

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, but during the new church hall construction two at the Moore Street narthex entrance).
- At the Peace, one usher to carry a collection plate (located in the rear of the sanctuary) to the balcony to collect offerings from those seated in the balcony. 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, two ushers as Gate Keepers and two ushers as Herders. 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.

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- 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. At the discretion of the ushers, Nave doors may be closed to prevent unusual loud 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 wheel- chairs to gain entrance to the church.
- At least one usher will locate at each Narthex entrance to warmly greet parishioners as they enter (during COVID restrictions and during new church hall construction, the Bell Tower Narthex doors will be closed). 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 late-comers with feeling welcome and finding a seat. If the Sanctuary is crowded, invite arrivals to sit upstairs in the balcony (complying with any existing COVID masking and seating instructions).

During The Service

- 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 will have to have narthex doors opened for them.
- 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 take the plate from the back of the Sanctuary and proceed to the balcony to collect the offering from those seated in the balcony. This collection must be completed, and the usher returned to the rear of the Sanctuary and that collection 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 late service only) another usher following with the food basket proceed to the communion rail to give the collection plates to the

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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

- At communion, two ushers (Gate Keepers) stand at the center front aisles in front of the first pews to direct worshippers to the communion rail. At the Sunday 10:00 AM service, choir and acolytes receive communion first, followed by balcony parishioners (during COVID restrictions, a Deacon or EM will deliver communion to those seated in the balcony) and far-left side worshippers who have been directed to move to the center aisle. Parishioners sitting on the far-left side pews and seats who have mobility concerns may be sent directly to the left side altar rail. At the Sunday 08:00 AM service, parishioners sitting at the far-left side pews and seats should be sent directly to the left side altar (One usher will be assigned to notify parishioners seated on the far-left side to move to the center aisle for communion). Watch for open spaces at the altar rail, try to keep couples together, keep it flowing. Openings at the altar are filled from the middle to the outside. When the center altar rail is not used, parishioners may use this space when standing to receive communion. (This procedure also applies during COVID restrictions when two Priests or Deacons provide communion at the front of the center aisle).
- Two ushers (Herders) position yourselves on the left and right side of the center aisle following the balcony and far left side worshippers. Once the center aisle is cleared, begin releasing rows from front to back to receive communion. The ushers will be the last to receive communion.
- Once parishioners receive their communion, they should be directed to return to their seats via the side aisles.
- The Head Usher and one other usher will be the last in line to receive communion. One usher will be assigned left (Gospel) side to acknowledge those who need communion delivered to their pew/seat and one usher will be assigned to do the same for the right (choir) side of the Sanctuary. These two ushers will ascertain prior to communion beginning what parishioners will need communion brought to them in their pews. This information will be provided to the Priest(s)/Deacon(s) by these two ushers while receiving communion. 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.

At the End of the Service

- 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.

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- 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.
- 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. 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 church 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.

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- 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. Magnetic locks on all external doors will activate five minutes after the start of each service. After magnetic locks are activated, ushers will:

- Place signs in all external door windows that indicate doors are locked and identify which entrance into the church is available.
- Place velvet rope stanchions at the locked doors to preclude persons from activating the magnetic lock motion sensors.
- The Head Usher will assign one usher to monitor the Bell Tower Narthex door and one usher to monitor the Moore Street 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. (The Bell Tower doors may remain closed until the new church hall construction is complete)

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 and all door closed signs.

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

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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 an emergency medical kit or an Automated External Defibrillator (AED) to assist the afflicted parishioner.
- * 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

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- 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, automatically unlocking exit doors in both 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.
 - o 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:
 - o Sacristy
 - o Dressing Room
 - o Flower Room
 - o Men's Restroom
 - o Women's Restroom
 - o 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:
 - o The hallway between the restrooms and the sacristy
 - o The upstairs vault area near the storage room
 - o 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 ac-

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tions 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 first to respond 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!