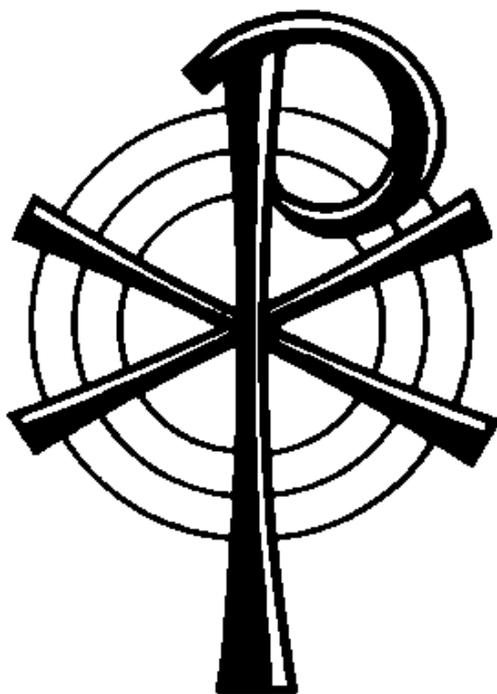


THE

USHER

HANDBOOK



**Peace Lutheran Church
10625 Ranch Road 620 North
Austin, Texas 78726**

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PEACE LUTHERAN CHURCH

USHER CHECKLIST

Before the Service

- First service – Set the thermostats in the narthex and sanctuary.
- Check the sanctuary and narthex for trash and old bulletins. Make sure the rows of chairs are straight.
- Check inside the usher door for special instructions.
- Set out the registration books on all rows including choir. Make sure each book has a usable pencil.
- Prepare the bulletins and weekly inserts.
- **Hymnals and bulletins** should be **handed** to each worshiper.
- Welcome everyone as you pass out the hymnals and bulletins.
- Light the acolyte's candle lighter.

During the Service

- Seat latecomers – Only during portions of the liturgy that will cause the least commotion (i.e. During a transition)
- Take attendance and fill out the attendance form.
- Continuously monitor the temperature.
- Perform Offering and the Offertory procession.
- Assist with communion.

Following the Service

- Collect the bulletins and hymnals from the worshipers as they exit the sanctuary.
- Pick up the offering and put it in a bank bag along with the Worship Attendance form. Place bank bag in the slot in the office door.
- Straighten up the bulletins for the next service.
- Straighten chairs and pick up around the sanctuary and narthex.
- **11:00 am service**
 - Bulletins should be returned to the usher cabinet.
 - Collect all registration books.
 - Remove all used pages, even if not full and place in church secretaries box located in hall next to the restrooms.
 - Return registration books to usher cabinet.

Prayers for Ushers

Direct us, O Lord, in all our doings with your most gracious favor and further us with your continual help, that in all our works, begun, continued, and ended in you, we may glorify your holy name and finally, by your mercy, obtain everlasting life; through Jesus Christ our Lord.

Lutheran Book of Worship, p. 49, copyright 1978.

Almighty God, you have blessed each of us with unique gifts, and you have called us into specific occupations, relationships, and activities using those gifts. Enable us to use our talents to witness to our faith in you and to communicate your love to the people we meet each day. Empower us to be ministers of your reconciliation, love, hope, and justice. Keep us steadfast in our commitment to serve actively in your name; through Jesus Christ our Lord.

Occasional Services, p. 148, copyright 1982

Acknowledgments

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Ushering as Ministry

Congratulations and thank you for serving as an usher!

This means that you are being given a very special ministry in your parish, a ministry that can trace its origins back to the earliest moments of religious history. It's a ministry that still goes on each week, because the church has discovered that ushers fulfill a very important role when Christians gather for worship. In fact, ushers are so important that they profoundly affect the quality and spirit of each service. When the liturgy is ended and the people return to their homes, their impressions and opinions of the Church and especially of that particular congregation have been significantly shaped by the kind of ushering that has been provided for them.

