

USHERS AND STEWARDS

Ezekiel 40:45-46 – “persons who keep charge of the temple” and “who keep charge of the altar”.

KNOW WHAT VISITORS ARE LOOKING FOR AND PROVIDE IT

- People are looking for **friendliness and warmth** in a church.
- They are looking for **integrity and meaning in worship**. They hope to experience God and to hear a word from God.
- The most important issue is having **a place where moral and spiritual issues are being taught to their children**.
- A better scenario, of course, is a church that **brings benefit to kids and their parents** (adult programmes).
- The church building. **For both the exterior and interior, cleanliness is crucial. Outdoor landscaping and paint make important first impressions.**
- The church image. The pastor’s visibility in local community activities.

Visitors determine the friendliness of our church by the number of people who talk with them!

Many conversations = friendly church.

Few or no conversations = unfriendly church.

Statistics of a rating scale for new visitors

- A smile of welcome – 10 points
 - A word of greeting – 10 points
 - Exchange of names – 100 points
 - Invitation to return – 200 points
 - Introduction to another member – 1,000 points
 - An invitation to meet the pastor – 2,000 points
- In 11 of 18 churches, less than 100 points were scored; in 5 churches less than 20.*

The critical time for making a friendly impression is not just at the beginning of the service but also the 10 minutes right after the last prayer is prayed or the last song is sung. Leaving is a group experience, since it happens together. This can be the loneliest moment of all if everyone else is greeting friends as the visitor walks up the aisle in a pocket of isolated silence. Here are a few other reasons we were told that the last ten minutes are so important to visitors:

- “It is the last thing I experienced and the most vivid memory I drove away with”.
- “It confirmed the experience I had had before and during the service”.

- “It told me a lot about the priorities of that church”.
- “When no one talked to me after the service, it made a mockery of the ‘friendship time’ during the service when we were supposed to greet the people next to us”.

THE WELCOME TO NEWCOMERS

The welcome that newcomers receive will have a great deal to do with whether they come back a second time. It is not just the sermon that is the message – the whole service is the message!

The contribution and input of the Ushers, the Worship Team, Prayer Warriors, Youth, Young Adults and Sunday school plays a tremendous role in the success of the services!

- The ushers are often the first official representative of Jesus Christ that are met by people visiting the house of God. They may even be the only individuals with whom the visitor has contact.
- **Ushers are there to give personal attention to each individual** and must therefore be prepared to accept people as they are, and not as they wish them to be.

Guests who leave our church should feel that they have had a meaningful connection with one or more people.

They have had a chance to tell a part of their story to someone who was genuinely interested, perhaps as Jesus would be. Therefore the ushers should do their task in the power of the Spirit, while glorifying God.

If we expect to see visitors return, it’s important to treat them like honoured guests.

Treat them the way you would want to be treated if you were feeling alone in the world, looking for some hope, some community, some love. The benefit is far greater than the time and effort you will expend.

- Pay particular attention to visitors, especially persons visiting for the first time. Let them always feel like guests of honour with: “a special place just for you”. Notice whether they have a church bulletin, visitor’s card, sermon notes, etc.
- **The welcome guests receive make them feel somebody is interested in them. Add a sense of worth.**
- Pay attention to where regular attendants sit. People will notice your thoughtfulness if you remember their seating habits and leave it open as you show others where to sit.

STRATEGICALLY PLACING USHERS

If we are serious about welcoming the guests, we have to place ushers strategically.

a. *Parking lot ushers*

- Meet your guests soon after they get out of their car. Pay special attention to visitors.
- If it's raining, parking ushers should have a large golf umbrella to hold over guests as they walk to the building.
- On reaching the front door, the parking lot ushers should "hand off" their guest to the lobby ushers.

b. *Lobby ushers*

- Problem with greeters are that their feet seem to be nailed to the floor, a smile glued to their face, and their vocabulary limited to "good morning".
- A lobby usher is someone who can move around to make guests feel comfortable.
 - *One guest family might encounter a lobby usher who escorts the mother to the children's department and explain the process of dropping off and picking up her kids.*
 - *Another might introduce the guest to someone in the church who lives in the same neighbourhood or might have a similar job.*
 - *Another usher encounter might be the invitation to meet after the service at the refreshment table to introduce the guest to the pastor.*

c. *Service ushers*

- These are people who are actually inside the auditorium. **If our auditorium is a bustle of activity before the service begins, it will add to a relaxed and energetic atmosphere. It will break any spirit of religion.**
- Service ushers are looking particularly for guest or people they don't recognize and taking the initiative to introduce themselves.
- If guests are seated by themselves, good social etiquette is to introduce someone from the church to the newcomer (a "social hand-off"). It is a great time to answer any questions guest might have and to a little honest bragging about the church.

d. *Coffee ushers*

- Time set aside for coffee can be one of the most effective – or destructive – ways to extend a welcome to guests.

