

CONTENTS

Introduction	1
1 The Ministry of Ushering	5
2 The Usher's Importance in the Total Church Program	13
3 What Does an Usher Need to Know about the Church?	21
4 The Organization of the Ushers	27
5 The Qualities of a Good Usher	33
6 The Duties of the Usher: Greeting and Seating	47
7 The Duties of the Usher: Specialized Functions	61

THE MINISTRY OF USHERING

Four great ministries comprise the work of the church: preaching, teaching, music and ushering. Each one is vital to the spiritual success of the church, for without any one of them the total ministry will suffer.

First and foremost, the church usher is a servant. Too, he is one who exercises his spiritual gift, for the ministry of ushering surely must be included in the gift of helps referred to by the Apostle Paul in his letter to the Corinthians:

And God hath set some in the church, first apostles, secondarily prophets, thirdly teachers, after that miracles, then gifts of healings, helps, governments, diversities of tongues (1 Corinthians 12:28).

In his role as a servant, the usher is reminded: “by love serve one another” (Galatians 5:13). “If any man serve me, him will my Father honour” (John 12:26).

The faithful church usher finds his motto in Colossians 3:23, 24: “And whatsoever ye do, do it heartily, as to the Lord, and not

unto men; Knowing that of the Lord ye shall receive the reward of the inheritance: for ye serve the Lord Christ.” The usher should constantly remind himself: “*I serve the Lord Christ.*” That will add a whole new dimension to his service.

Like all true believers who remain steadfast in their service for the Lord, the usher stands to hear those glorious words some day: “Well done, thou good and faithful servant: thou has been faithful over a few things, I will make thee ruler over many things: enter thou into the joy of thy lord” (Matthew 25:21).

This idea of service is kept constantly before the ushers and the congregation of the Lombard Bible Church. Pastor Clarence E. Hager frequently introduces the offering with these remarks: “As the ushers come forward, I want to remind you that as they serve us, they are serving the Lord.”

Pastor Howard C. Stein of the Fox Valley Bible Church echoed the view of others: “The ministry of ushering creates an atmosphere; it sets a tempo for the service to follow. It is a part of the worship service.”

Most pastors agree that church ushering itself is an act of worship. The usher is responsible for maintaining an atmosphere of reverence and order before, during and after the service. His attitude is influenced greatly by such scriptural admonitions as these:

But the LORD is in his holy temple: let all the earth keep silence before him. (Habakkuk 2:20)

God is greatly to be feared in the assembly of the saints, and to be had in reverence of all them that are about him. (Psalm 89:7)

As host for God Himself, the church usher should help people feel comfortable and at home. “Come unto me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest” (Matthew 11:28).

In the words of Pastor Donald Wiggins, Westmont Alliance Church, “An usher can serve as a representative for Christ, either drawing people to Him or driving them away.”

Dean Sonntag, head usher at the Westmont church, considers his role a very important function. “In many cases,” he said, “the first impressions visitors to the church experience are those of the ushers.”

Ushering, in the Old Testament, is perhaps best exemplified by Psalm 84:10, “I had rather be a *doorkeeper* [italics added] in the house of my God, than to dwell in the tents of wickedness.”

In the New Testament, it seems clear that Jesus often used His disciples as ushers:

And he commanded the multitude to sit down on the ground. And he took the seven loaves and the fishes, and gave thanks, and brake them, and gave to his disciples, and the disciples to the multitude. And they did all eat, and were filled: and they took up of the broken meat that was left seven baskets full (Mathew 15:35-37).

Pastor Ronald B. Gifford of the Blanchard Road Alliance Church declared that “a smooth service happens only when ushers are faithful. Their greeting of people—especially guests—is seriously undervalued.”

His head usher, Ray Munsterman, emphasized one of the prime functions of the usher: "Visitors should be welcomed warmly and made to feel at home."

Ed J. Mark, South Holland Alliance Church, stressed the point that church ushers "should have pride in their work and perform their duties as unto the Lord."

Other scriptural injunctions seem to apply directly to the church usher, or to the ministry of ushering itself. "Let all things be done decently and in order" (1 Corinthians 14:40).

It is largely up to the church usher to see that this command is obeyed.

"Ye are the salt of the earth" (Matthew 5:13). To a great extent, the usher is responsible for the "flavor" of a service.

"Let your speech be alway with grace, seasoned with salt" (Colossians 4:6). Self-control in use of the tongue is especially important to the church usher, for he often is the only contact a person may have with the church.

"Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father which is in heaven" (Matthew 5:16). As the first official representative of Jesus Christ seen by most visitors, the usher's light must burn brightly, which of course means that the fruit of the Spirit must be very evident in his life.