Ushers are ministers of hospitality. Their task is to serve all those who have come together to worship - to serve them efficiently with authentic hospitality, thus enabling them to worship God and to enjoy Christian community. That's the kind of ushering that complements and advances the mission of the congregation, for it makes both visitors and members feel welcome and wanted.

Ushers in Today's Church

"Hey, Jim, will you help take up the offering?" On the surface, this sounds like a very harmless and even practical question. Maybe one of the ushers didn't show up or the attendance was so great that extra hands were needed. Or, maybe the question reflects a certain understanding of what it means to serve as an usher - just a collector of money. The question may also suggest that anybody can do the work of an usher - no experience necessary and no training needed.

There is no ministry in the church that can be performed without some training. To be effective ministers, the organist must know how to play the instrument and the choir must rehearse. To be effective ministers the acolytes, lectors, assisting ministers and altar guild all must train and prepare carefully for their roles. Pastors must train for several years before the Church will ordain them to preside at worship. Such preparation is essential to be effective ministers.

Ushers are ministers of hospitality. Ushers are usually one of the first official representatives of the parish that people meet upon arrival at church for worship. The ushers' appearance and dress, their attitude, their words, their demeanor, their body language, their motions and conduct all shout clear messages to the arriving worshipers about what to expect of the congregation. In that sense, ushers are the first proclaimers of the Word of God for those people; ushers

serve as a kind of an indicator of what the church has in store for all those who enter. It's just not enough to put a bulletin in the hands of arriving visitors and members. Nor is it enough to gather the offerings with efficient precision. Robots could perform such tasks. What is needed instead is a warm, genuine and authentic expression of Christian hospitality that shows itself through the honest efforts of helpful, caring and accommodating ushers.

Ushers are liturgical ministers. Ushers are worship leaders. Although their tasks do not include serving at the pulpit or altar, ushers are servants of the Word of God and of the liturgy. Along with other worship leaders, ushers are expected to address their tasks with such a level of devotion and reverence that all worshipers gain a glimpse of the glory of God and of the grandeur of heaven.

Ushering is one of the evangelism ministries of the church. Being an usher does not mean that home evangelism calling is part of your job. However, as ministers and as official representatives of the congregation, ushers are automatically evangelists. How ushers do their tasks, how they deal with people, how they conduct themselves, their appearance, their sense of reverence, and their ability to convey authentic hospitality - all of these can have a great influence on the way people react to the church and to the mission of the church.

Strangers and visitors often seem to possess a special kind of "radar." They have the uncanny ability to detect phoniness and indifference just as soon as they sight the first usher. That's when the first impression of the church is shaped. These newcomers seem to know immediately if this is a place of welcome, of acceptance, and of friendship. As soon as they enter the building and see the ushers in action, visitors are able to determine whether worship is an event of consequence and whether the congregation cares one whit about extending hospitality to those who show up for worship. It does not matter if words of welcome are inscribed in ten-foot letters in the church yard or if such words are printed in the bulletin - it's the ushers who are perceived as "Exhibit A" of the congregation's nature and mission. By the time visitors reach their seats, they have already formed an opinion about the people and the pastor of the congregation; similarly, they have drawn some conclusions about the gospel of Jesus Christ. Ushers can make that kind of difference. Ushers are evangelists!

Usher Procedures

The following section provides specific and detailed information regarding the ministry of the ushers at Peace Lutheran Church.

Preparation before each service

1. Arrive at least 25 minutes before the service.
2. Spot-check the sanctuary and fellowship areas. Make sure that old bulletins and other litter have been discarded and that the areas are clean and neat. Look in the cubby under the chairs for books and trash.
3. Straighten the rows of chairs in the sanctuary.

Usher Materials

4. All supplies needed by ushers are kept in the wall cabinet located in the narthex to the right of the doors to the worship area.
5. Check the inside of the usher cabinet door for special instructions due to service or church season or a change in ushering procedures e. g. handing out candles, dimming the lights etc...