- If guests come alone, they will probably not make it to the coffee table after the service and if they come and no one engages them in conversation, they won't stay long.
- **Coffee ushers hang out in the immediate vicinity and are on the lookout for newcomers standing alone.** Their task is to engage these guest in conversation and not leave them until they have handed them off to someone else in the area.

e. *Many ushers*

- Spread the ushering responsibilities among many people throughout the year. This allows more members to be involved in welcoming newcomers.
- **Experience has shown when members perform their ushering duty on their assigned days, they are increasingly friendly with guests even on the days they are off duty.**

PRIMARY ROLE OF USHERS

- Heartily greet all guests and members, to welcome them and make them feel relaxed and at home.
- The church bulletin and visitor's cards (connection cards) must be handed out to visitors as they enter the church and be retrieved at the beginning of the service.
- Ushers have the responsibility to maintain order throughout the whole service, before and after the service.
- Greet all people.
- Be friendly.
- Make sure all people and children feel at home.
- Start some chit-chat with them.
- Speak out the privilege to have them in the service.
- Introduce them to other people.
- Where necessary introduce them to the Pastor.
- After service, ask them if they enjoyed the service.
- Invite them to come again.
- Spent some time with them.

FURTHER GUIDELINES

- Fill the church from the front.
- Seat people near one another.
- Notice the number of empty seats in a pew and accompany the people there.
- Seat latecomers at the rear so as not to disturb the service.

MINISTRY RULES FOR USHERS

(1 Cor 14:40) But all things should be done with regard to decency and propriety and in an orderly fashion.

- Make sure you have everything you need when you get to your post (pens, visitor's cards, and church bulletin) to fulfil your ministry and that everything is in place and tidy.
- Avoid crowding during services.
- Greet each person attending the service in a friendly manner and specifically welcome visitors.
- The usher needn't introduce himself to visitors unless they do first. A self-assured, friendly greeting like *"You are most welcome here with us, we trust your visit will be a blessed experience"* is sufficient
- Comfortably communicate with people.
- Show them to their seats when the church starts to fill up.
 - When accompanying people, lead at a comfortable pace, otherwise the people might "vanish".
 - Once the intended seats are reached the usher forms a 'gate' by placing the back of his hand against the back support of the chair or pew in front. **IT IS AN UNPARDONABLE ERROR FOR A USHER TO DIRECT PEOPLE TO SEATING BY MERELY POINTING TO IT.**
 - When people are to be seated (especially strangers), the usher should recommend the best seating. He must never ask "Where would you like to sit?" for this may land him in a predicament.
 - The usher should encourage people to sit near the front of the church as it is good policy **to fill the church from the front**, but the person who insists to sit at the back should rather be allowed to do so, than run the risk of him leaving the building.
- **The ushers are the first point of contact a visitor has with the church and should embody the spirit of the church by extending a warm, friendly greeting to every visitor, showing sincere interest in their comfort.**
- **The usher should under no circumstance leave his position.** Depending on the size of the assembly and the building, there should be two ushers at each entrance.
- **It should be noted that an usher's duties only end when the church building is totally vacated.** During the benediction, all ushers

again assume their positions at the rear of the church.

- **Ushers must be placed at strategic points throughout the entire service.** E.g. near the entrance of the Mother's room, to give direction to the Sunday School etc.
- **Larger churches can make use of a "moving" usher** who is not allotted to a specific section. He acts as a substitute when the other ushers are attending to people.
- **At least one usher should be at the foyer during the course of the service as well as afterwards.**
- **Other exits should be manned by ushers who should greet each person, bidding them farewell.**
- After church, introduce new arrivals into the "body of saints" in an orderly manner and with an attitude of love and joy.
- When a person, whether visitor or member, leaves the church during the course of a service, the usher should escort the person outside without asking why the person is leaving; rather just wish him well with the words: *"I am very sorry you have to leave the service so early today"*. Hopefully the person will then provide the reason on his own account, which should later be related to the Pastor. (Use your own discretion in this regard e.g. is the service longer than usual, etc. In which case follow-up is unnecessary).
- A person, who leaves the building and returns again, should be encouraged to sit at the back, especially whilst the Pastor is busy preaching. (Use your discretion).

SECURITY

- One usher must be at the entrance of the church throughout the whole service.
- Should the usher see or experience anything suspicious before, during or after the service Marius must immediately be alerted.
- The middle gate must be closed 10 – 15 minutes after the service / event has started.
- Remember to open the gate once the service is finished.
- Ushers must also assist with security after the service in the play area of the children to ensure the safety of toddlers and younger children.
- Notify the pastor or Marius when there are still children in the play area and you are the last usher to be leaving.

