

THE MINISTRY OF USHERS, GREETERS, ACOLYTES AND SPECIAL HELPERS

Smith Memorial Presbyterian Church – *revised March 27, 2023*

“Do not neglect to show hospitality to strangers, for by doing that some have entertained angels without knowing it.” – Hebrews 13:2

“Welcome one another, therefore, just as Christ has welcomed you.” – Romans 15:7

Background

In new situations, we begin forming impressions very quickly. Think about when you go to a new restaurant. Have you ever walked into a restaurant and there was nobody up front to greet you? When you feel ignored in the first 30 seconds, it can make the whole experience feel awkward. If the first few moments of a new experience are negative, we often begin to look more critically at everything else that happens. But, if those first few seconds are positive, we are likely to continue to feel positive about the rest of the experience.

I think I have heard more new members say that they joined the church – not because they liked the pastor or the programs of the church – but because they said, “The first time that we visited, it was the people who were so kind and welcoming toward us.”

Although some people may seem to be well connected through Facebook and the internet, there is a growing feeling of isolation among many people. We may work in cubicles at the office or at home. And, the average American has fewer close friends than we did decades ago. People have an almost desperate need for community, and the church as the body of Christ can offer a level of belonging that is not found anywhere else.

Greeters and Ushers are ministers of hospitality. They are usually the first official representatives of the congregation that people meet upon arrival at church. They should pray that the people who visit our congregation will feel like Jesus has been with them, and that they, as ushers and greeters, have played a role in that process.

At Smith Memorial Presbyterian Church, we will have at least 2 greeters and at least 2 ushers on a given Sunday. Volunteering to serve as an usher or greeter is open to everyone throughout the church including families with children.

Greeters will be stationed at the front entry doors of the church to joyfully welcome people right when they walk in from the parking lot.

Ushers will be stationed in the narthex to give a friendly smile as they pass out bulletins and assist people with any special needs.

Some tips to remember

Be sure to wear your name tag and encourage others to do the same.

Make positive eye contact with people and SMILE.

Give a friendly greeting like, "Good morning. It is nice to have you here today."

Greet children at their level by bending down. This makes eye contact possible and helps you appear less intimidating.

Focus your efforts on communicating a genuine welcome to everyone who comes – long-time members, newer members, and visitors. But, true hospitality does mean putting visitors first when you have to make a choice in your use of time. Visitors need a little more attention than regulars.

Be alert for opportunities to introduce visitors to other members of the church.

If you are unsure if somebody is a new visitor or a long-time member who you just don't know, consider a simple introduction like: "Hi, I'm not sure we've met. My name is _____."

Be careful not to give the impression that a visitor has to pass some kind of litmus test to be accepted. Don't appear disappointed if an initial conversation doesn't reveal something you have in common. Rejoice that the person is present in our church!

While you want your personal appearance to be neat and attractive, there is nothing wrong with diversity in dress by those who are ushers and greeters. A mixture of our ushers and greeters wearing both casual and traditional "Sunday dress" communicates to visitors that we welcome every single person regardless of their attire.

Make an active effort to remember the names of visitors when they arrive, and be sure to greet them by name at the end of the service or when they come back the next Sunday.

In case you meet a family with young children, be able to share some basic information about our nursery, children's corner, children's chapel, and youth ministries. The children's corner in the entry way has books, fidget toys, and children's bulletins. Make sure they connect with our Community Relationship Builder, Drew Barowicz, who works with children and their families. *(Note: Drew is not able to be here on the 3rd Sundays of the month).*

CHECKLIST FOR GREETERS

Greeters will be stationed at the main entryway (or even in the parking lot) to joyfully welcome people right when they walk enter our church.