Bulletins & Inserts

6. Check to make sure you have the correct bulletin and weekly insert.

Hymnals

7. Check the information sheet in usher cabinet to see which hymnals will be used for worship that day. Hand the hymnals along with the bulletin to each worshipper. Do not just tell them, “Green book today”. Replace in cart after services. Check sanctuary for hymnals, bulletins, and weekly inserts.

Registration Books

8. **Make sure every book has a usable pencil, at least 5 blank sheets.** Leave a book on the first chair of every row going down the center aisle on both sides. Leave 2 books for the choir and musicians. Check that each pad has offertory envelopes inside.

Assist the Acolyte

9. Matches or lighters are kept in the usher cabinet. As soon as the acolyte is ready, light the acolyte's candle lighter.

Procedures as people are arriving for the service

10. Keep the glass doors to the sanctuary closed at all times. This will help cut down on the noise in the sanctuary and allow people to quietly prepare for worship.
11. Each usher should position themselves with their back to the glass divider between the two sets of doors. Make sure you greet everyone as you hand them a bulletin and correct hymn book.

Seat People when needed

12. In most cases, worshipers prefer to find their own seating. However, ushers should assist people whenever the seating begins to fill up. This is especially true for highly attended services such as Christmas Eve and Easter. Ask the people who are seated already to move toward the center of each row. Assist the people in finding a seat. The ushers should try to reserve seats in the back for seating latecomers. The ushers should sit in the back row.
13. On Christmas Eve and Easter, additional seating will be set up ahead of time in the narthex. Fill the seats in the sanctuary before seating people in the narthex. Set up extra chairs in the narthex if needed. Additional chairs are located in the storage closet in the narthex.

During the service

Worshipping

14. Ushers are worshipers and should participate fully and actively in the celebration of the liturgy. Stay in the narthex until the Prayer of the Day to greet latecomers. Then, have a seat in the back row.

Seating people once the service has begun

15. Ushers should seat people during portions of the liturgy that will cause the least commotion. Most people will know that they have arrived late and that they are not at liberty to enter the sanctuary as

they please. Most people will accept your polite suggestion that they wait in the narthex for just a few moments to be seated. The general rule is that people should not enter the sanctuary during times of *silence, confession, prayer, or readings*. Seat people during the welcome, hymns or liturgical songs.

Worship attendance

16. Take the worship attendance during the service. Count everyone; include those in the nursery, all the worship ministers and the choir. Fill out the ‘Worship Attendance Form’ located in the usher cabinet. Put this form in the bank bag with the offering at the end of the service.

Continuously monitor the temperature

17. Be sensitive to the temperature inside the church. The thermostats in the sanctuary are not accurate and most likely will need adjustment during the services. Watch the congregation for temperature clues. If people are fanning themselves or putting on coats, the temperature needs adjusting.

Collecting the Offering

18. During The Peace, get all offering plates and walk to the front. The two ushers should use the center aisle. As soon as the people are seated, you should immediately begin collecting the offering.
 - A. Don’t forget the people seated in the choir.
 - B. Begin passing the plates in the first and third rows. The person at the end of the row will pass it to the row behind them.
 - C. The ushers proceed up the center aisle, going from row to row, front to back. See diagram A on page 14. Wait in the back until the Offertory Procession.

Offertory Procession

19. The Offertory is a processional hymn to signal and accompany the presentation of the people’s gifts of money, bread and wine. Three people are needed for the procession: See “A”.
 - A. After all the gifts have been gathered, the ushers and communion assistants will gather at the glass Sanctuary door.

At the time the Offertory Hymn begins the Ushers and Communion assistants will form a procession at the rear of the center aisle. The first usher carrying the offering plates leads the procession, the second or communion assistant with the bread follows about 5 feet behind and the communion assistant with the wine follows another 5 feet behind. These distances are necessary to provide an orderly presentation method at the altar.

- B. The Offertory Procession begins with the singing of the Offertory. The ushers should wait until the Offertory Hymn has begun to gather at the Baptismal Font and approach the altar.
- C. At the altar, the offering plates are handed to the acolyte. The first usher steps aside allowing the bread and wine to be presented to the assisting minister. Following the presentation of the gifts, the ushers and communion assistants re-form in procession and return to the rear of the church.