- Even when off duty, always be alert for anything that is out of place and alert Marius.

AFTER SERVICES AND / OR FELLOWSHIP

- Help close and lock all doors where applicable
- Switch off all lights.
- Switch off the air conditioner.
- Put the milk back in the fridge and close all the lids of the coffee, tea, sugar, rusks.
- Switch off the urn and the computer.
- Also check that all stoves are switched off.
- Place all the tables and chairs back in order.
- Pick up all papers that are laying around and make sure the place is tidy.
- Close all windows.
- Lock all doors and gates.

PROTOCOL FOR VISITING PASTORS

1. One person must be allocated to serve the guest Pastor.
2. Meet him / her / them at the car.
3. Offer to help them carry their briefcases or anything else they are bringing to the meeting.
4. Help them settle in the office where they can become comfortable.
5. Immediately show them where the bathrooms are, the auditorium where they will be ministering and ask how you can assist them.
6. Give them a bottle of water and ask them if they would like some coffee or tea.
7. Be the Pastor's shadow for his / her / their time at the church and let them know they must inform you if they need anything.
8. Pastor Tania will confirm further arrangements with the ushers.

PERSONAL REQUIREMENTS: QUALIFICATIONS

- Must be saved and live an exemplary life.
- Must have a strong faith.
- Must be able to control their tongue.
- Speak clearly and confidently.
- Must be faithful in that which is least.
- Must pray regularly.
- Must allow the Holy Spirit to lead them.
- Must be friendly.

PERSONAL REQUIREMENTS: APPEARANCE

Ushers should pay meticulous attention to their personal appearance because they are the first point of contact with visitors and their appearance will make a lasting impression. REMEMBER you are the "showpiece" of the assembly.

- Personal neatness.
- Deodorant.
- Mouthwash.
- Tidy hair.
- Clean-shaven.
- Clothes ironed.
- Shoes polished, tidy.
- Clean shirt, tie, blouse etc.
- Wash your hands thoroughly before and after.

PERSONAL REQUIREMENTS: ATTITUDE

- Have pride in their ministry.
- Be optimistic about their church.
- Communicate easily.
- Have a friendly appearance to all people.
- Not be judgmental towards others.
- Prayerful.
- Helpful.
- Excitement towards all people and the church.
- Not familiar with guests.
- Take ownership – clean when dirty, fix when broken.

DUTIES OF HEAD USHER

The head usher is responsible for the efficient organising and functioning of the panel of ushers and for the training of new ushers.

- **Identify three different teams, so they can rotate from one week to the next.** With three teams, the schedule could be **two weeks on, then three weeks off.**
- Each usher should be allotted a specific section in the church, with particular reference to seating – know your block and know your people. Distinguish between open seats and a seat where some has just left for a moment.
- Arrange for the distribution of bulletins, visitor's cards, pens etc. to the ushers.
- **TEACH THE USHERS FIRST AND FOREMOST THAT THEY ARE instruments to prepare the way of the Lord to work in the hearts of people.**
- See to it that all ushers know and understand their function and act accordingly.
- All visitor's cards must be handed over to the Head Steward who will hand it in with the collection.

THE STEWARD'S ROLE

Taking up an offering has been part of the worship service since the time of Paul (1Cor. 16:1-2) and is part of the steward's ministry.

- The Head Steward arranges how this will be carried out, and distributes the collection plates.
- The time and manner in which the offering is received, is left to the discretion of the Pastor.
- When Pastor says “we are going to take up the offering”
 - the stewards must immediately stand up and walk to the front,
 - take in their position at their allotted isle, face the congregation and wait for the prayer of blessing to be done before starting to take up the offering.
- Stewards should be ready to receive the offering at all times and should not become distracted.
- Money must ALWAYS be counted by two people. Both must sign the receipt book.
- The Head Steward hands the offering over to the treasurer once it has been counted and made up.

SERVING OF COMMUNION

- The communion table is being set up by the Kitchen Ushers.
- When Pastor mentions that communion is going to be served, then the ushers get up immediately and take their positions next to the table.
- She will hand over the “wine”/grape juice first and after everyone has been served, the bread.
- Every usher go then to their designated isle. One usher give the “wine”/bread for the first person in the first pew and on the other side of the pew, another usher takes it from the last person and give it again to the first person in the next pew.
- All the ushers wait at the back until all people have been served. Then they all walk to the front, put everything back on the table and go stand next to the table to be served by Pastor.
- Thereafter two or three ushers takes up all the bowls that has been handed out during communion. Baskets are available for it. Place the baskets then on the front pew.

RESPONSIBILITIES OF THE KITCHEN USHERS IN THE AUDITORIUM

1. Water at the pulpit for the preacher.
2. Tissues and anointing oil.
3. Neat and tidy around the pulpit.
4. The information table neat and tidy before and after the services.

