

USHERS' HANDBOOK

ST. JAMES'S EPISCOPAL CHURCH
1205 W. Franklin Street
Richmond, VA 23220
(804) 355-1779
www.doers.org

Dear Friends,

Thank you for your willingness to take part in this important ministry. Many people think that ushers are volunteers who simply hand out bulletins and help with the offering plates. While this is an important part of the role you play, the ministry of ushering encompasses so much more.

Our ushers are the face of welcome at St. James's. You are often the first to meet and greet those who are new to our church family. From a theological point of view, ushers are literally the face of the body of Christ. If first impressions are the strongest, then the way our ushers welcome the people on Sunday sets the tone for what newcomers will expect for the rest of the morning. A smiling - "Good morning and welcome," goes a long way toward making those new to our community feel at home.

The clergy count on our ushers to ensure that the service runs well. I cannot overstate how much I depend on the ushers to be able to facilitate an efficient service of communion. In a church as large as St. James's, moving five hundred to a thousand people is no easy matter. I also know that our ushers can handle anything that happens during the service. If the clergy need to be informed about people in the congregation who cannot make it to the communion rail, if someone is ill, if one of our indigent friends is having a bad day, if a child cannot find his parents - I know our ushers will take care of everything while protecting the integrity of the liturgy.

Please find enclosed a detailed description of all the duties for our ushers. I hope you will read this booklet carefully. Thank you for your ministry and your service to St. James's.

Blessings,

Randy

FOR HEAD USHERS:

- Your team will receive an e-mail reminder from the Chief Usher when scheduled to serve. It is up to you to remind your team and be sure that at least eight (8) ushers (including a head usher) will be there on Sunday morning
- - If necessary, you can recruit substitutes or trade places with people on other teams.
- Arrive early, by 8:30 a.m. or 10:45 a.m., or designate a member of your team to arrive early.
 - Check to be sure there is fresh ice water in the carafe on the Ushers' table.
 - Be sure all bulletins from the previous service have been disposed of.
 - The head usher at 11:15 should get the flower cards from the Altar Guild members in the sacristy to distribute to ushers to deliver flowers after the service.
 - After counting the number of people including all adults, children, worship assistants and choir members), call the Parish Coordinator's extension to give the total attendance for the service, also noting the date & service time.
- At all Communion services recruit two people, not necessarily related, to serve as oblation bearers. Tell them to come to the back of the church at the Peace.
- ANTICIPATE, ANTICIPATE, ANTICIPATE! It is your responsibility to see that the service flows smoothly. Be prepared for whatever it is that comes next in the service and expect the unexpected. Refer to this Handbook. Another copy will be on the Ushers' table in the Narthex.

FOR ALL USHERS AT BOTH THE 9:00 AND 11:15 SERVICES:

- Arrive in the Narthex by 8:30 a.m. or 10:45 a.m.
- Baptisms are usually scheduled on the 1st Sunday of the month (with some exceptions) during the program year, and on the 3rd Sunday during the summer. There are no baptisms during Advent or Lent. If a baptism is scheduled, please be sure the reserved signs (which will be on the ushers' table) are placed on the front pews for the baptism families. Discard the reserved signs after the service.
- Check each pew and pick up any trash, children's materials, or bulletins from previous services. Be sure that hymn and prayer books are placed in the racks in order. (The sextons have primary responsibility for this, but please serve as a back up for them.)
- Prior to the service ushers with bulletins should be stationed at the doors to the church. Please make every effort to greet people and hand out bulletins.

- The doors to the Nave should be closed 10 minutes before the service is scheduled to begin to allow the congregation to have some quiet time for prayer.
- Try to keep the Narthex as quiet as possible both before and during the service. Keep the doors between the Nave and the Narthex closed as much as possible. Have only one usher remain in the Narthex during the service and he/she should stay away from the glass doors so that the worship leaders in the Chancel will not be distracted. The other ushers may sit in the church for worship and come to the Narthex for the Offertory and to direct people to Communion.
- When the prelude begins, line up the procession at the center door. (Mark Whitmire usually helps with this.) When the procession is in place, the clergy will signal the organist with the “organ” button, located near the west door into the Nave. Once the procession has begun, TURN OFF THE BUTTON. This is the head usher’s responsibility.
- The clergy are always last in the procession. Once they enter the Nave, close the center doors. Two ushers should block the center aisle UNTIL THE CLERGY ENTERS THE CHANCEL. Then allow people to enter while music is playing.
- The ushers at the side doors in the Narthex should not let anyone down the side aisle until the choir has cleared the aisles.
- Close the doors at the end of the procession. Latecomers should NOT be seated during prayers and scripture readings. ASK LATECOMERS TO WAIT UNTIL A HYMN OR CANTICLE. There is a lot of music during the first 10 minutes of the service.
- DURING THE SERMON, count the congregation (Both 9:00 and 11:15 services). One usher should count the west side from the east balcony and another usher count the east side from the west balcony. BE SURE TO INCLUDE EVERYONE: USHERS, CLERGY, CHOIR, AND PEOPLE IN THE BALCONY, CHILDREN, AND ACOLYTES!
- During the Peace (or announcement time when Morning Prayer is being read), ushers should return to the Narthex and get the offering plates. After the preacher says the offering sentence, led by the oblation bearers (except at Morning Prayer), the ushers proceed down the center aisle by twos with the offering plates.
- **At both the 9:00 and 11:15 service**, the first two ushers turn and receive the offering from the people in the short side window pews and then from the balcony. The second two turn and receive the offering from people in the outside of the center pews from the side aisles. The last two ushers do an about face and receive the offering from people in the inside of the center pews from the center aisle. When the offering has been received, line up again and use the “organ” button to signal the organist that you have finished. At the end of the anthem, when the Doxology begins, proceed down the aisle and give the plates to the acolyte before returning to your seats by way of the side aisles. THE HEAD USHER SHOULD TURN OFF THE SIGNAL TO THE ORGANIST.