Communion Distribution Procedures

During the Agnus Dei (usually *Lamb of God*), the ushers should move to their stations. People seated in the main seating section beginning at the front at both sides of the aisle should be the first to commune, and then the choir/musicians. Communion will be distributed either in two different methods - "continuous" or "table".

****Note that there may be people that can not come up to the Altar for communion and may need to receive communion in their seats****

20. "Continuous" Communion (See diagram "B", page 15)

- A. In the practice known as "continuous" Communion, the communicants approach the Communion station at the altar singly as space becomes available. Ushering for this method should be minimal. Two ushers are needed, one for each side of the main aisle. The ushers should simply indicate the appropriate time for the next row of communicants to stand and approach the Communion station.
- B. The communicants will approach the Communion station in a continuous line by the center aisle and return to their seats by the side aisles. Distribution goes fairly quickly using this

method. The ushers should keep about 5 to 7 people standing in the center aisle ready to receive Communion at all times.

21. "Table" Communion (See diagram "C", page 16)
 - A. In the practice known as "table" Communion, the communicants surround the altar in a circle. Once the "table" has communed, the Presiding Minister blesses and dismisses the people. Ushering for this method should be minimal. Two ushers are needed, one for each side of the main aisle. The usher should simply indicate the appropriate time for the next group of communicants on each side of the main aisle to prepare to approach the altar.
 - B. The communicants will approach the altar by the center aisle and return to their seats by the side aisles. The usher should have about 40 people (20 from each side of the center aisle) ready to receive Communion. If less than 80 people are present in a service, divide the congregation into two equal groups.

Following the service

22. Pick up the offering. Take one bank bag from the cabinet and put the offering envelopes, loose monies, and the Worship Attendance Form in the bag. Seal the bag and drop it in the mail slot in the office door. Return the offering plates to the usher cabinet.
23. After each service, replace a registration book at the end of each row. After the 11:00 a.m. service collect the registration books, remove all pages in which even one person registered, and place them on the church secretary's desk. Stack the registration books in the cabinet.
24. Walk through the sanctuary again. Pick up any trash, bulletins, and hymnals.
25. Collect the bulletins and extra information sheets and put them in the cabinet for the next service. After the 11 a.m. service, when it is the end of the cycle for the service book, separate the colored cover and throw the separated books and covers in the recycling bin in the workroom.

Usher Scheduling

There will be two ushers at the 8:00 am, 9; 30, and 11:00 am services. Holiday services that are expected to have a large attendance will have additional ushers assigned. You can choose to be assigned to either the 8:00 am, 9:30 am, or 11:00 am service. All usher teams will alternate in ushering at evening services (i.e. Lent, Holy Week, and Christmas Eve). The church office will mail out an Usher Schedule four times a year and a monthly schedule is included in the messenger mailed out each month. The schedules should arrive to you about two weeks in advance. **If you are unable to attend your assigned service, you are responsible for arranging your own replacement.** For your convenience, home phone numbers and email addresses are included separately with the schedule. Once you have found someone to switch times with you, call the church office at 258- 2293 or send an email to peaceaustin@sbcglobal.net to inform the Office Administrator of the change no later than the Wednesday prior to your scheduled time.

Ushering at Occasional Services

CHRISTMAS EVE

- Four ushers are scheduled because of the large number of people.
- Arrive 45 minutes prior to the service to get ready. People begin arriving at least 30 minutes before the service.
- Divide the duties among yourselves.
 - Two ushers should hand out bulletins and help welcome people to worship as usual.
 - The other two ushers should assist in seating people and setting up additional seating. Try to completely fill the seats in the sanctuary before using the narthex. Set up chairs in the narthex at pastor's request.
 - Please discourage saving of seats.
- Hand candles are used on Christmas Eve. Prepare and give one candle to everyone along with a bulletin.
- Dim lights in narthex when service begins.
- Hymnals are not needed on Christmas Eve. The entire service is in the bulletin.
- All four ushers should collect the offering. Two ushers for the side aisles and the other two for the main aisle.
- Communion distribution will be "continuous."
- Dim overhead lights leaving chancel and side lights on at the lighting of the candles (usually Silent Night).