But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, longsuffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, meekness, temperance: against such there is no law. (Galatians 5:22-23)

Christ's *love* must radiate in and through the usher. Then it will be obvious to member and visitor alike that the love of God is alive and well in the church usher who serves Him.

Since the scriptural promise is true, "in thy presence is fulness of joy" (Psalm 16:11), the effective church usher should show forth that *joy* in the performance of his duties. He has the priceless privilege of setting the tone for the service.

Part of that "tone" is a sense of *peace* that should pervade the atmosphere, and the Spirit-filled and Spirit-led-usher—who has yielded himself to the Holy Spirit anew as he begins his duties—is one who manifests that peace in his own spirit and manner.

When overflow crowds or unexpected disturbances make the usher's job more demanding, it is then that *long-suffering*—or patience—becomes a most desirable trait.

Gentleness is a virtue that makes strong men even stronger. In every situation, the Spirit-filled usher responds by being gentle, no matter what the provocation might be.

A good man, in scriptural terms, is one who obviously and demonstrably reflects honor and glory to his Lord. Surely that trait of *goodness* should characterize the church usher. In reality, that goodness is the righteousness of God imparted to the believer.

Meekness—"power under control," as Dr. Warren Wiersbe once defined it—denotes a humble spirit that befits the servant role of the usher. It reminds the usher that he is there to serve, not to boss.

Faith—or *faithfulness*, as the Living Bible translates the word—refers to one of the most important qualities any servant

of God possesses. Without dependability, the church usher is lacking a vital characteristic.

Self-control is perhaps best described in Proverbs 16:32: “He that is slow to anger is better than the mighty; and he that ruleth his spirit than he that taketh a city.” By the very nature of his position, the usher has little problem being “slow to anger,” but it is not always easy to rule one’s spirit when circumstances dictate otherwise.

The church usher has a unique opportunity to display the grace of Christ by his attitude and the atmosphere he creates.

“Ushering sets a tone—hopefully one of friendliness, concern, helpfulness—for visitors,” observed David E. Brandon, Fox Valley Bible Church.

David Riemenschneider, Bloomingdale Alliance Church, pointed out that church ushering done right is an evidence of a well-organized church, and certainly the visitor has a right to expect that when he appears for worship.

Rev. Stanley J. Lemon, South Holland Alliance Church, reinforced this view: “The initial impression of visitors is communicated through the greeting given by the ushers.”

Other Scriptures point forcefully to the type of servanthood that belongs to the church usher. “Do good unto all men, especially unto them who are of the household of faith” (Galatians 6:10). “Study to shew thyself approved unto God, a workman that needeth not to be ashamed” (2 Timothy 2:15).

In the matter of taking his work—not himself—seriously, the usher has the example of Jesus in Matthew 11:29: “learn of me; for I am meek and lowly in heart.”

In his very helpful *The Usher’s Manual*, Leslie Parrott suggests an usher’s prayer that might well be uttered just prior to his servant’s role at each service:

May I, dear Lord, in church today, fulfill my assignment in a Christ-like way. Make me efficient in what I do, effective in what I say, understanding by the way I feel about people, and helpful in the attitudes I have toward them.

Make me a coworker with the pastor, the church musicians, the teachers, and most of all, Lord, with Thee.

Save me from hurtful words and harmful deeds. Make people glad they came to our church today because the Holy Spirit ministered to their needs through the sermon and prayer of the pastor, through the music of the organist and singers, through the explanations of understanding teachers, and through the ministry of ushers like me.

In Christ’s Name. Amen.¹

To add even greater significance to the role of usher, Parrott also recommends a special usher’s commission, to be read publicly to the church ushers at the beginning of their term of service each year:

At the beginning of another year, the church gives you this fresh commission, new and yet old. Allow the hospitality of this church to become incarnate in you.

Wrap every word and clothe every action in the spirit of human kindness. May your kind of Christianity help people to let down their guards, open their hearts and relax their

minds for the worship of God and direction of His Holy Spirit.

Be understanding with the difficult person. Exercise compassion with all kinds of people. Learn to be efficient, but not at the expense of kindness. And accept from the pastor and congregation this assignment which ranks in importance with the other ministries of this church.

May your highest good be the kindness of human understanding, your greatest virtue the stability of a man in Christ, and your most effective tool the indwelling presence of the Holy Spirit who is the Spirit of Christ.²

Summary

1. There are four great church ministries: preaching, teaching, music and ushering.
2. The church usher is a *servant*, exercising the gift of *helps*.
3. Church ushering itself is an act of worship.
4. As *salt* and *light*, the usher should demonstrate the fruit of the Spirit.
5. The church usher should take his work—never himself—seriously.

Notes

1. Leslie Parrott, *The Usher's Manual*. Grand Rapids: Zondervan Publishing House, 1970, p. 22.
2. *Ibid.*