

Usher Procedures

Episcopal Church of the Epiphany

When You Arrive

Please arrive at least 20 minutes before the service to be available to arrange and hand out bulletins. If pinned flowers are provided on the narthex table, please put these on to indicate you are an usher. Please throw away the plastic bags that the pinned flowers are stored in, and make the tables in the narthex neat and tidy. At least one usher should be stationed in Servants Hall to pass out bulletins and help greeters.

Bulletins: The bulletins are located in a basket on the table in the narthex. Ensure there are also a few bulletins on the nearest console table into the entry from the Porte-cochere and also the table nearest the door to the Sanctuary in the Gathering Space of Servants Hall. The bulletins for the Saturday night service look different from the Sunday services, and sometimes the two Sunday services have different bulletins. If the Sunday services are the same, and you are doing the late service, you may have to re-use some that were left behind from the early service. Just take a few moments to re-insert any inserts that are not inside.

Before the Service

Be on the lookout for people who may need help with the door (people on walkers, in wheelchairs or just needing help in general, such as with children).

Greeting & Newcomers: For Sunday services there are usually assigned greeters standing close to the door. But ushers are also greeters, one of the first faces people see on entering, and your warm welcome is always appreciated. Be on the lookout for people who are new to Epiphany in case they need help with where things are located or want to know more about Epiphany. Please look for Temple Taylor and/or the priests before or after the service to introduce them to newcomers. There are clear Welcome Bags hanging on the same rack that holds the pew cushions in the Narthex. Offer these to folks that you know to be newcomers or visitors.

Oblationers: As people enter, be on the lookout for two people (not newcomers) that you would like to ask to be oblation bearers -- often a married couple but any two people old enough to responsibly handle carrying the elements. Try to have the couple designated before the service starts. Ask the oblationers to be sure to come to the back of the nave during the passing of the plate. More on oblations under "During the Service."

Bell: Someone -- usually not an usher -- will be assigned to ring the outside bell before the service begins. The designated worship committee facilitator or priest will indicate to you when it's time. Then signal to the person waiting to ring the bell. In the unusual case that

no one is there to ring the bell, it is the usher's responsibility. The ring is: Three sets of dings, three times each set, slight pause between sets.

Processional: Be aware of whether the choir is part of the processional before the service. Please close the doors from the narthex to the nave as the processional is about to start, and ask latecomers not to walk in during this time. When the processional is complete (this will take longer if the choir is part of the processional), then open the door for late comers, and close it again to keep any narthex noise out of the nave.

During the Service

Be familiar with the order of the service in the bulletin. When you're not performing a duty, sit quietly at the back of the nave. Be on the lookout for young children or adults who may need help with the doors if they have to leave through the narthex during the service.

Counting attendance: A small paper for attendance count is located in a basket on the top shelf of the usher's closet (first door to the right when entering the narthex). During the Sequence Hymn that precedes the gospel reading, discretely go to the far aisles to count the people in the pews. Go to the choir loft to count the number in the choir, then add ushers, acolytes, and servers. Don't forget anyone sitting at one of the very back pews. Put the total count on the piece of paper where indicated, fold it in half and place it in the ciborium (the covered metal cup containing the hosts) located on the small table at the back of the nave. The celebrants use this number to determine if the ciborium has enough hosts for that service, or if they will need to add some.

Retrieving Children from Children's Chapel: During the Prayers of the People, an usher can go to the Family Annex (former Choir room) to let the Children's Chapel leader know it is time to have the children return to the church. Once they arrive, please have them stay in the narthex until after the Prayer of Confession, at the Sharing of the Peace. Then open the doors and allow the children to find their parents.

Offerings: Wait until the offertory music begins to walk down the aisle to begin passing the plate. A minimum of two ushers are usually needed, one for each side, each passing an offering plate from the center aisle. For large services, two on each side may be desirable (one each on the outside aisles, one each in the center aisle), passing 2 or 4 plates total. When all plates have been passed, and the oblationers are in place at the back of the nave, turn on the red light at the large switch plate located on the wall just to the right of the doors into the nave from the narthex. The switch is at the center of the plate. When the light is turned on, it turns on a corresponding light for the organist, so he or she will know it's time for the doxology (music played as the offering is brought forward).

Oblation: The oblation is the lay presentation of eucharistic elements (bread and wine), offered to God at the altar along with the plate offerings. The ciborium containing the host and the wine pitcher are located on the table at the back of the nave. The oblationers walk down the aisle as the doxology begins, followed by one of the ushers carrying the offering plates (usually stacked). The oblationer on the left brings the ciborium. The oblationer on the right brings the wine pitcher, holding it so that the handle faces the altar (so the acolyte can easily grasp it). Acolytes will be waiting at the front of the altar to take both the host and wine. They will bow as they take it, and the oblationers return the bow. At the same time, the usher carrying the offering plates stands beside the oblationers at the altar, lifting the plates so the celebrant blesses it. Don't worry if this is not all perfectly choreographed! Oblationers may walk back down the center aisle to return to their pew, or around the sides of the Sanctuary.

Communion: Wait until the celebrant(s) begin to serve acolytes and chalice bearers before walking down the center aisle to direct the flow from the pews to the altar. If the choir is there, let them go to the altar first, preferably before you walk down the aisle. The usher can open the door to the choir stairs to make it easy for the choir to pass through. Just try to make sure there is not a long wait at the altar for people to arrive, whether it is choir or people in pews. Gluten-free people usually wait at the back of the nave to walk up last for the GF host. Ushers wait until all the people have finally been served before kneeling to be served.

Recessional: During the recessional, open the doors to Servants Hall to let the recessionals go through, and the doors to the narthex for people exiting.

A Few Exceptions

Special services often have special procedures. This includes baptisms, funerals, marriages, candlelight services, Check with the clergy if you're not sure about procedures.

Incense: If the service includes incense, it must come through the narthex rather than Servants Hall, where the fire alarm would go off. Be on the lookout to make sure no one is trying to bring the lighted incense into Servants Hall! At the recessional, open the doors to the narthex where the recessionals will exit.

After the Service

Clean up any debris in the pews. Check the hymnal racks for tidiness. Ensure the two prayer books are at the center of the rack, and each end has a standard red hymnal in front of a Renew hymnal. Check each row for attendance sheets. Remove attendance sheets only after the 11:00am service. If Temple Taylor if she is available, give them to her; otherwise, attach them to the small clipboard on the inside of the usher's closet door. Check the acrylic prayer request and visitor card holders also on the backs of the pews. All holders should have one working pen and a stack of cards. All pew books should have an attendance pad of paper and one working pen. Please remove mechanical pencils or

crummy-looking pens from the pews. Nice pens and replacement pads of paper are located in the bookshelf at the foot of the stairs that lead to the choir loft. The pews in the very back of the Sanctuary should also have one attendance register booklet with pen, as well as two hymnals, two renew hymnals and two BCPs. Extra Hymnals and BCPs are also located on the bookshelf at the foot of the choir loft stairs. These pews are the first thing that people see when they walk in from the narthex. They should look neat and tidy.