ASH WEDNESDAY

- Distribute hymn book and service bulletin to each worshiper.
- People may come to the front for the Imposition of Ashes. Usher as for communion. Please dim overhead lights leaving only the side lights on.
- Communion distribution will be "continuous."

LENTEN SERVICES

- Distribute hymn book and service bulletin.
- Prepare and hand candle to each worshiper.
- Start service with overhead lights dimmed. After candles have been extinguished, please turn on lights as usual.

PALM SUNDAY

- Distribute the bulletins as usual and palm branches to each person.
- The congregation will assemble outside the church prior to the service. The ushers should assist in moving people outside.
- The congregation will form in procession and enter the building during the Entrance Hymn. The ushers should assist the procession by opening and closing the doors.

MAUNDY THURSDAY

- Worshipers enter and leave in silence. Ushers should politely discourage any socializing.
- During the Confession, people may be invited to come forward for Individual Absolution. No ushering is needed for this. People can come forward as they wish.
- Communion distribution will be by table with the First Communicants and their family coming up for the first table. The remaining people will follow in the usual manner.
- The lighting in the worship area will be full until the stripping of the altar, then turn off the overhead lights. Leave the sidelights and the chancel lights on.
- Worshipers are invited to remain for prayer and meditation following the service.
- Collect the bulletins to be used again on Good Friday.

GOOD FRIDAY

- Worshipers enter and leave in silence. Ushers should politely discourage any socializing.
- Pass out Passion Narrative along with worship bulletin.
- Only the side lights and the chancel lights will be on during the service.
- Holy Communion is not celebrated in this service.
- After the Lord's Prayer there is time for meditation. During that time pass out large nails that will be in the ushers' cupboard in two baskets. The time will be marked in the worship bulletin.
- There is also no gathering or presentation of an offering, however the offering plates be placed on a linen covered table in the narthex by the entry to the Sanctuary. ****please leave these out until everyone has left the Sanctuary****
- Worshipers are invited to remain for prayer and meditation following the service.
- Collect the bulletins to be used again at the Easter Vigil.

VIGIL OF EASTER

- Worshipers will assemble outside for the lighting of the fire and Pascal Candle. Prepare and distribute hand candles and bulletins to everyone.
- Lights will be off over the chancel (altar) until Altar is dressed with the Paraments. Please turn the lights on while Liturgical Arts members are putting the paraments on the Altar.
- Following the lighting of the Pascal Candle, the congregation will process into the church.
- Holy Communion is celebrated in this service. No offering will be taken, however, the Offertory procession will occur with the Bread and Wine.
- There is no offering during the service. Place a small table with a table cloth in the narthex by the entry to the Sanctuary. Place two offering plates on the table. ****leave these until all people have left the Sanctuary****
- Communion distribution will be "by table."

EASTER DAY

- Make sure extra chairs have been put out in the Sanctuary around the altar (where Pastor sits and the other side of the Altar). Add
- Four ushers are scheduled because of the large number of people.
- Arrive 30 minutes prior to the service to get ready. People begin arriving at least 20 minutes before the service.
- Divide the duties among yourselves. Two ushers should hand out bulletins and help welcome people to worship as usual. The other two ushers should assist in seating people and setting up additional seating. Actively assist people to find seats and take the initiative to ask people to move into empty seats.
- Hymnals are not needed on Easter. The entire service is in the bulletin.
- All four ushers should collect the offering. Two ushers for the side aisle and choir seating and the other two for the main aisle.
- Communion distribution will be "continuous."

In Case of Emergencies

Fire extinguishers: Located on the walls of the sanctuary.

Exits: Through the narthex, back door, door behind the organ and then handbell tables, through the hallway; exit doors to the left and right of the altar.

In case of a major emergency: Call 911. Phones located in the kitchen and all offices.

