - Ushers are the first line of defense for both identifying and deterring intrusion by a person(s) considered a threat to parishioners and clergy inside of the church. The Head Usher is responsible for immediate notification to the serving Priest or Deacon that an external threat exists and recommending whether the service should be suspended, whether the church should be locked down, and whether parishioners, staff, and clergy should be evacuated from the sanctuary to safer locations within the church. The decision to stay in place or move to safer locations resides with the serving Priest or Deacon.

- The Head Usher or an assigned usher will call 911 and ask for an immediate police response when an external intruder threat exists.
- Ushers will ensure that all doors remain locked, allowing no one to enter the exterior door sensor areas (which would automatically unlock exit doors in either of the Narthexes). One usher will be assigned at each Narthex door to maintain this security posture and to identify any attempt to enter the church through either of these doors.
- The main sanctuary can be considered unsafe from an external threat for various reasons, the most identifiable are visual access from outside through the large church windows and close proximity to external doors. Whether a potential intruder or violent weather outside, the Head Usher may make a recommendation to the serving Priest or Deacon to move the parishioners to safe areas within in the church, to include safe rooms and safe passageways. If approved, ushers will assist parishioners to move to these areas, assisting those with mobility problems.
- The Head Usher is responsible for requesting assistance from other parishioners to escort persons from the Sanctuary to safe locations in a calm and orchestrated manner.
- The SSC has identified Safe Rooms and safe area locations. Safe Rooms are required to have separate dead bolt locks with key access from the outside. The SSC will identify the recommended capacity for each Safe Room. Since the number of parishioners varies by each service, there is no viable way to assign parishioners for each Safe Room. Parishioners will be directed by ushers to safe locations based on their mobility and ability to climb stairs.
- The following rooms have been designated as Safe Rooms:
 - Sacristy
 - Dressing Room
 - Flower Room
 - Men's Restroom
 - Women's Restroom
 - Second Level Storage Room
- Once Safe Rooms have reached their capacity, ushers will ask parishioners to locate in protected passageways near the Safe Rooms. These include:

- The hallway between the restrooms and the sacristy
- The upstairs vault area near the storage room
- The balcony

- Church Intrusion. For the purpose of this Customary, “church intrusion” means that some person(s) has entered the church by force, to include physically breaking through church doors, and acts in such a manner as to be a physical threat to the clergy, staff, and parishioners attending the service. It also includes threat actions by a person(s) who has entered the church during normal church attendance activity. Person(s) in these categories will be identified as an “intruder”. If that person(s) has weaponized themselves (gun, knife, etc.), then that person(s) will be designated as an “armed intruder”. At the printing of this Customary, the SSC is in the process of establishing policy and procedures for Church Intrusion for Vestry approval. Until such time this policy and procedures are approved and published, ushers will act as initial responders to church intruders.

- The Head Usher will immediately call 911 and ask for immediate police response to church intrusion.
- Ushers will immediately respond by restricting and securing any intruder.
- The Head Usher will request assistance from those parishioners in attendance who have identified themselves to assist when this security issue arises.

Please remember, each service is unique, and alterations/accommodations may need to be made. Be flexible and welcoming to all!