- ✓ Arrive 20 minutes before the service. Check if there are nametags available and that the welcome table is clean and organized. Notice if there are any special events coming up that may be important to share with visitors.
- ✓ Smile and let people know that you are glad that they are here.
- ✓ Help visitors prepare a name tag (optional) or direct them to a welcome center for that purpose. If you notice a visitor sitting alone in worship, make an effort to sit on the same pew when you come inside to worship and help them meet others at passing of the peace.
- ✓ Be available to help the ushers with the offering, if requested.
- ✓ After worship, go back to the entryway to say goodbye to people as they leave. Be open to Pastor Brad asking you show a visitor where the Fellowship Hall is for refreshments and walk with them. Even better, invite them to sit down with you for coffee. (It can be intimidating for new people to walk into a room full of strangers. It is nice to have someone with them to help them to not feel as alone.)

Be professional and courteous at all times. Be especially friendly to those you do not recognize. Greet people using their names as often as possible. Pay special attention to visitors. Bend down to the level of children and youth; say "I'm glad you're here!"

Remember, your main job is to warmly welcome people to the church so that they may encounter the love of God in Jesus Christ.

CHECKLIST FOR USHERS

Ushers will be stationed at the double doors that connect the entryway with the sanctuary. They are to give a friendly smile as they pass out bulletins and assist people with any special needs.

Before the service

- ✓ Arrive 20 minutes before the service. Read through the bulletin. Check with the pastor for any special instructions.
- ✓ Select two additional people to assist with the offering. You may ask the greeters, but also try to include the youth in this process or others who are minimally involved.
- ✓ Please be sure to direct families to the children's corner and hand out children's bulletins and clipboards/crayons to any families with children.
- ✓ Be professional and courteous at all times. Be especially friendly to those you do not recognize.
- ✓ Greet people using their names as often as possible.

- ✓ If people need a little extra assistance, one of the ushers should escort them to their seats. If they need hearing assistance, get a Williams receiver from the table in the Narthex for them. If they need sight assistance, large print bulletins are also available.
- ✓ Connect with the acolyte and make sure that the acolyte is prepared. Our Community Relationship Builder, Drew Barowicz, who works with children and their families, might also be available to help find an acolyte. *(Note: Drew is not able to be here on the 3rd Sundays of the month. Plus, sometimes he teaches children's chapel and will not be available to help the acolyte at the end of the service).* Both adults and children are welcome to acolyte. If no acolyte is present, then one of the ushers can do it. (See acolyte instructions.)

During the service

- ✓ At the end of the Opening Prayer, light the acolyte's staff. (There is a lighter in the drawer of the table in the entryway). When we start singing the opening song or a musical interlude begins, send the acolyte forward to bear the light of Christ.
- ✓ Please watch for latecomers. They may be seated between parts of the liturgy, but not during times of prayer. Help them find a place to sit. Try to direct them up the side aisle. At 10:15, the inside doors of the sanctuary may be closed. *(Note during COVID, we kept all the doors open to improve air circulation. As the risk of airborne viruses fluctuates, we may need to keep the doors open as we weigh the risks of health and safety for any particular time.)* At least one usher should remain in the narthex sitting on the pew by the windows to greet latecomers and assist the Special Helper with opening doors for people needing to come and go or to leave to use the restroom. In cases of threats or people of concern, the usher should work with the special helper to ensure that the lockable doors are closed and locked. Furthermore, in cases of threats or people of concern, an usher may need to close the lockable hallway door as well.
- ✓ Attendance: During the first hymn, take attendance and record the count in the notebook in the table in the Narthex. Be sure to include musicians, the pastor, and anyone helping with the service, including people that maybe working in the Fellowship Hall, nursery, or children's chapel. The count should be the total amount of people on our campus at the time of worship.
- ✓ During the children's message, walk up center aisle with prayer request basket. If anybody submits a prayer request, please put the basket on the floor by the pulpit.
- ✓ Offering: Requires four people. The plates are located above the coat rack in the Narthex. Enter the Sanctuary down the center aisle when requested by the Liturgist. Once you arrive at the front of the Sanctuary, the first two people will turn to go up the outside aisle. When finished, consolidate the offering trays into one. Walk with one of the Counters who will take the tray to the Bookkeeper's office. It is important to have 2 people witness that all of the money was placed in the lockbox.