If the fire alarm goes off: Quickly and calmly assist everyone out of the building. Call 911 immediately.

*Don't hesitate to inform the pastor or congregation of an emergency during the service. **Interrupting the service for an emergency is not a mortal sin!***

Diagram A

OFFERING PROCEDURE

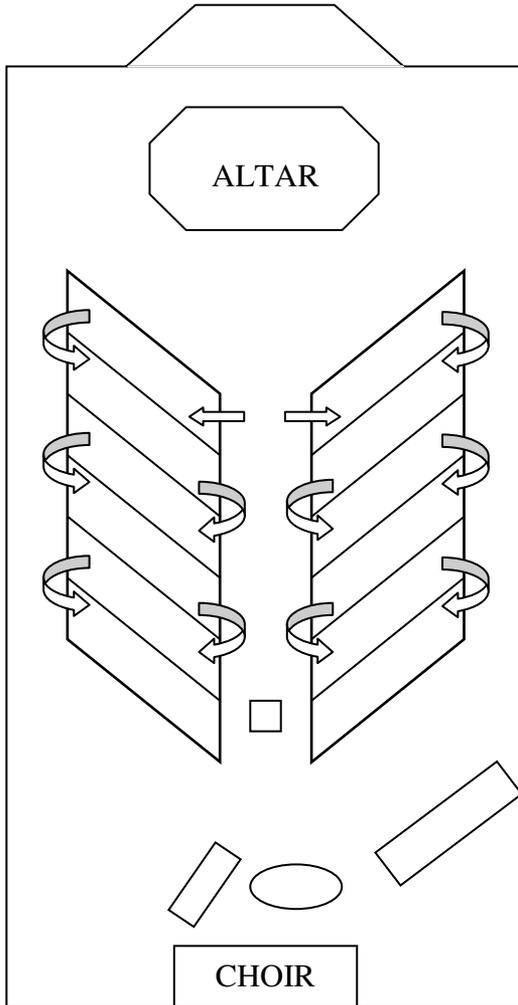


Diagram B

"CONTINUOUS" COMMUNION PROCEDURE

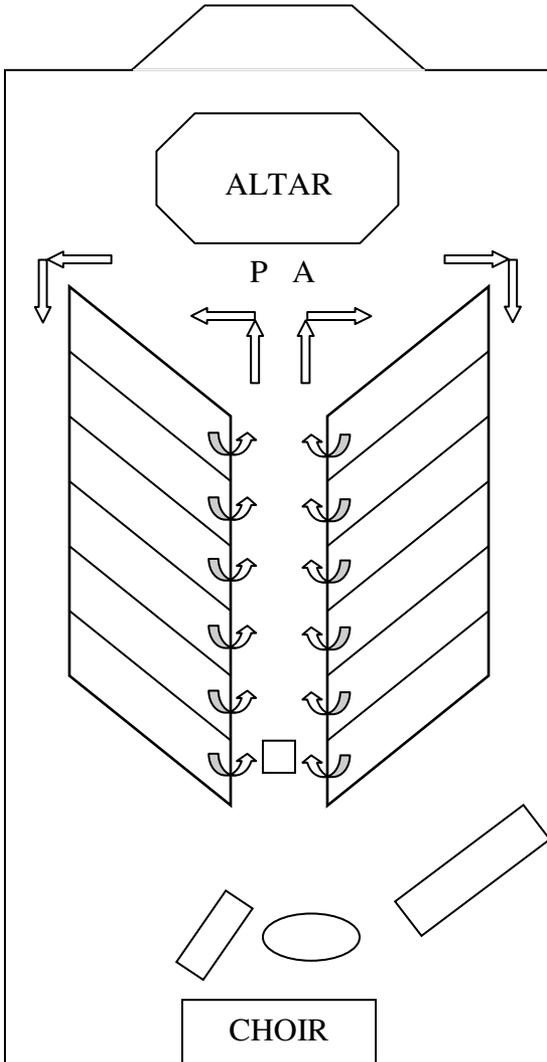


Diagram C

"TABLE" COMMUNION PROCEDURE