DIRECTING THE CONGREGATION TO COMMUNION (BOTH SERVICES):

- Usher locations and responsibilities during communion are as follows:

Communion at the Main Altar only

At 9:00 the Choir may commune first **BUT** the ushers will always precede them so that they can close the altar rail gate and get themselves in position to direct the congregation to communion.

At 11:15 the Choir will come from the balcony sometime during communion. They should be permitted to “go ahead.” Ushers should hold the congregation and resume when the Choir passes them.

As people come forward, one Usher will stand immediately in front of the West Prayer Desk and another will stand immediately inside the doors (on the carpet) in the sacristy to alert people to the small step at the doors.

The two Ushers in the center aisle and the two Ushers stationed in the outside aisles should go directly to their stations. **WAIT** until everyone from the window pews has gone forward and then release all those in the middle pews. **Keep the line FULL. No voids.**

Communion when the Chapel is also used

Eight ushers are required.

Two will go immediately to the altar rail and close it after the clergy who are serving in the Chapel have exited the area. One will stand immediately in front of the West Prayer Desk and the other will stand immediately inside the doors (on the carpet) between the Chancel and Sacristy to alert people to the small step at the doors.

The next two will go to the East and West side pews. The East usher begins directing people from the front immediately to the Chapel. The West usher waits a short time and then begins directing people from the front to the back, through the Narthex to communion in the Chapel.

The next **two** will go, one to the foot of the steps on the East side to assist people at the steps and one to the lower Chapel doors to direct people who will be receiving communion in the Chapel.

The next **two** will go to the front of the center aisle and immediately begin releasing people to communion at the main altar rail.

- **SOME GENERAL NOTES:**
 - **KEEP THE PEOPLE MOVING!!!**

- The line of people waiting for communion should extend as far back as the usher releasing people from their seats. At some point the choir will come down from the balcony and they should be allowed to “jump line.” People sitting in the balcony generally follow the lead of the choir and come down for communion when the choir does.
- The ushers take communion last and notify the clergy of any special circumstances such as people who need to have communion brought to them in the pew because they are unable to come forward. After everyone at the rail is communed, the ushers in the sanctuary should open the gates in the altar rail (RIGHT HAND SIDE FIRST AND LIFT!) and move the middle kneelers back to the side.

USHERS AT THE 11:15 SERVICE DELIVER THE FLOWERS

- The head usher will distribute flower cards to the ushers. There are usually three to four arrangements each week.
- Take the card to the sacristy after the service and the Altar Guild members will give you the flowers.
- You may take the flowers directly from church or later in the afternoon. The short visit is often even more appreciated than the flowers.

GENERAL INFORMATION

NO PHOTOGRAPHS OR VIDEOS ARE PERMITTED DURING ANY WORSHIP SERVICE!

Restrooms are located at the bottom of the stairs in the west side of the Narthex. Handicapped accessible rest rooms are located on the 1st floor of the Education Building (near the library) and in the basement (just outside the elevator on level B).

A water fountain is located just inside the Education Building through the door near the pulpit.

A telephone, for emergencies, is on a pillar on the west side of the Narthex.

Clipboards with lectionary-based materials for children, crayons and books are located in the Children's Kiosk in the east side of the Narthex.

Nurseries are available for infants, toddlers, and preschoolers at both services. Nursery suites are located just through the door by the pulpit. Infants and toddlers are on the first floor on the left; preschoolers are in the same location on the second floor.

"Liturgy of the Word" is available for elementary school-aged children during the Sermon at the 11:15 service.

Large print copies of the services are available from the literature racks on the tables in the Narthex.

Devices for the hearing impaired are stored in the drawers of the tables in the Narthex. They are wireless and have individual volume controls.

Handicapped access to the church from outside is through the Atrium doors. There is a ramp there which brings you to the elevator by the sanctuary and makes the church and the other floors of the Education Building accessible.

The elevator is located through the door from the Sacristy area, which is just beside the pulpit. The elevator will provide access to the two basement levels and the two levels of the Education Building. Stops on the elevator are BR (Undercroft: Peterkin Parlour, Parkinson Room), B (Assembly Room, bathrooms which are handicapped accessible, acolyte and choir vesting rooms), 1R (church), 1 (1st floor of the Education Building: nurseries, Children's Chapel, handicapped bathrooms, conference rooms, Atrium) and 2 (2nd floor of Education Building: clergy vesting room, choir rooms, Sunday school rooms).

Wheel chairs are stored near the lift at the Atrium entrance.

A first aid kit is stored in the closet under the east stairs in the Narthex.

A brochure listing services available to street people on weekends is in the drawer of the Ushers' table under the window.