At the end of the service

- ✓ Assist the acolyte in carrying the light of Christ out into the community: When the congregation begins the second to last verse of the last hymn, the acolyte should walk down the center aisle with the staff unlit.
- ✓ Open the doors, and greet the people on their way out, thanking them for coming. Direct them to the coffee hour. Clean up the pews, pick up papers, and replace hymnals, bibles, pencils and the pew envelopes. Collect unused bulletins and place in recycling. *(Note: if there are inserts like Deacon offering envelopes that can be used again, please return those items to the church office.)*

ACOLYTES AT SMITH MEMORIAL PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH

Background

The word "acolyte" comes from the Greek word "akolouthos" which means a helper. The acolyte has a vital role in helping with the worship service. At Smith Memorial Presbyterian Church, the acolyte will light candles the sanctuary. The lighting of the candles symbolizes the Light of Jesus Christ entering our lives and coming into the worship service to glorify God. At the end of the service, the light carried out of the sanctuary symbolizes the light of Jesus going into the world with us to guide us through the week until we meet again for worship together.

What to do at the beginning of the service

- 1) The Acolyte should report to the Ushers/Acolyte Coordinator by 9:55 a.m.
- 2) Check your candlelighter, and make sure it has a wick that will last.
- 3) At the end of the Opening Prayer, light the acolyte's staff. (There is a lighter in the drawer of the table in the entryway). When we start singing the opening song or a musical interlude begins, the acolyte will walk forward to bear the light of Christ. If the acolyte is a child, Drew or one of the ushers will light the acolyte's staff. When the music begins, the acolyte will walk down the center aisle to light the candle. (See pictures on the attached sheet.)
- 4) After the candle (or candles) are lit, pull the taper into the metal stem, which will snuff out the flame and walk back down the center aisle.

What to do at the end of the service

- 1) When the congregation begins to sing the second to last verse of the last hymn, the acolyte should walk down the center aisle with the candleholder unlit.
- 2) After walking down the center aisle, the acolyte should light his or her candleholder from the candle on the table and then snuff out the candle on the table.
- 3) Once the last verse of the hymn begins, walk down the center aisle leading the pastor until you both get to the back of the church. Once you are in the back of the church, you may extinguish the flame.

Some Things to Remember

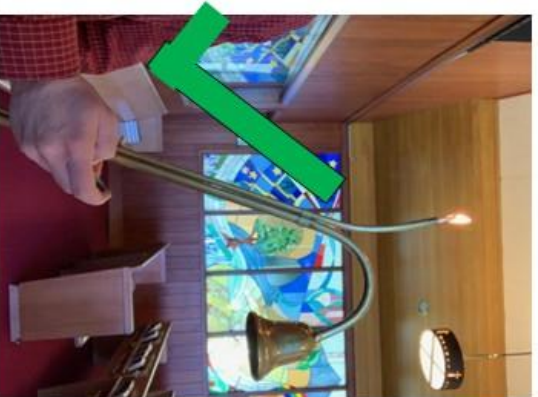
When serving as an acolyte you are actively assisting the people in the worship of God. It is a very important role, and should be approached with reverence, humility, and care. Always walk slowly and with dignity. Don't appear rushed or hurried. But at the same time, don't look stiff! SMILE!!!

Please be on time. When you are on time, everything flows more smoothly. If you cannot come on the assigned day, please get a substitute and let Pastor Brad, Meg, or Drew know that you cannot make it.

BEGINNING OF SERVICE



Do not walk down aisle holding the lighter with the flame in front and the bell pointed towards your head.



1) Walk down the aisle holding the lighter with the flame on top and the bell hanging towards the ground.



2) When you light the candle, tilt the flame on the lighter.



3) After the candle is lit, pull down the wick to extinguisher the lighter.



4) Walk back down the aisle, without a flame and the bell hanging towards the ground.

END OF SERVICE



1) Walk down the aisle, without a flame and the bell hanging towards the ground.



2) When you approach the candle, tilt the lighter.



3) Before you snuff candle, be sure to light the lighter.



4) After the lighter is lit, then snuff out the candle with the bell.



5) Walk back down the aisle, with flame up and the bell hanging towards the ground.



6) After you reach the doors, you may extinguish the flame.