5. Don't bother the pastor prior to services with silly requests. She needs to focus on service.
6. Should people need prayer or counselling refer them to an altar worker.

IN THE FELLOWSHIP HALL

1. Urn must be filled with water and switched on.
2. Use initiative with air-conditioning.
3. Coffee, tea and sugar holders must be filled and place the long spoons in appropriate holders.
4. Milk must be set out for the guests.
5. **Make sure music is on and at a comfortable speaking level.**
6. As the guests finish their coffee and refreshments take the dirty dishes to the kitchen to be washed.
7. When someone spill, help immediately to clean up in order to avoid embarrassment.

TOILETS

1. Make sure the bathrooms are clean and tidy.
2. Hang clean towels in bathrooms and arrange each week who will wash the dirty towels.
3. Make sure there is soap and cream.
4. Make sure there is enough toilet paper in each toilet.

ASSISTANCE ASSIGNED TO PASTOR TANIA AND MARIUS

1. When refreshments are served take out a small plate for Pastor Tania, Marius and Tatiana before the rest of the people arrive and hand it over with the coffee on their arrival in the fellowship hall.
2. Ask Pastor Tania and Marius when they enter the fellowship hall if they can be served with coffee so that they can focus on the guests.
3. When Pastor Tania is having a serious conversation with guests and Tatiana is distracting her, assist by keeping Tatiana busy until you see Pastor Tania is free again to give Tatiana the appropriate attention.

IMPORTANCE OF THE FIRST-YEAR MEMBERS

Of all the people who drop out of church, 82 percent leave in the first year! The first twelve months are critical in the life of new members if you hope to see them around beyond that first year.

During the first six months new members are asking:

- **Can I make friends in this church?** New members remained active in their church made an average of seven friends in their first year.
- **Is there a place I can fit in?** When newcomers feel that there are a lot of people “like me” and groups where they might fit, they are likely to stay in the church. **Common age, marital status, family status, special needs, interests, concerns all help newcomers feel comfortable in their new surroundings.**
- **Does this church really want me?** After the warm words of welcome, new members need to be regularly invited to participate in the ministries and activities of the church.

If the answer is yes, they stay around, at least for a second six months. But they're still asking questions:

- **Are my new friends as good as my old ones?** They are unconsciously assessing the value and depth of their new friends in the church.
- **Does the group meet my needs?** They may have found a young singles' group, a senior adult group or a Sunday school class of people like them. But seven to twelve months later, they're asking whether the benefit of their involvement is worth their cost in time, inconvenience, and social discomfort in the new setting.
- **Is my contribution important?** The question is now not so much one of involvement but of significance. Am I doing busywork or kingdom work? “I wanted to have an impact on people's lives,” one dropout told us, “but all they asked me to do was set up chairs for the church dinner.”

ALWAYS REMEMBER

The critical time for making a friendly impression is the ten minutes right after the last prayer is prayed or the last song is sung. Leaving is a group experience, since it happens together. This can be the loneliest moment of all if everyone else is greeting friends as the visitor walks up the aisle in a pocket of isolated silence. Here are a few other reasons we were told that the last ten minutes are so important to visitors:

- “It is the last thing I experienced and the most vivid memory I drove away with”.
- “It confirmed the experience I had had before and during the service”.
- “It told me a lot about the priorities of that church”.

MOVING TO THE NEXT STEP

What we can do about it

1. **Make a point to introduce your new members to those in the church with whom they have things in common** –. (for example: age, gender, marital status, number and age of children, special interests, particular concerns, hobbies, careers and other defining characteristics)
2. Identify all the groups and classes in your church in which the new member might feel socially comfortable.
3. **Contact the group leader or teacher and provide him or her with the name, contact, and other related information on the newcomer. Ask the leader to initiate a contact and invitation to the new member during the next few weeks.** Encourage the leaders you contact to go out of their way to introduce themselves to the new person or family, befriend them, in and introduce them to the others in the church.
4. **Encourage group and class leaders to nurture relationships among participants to a deeper level throughout the year. Discussion of curriculum is important but does not always connect people at a deeper level.** Rick Warren gives his list of deeper needs that people desire:
 - **Support:** Everyone wants to know they're not alone.
 - **Stability:** People are looking for a foundation to build their life on.
 - **Self-Expression:** People want an opportunity to express their uniqueness.
 - **Significance:** We all want to know that our life matters.
5. Regularly start new groups and classes, so that new members can participate. Many groups stop growing after several years since the relationships become so strong that it's hard for a newcomer to break in.

Bibliography:

Stewards and Ushers – Compiled by Pastor Tienie Berrangé / What every Pastor should know – Gary L. McIntosh and Charles Arn