

Saint Philip's Episcopal Church

Customary for Ushers

This customary establishes a basic framework and guide for people who serve as ushers at St. Philips worship and special occasions services. Duties assigned to ushers are intended to ensure the service runs smoothly and consistently.

Worship Service Information

- All ushers should be in place no later than 30 minutes prior to the start of worship services. Listed below are the worship services and special events with the number of ushers that are normally required.
 - 8AM worship service 4 ushers
 - 10AM worship service 4 ushers
 - 5PM Celtic service 1 usher
 - Summer service (Oak Island) 0 ushers
 - Funeral Service 2-4 ushers
 - Weddings 2-4 ushers
 - Chapel of the Cross 1 usher
 - Special worship services & events As needed

Worship Services in the Main Church Sanctuary

Arrive 30 minutes prior to the service.

Head Usher: The "Head Usher" is designated by an asterisk (*) on the monthly schedule and will perform the following duties:

- Meet with the assigned ushers and ensure they have their name badge and usher badge displayed on their clothing. The Head Usher will provide each usher with their assignment for that service. These assignments include, but may not be limited to:
 - Wheelchairs are located in the Moore Street Narthex and in the Bell Tower Narthex Usher Closet to assist those from the handicap parking area into the sanctuary.
 - One side of the Moore Street sidewalk is handicap accessible.
 - The Bell Tower handicap ramp leads to the portico and/or side door.
 - Two ushers are assigned to hand out bulletins, one at each narthex entrance. The other two ushers (one at each narthex) should be positioned with a clear line of sight to the handicap parking area, to assist as needed.

Before the Service Begins

- Thirty minutes before worship services begin:
- Open the Narthex doors (exterior) to allow for the smooth flow of parishioners into the Sanctuary. In case of inclement weather, keep the Narthex doors closed and open them as parishioners arrive.
- Ushers will ensure Nave doors are closed to prevent noise from entering the sanctuary prior to the start of the worship service.
- Ushers will ensure wheelchairs are available in each narthex before parishioners start arriving. One usher at each entrance is assigned by the Head Usher to assist parishioners using these wheelchairs to gain entrance to the church. Wheelchairs may be brought through either of the narthex entrances. Parishioners in wheelchairs using the Bell Tower Narthex for entrance shall be seated in the left side (Gospel) side seating adjacent to the acolyte seating or next to the rocking chair located in the last row in the rear of the Sanctuary. Parishioners in wheelchairs using the Moore Street Narthex for entrance shall be seated on the right side (Choir side) outside pew seats. In both cases, this allows better access to outside doors and prevents clogging the center isle during the recession from the altar.
- Ushers will locate at each Narthex entrance to warmly greet parishioners as they enter. Pass out worship bulletins.
- Assist parishioners with food donations and place items in the food basket/wagons. Remove items from plastic or paper bags.
- Assist latecomers by warmly greeting them and assist finding a seat. If the Sanctuary is crowded, invite late arrivals to sit in the balcony.

No Parking and Handicap Cones

- For all church services, ushers are responsible for putting out and storing the handicap and no parking cones along Dry Street. On Sundays, the 8:00 AM service ushers will put the cones out and the 10:00 AM service ushers will return them to Usher Closet. The Usher Closet is located in the Bell Tower Annex next to the stairs leading to the second floor.
- **Handicap Cones:** The handicap marked cones are to be placed along the entire length of Dry Street, on the church side. The cones should be placed where the sidewalk and gravel meet. Do not place them in gravel parking spots, otherwise cars cannot park properly, and to avoid driving over the cones. The cones should extend from the post office entrance to the sign near the Dry/Moore Street intersection.
- **No Parking Cones:** The "No Parking" cones should be placed along the entire length of the Chapel Annex, on Dry Street. The cones should extend from the

Dry/Moore Street intersection to the side entrance walkway. This will ensure all vehicles are able to travel down Dry Street without any hindrances.

During The Worship Service

- Electronic entrance doors at both Narthexs are controlled as follows:
 - Doors are unlocked thirty minutes prior to the 08:00 AM service and remain locked until 08:15, when they lock again. The doors unlock at 08:45. The Moore Street Annex Door will lock again at 09:15 and remain locked until 09:30. The Bell Tower Annex doors remain unlocked. Both annex doors lock again at 10:15 and remain locked until 10:45. Both doors remain unlocked until 11:15 and then lock again.
 - The Head Usher will ensure an usher is monitoring the Moore Street Narthex door at all times when the door is unlocked. When that door is locked, the assigned usher will turn the window sign over directing late arriving parishioners to the Bell Tower Narthex entrance door.
 - The Vestry Person of the Day (VPOD) is responsible for monitoring the Bell Tower doors after the 8 AM service begins and until 09:30 AM when the 10:00 AM service ushers arrive. The VPOD again assumes responsibility for monitoring the Bell Tower Annex doors when the 10:00 service begins and remains there to monitor the doors until 11:00 AM or when the 10:00 AM service ends. The head usher should ensure the VPOD is present before the service starts. If the VPOD is not present, this responsibility falls to the Head Usher.
 - The Head Usher will complete the attendance count card and place it with the bread elements to be carried forward to the altar. The Head Usher may request ushers to assist taking attendance.
 - The Head Usher will review the list of parishioners who are first responders to assist during a medical or security issue. The list of these first responders is kept on the podium at each Narthex entrance. The Head Usher shall make a mental note where the first responders are sitting during the worship service.
 - All Ushers will remain vigilant for parishioners arriving late after the service begins. Late arrivals may only gain entrance through the Bell Tower Narthex doors.
 - All ushers will remain vigilant for any medical or security issue and report any situation immediately to the Head Usher.
 - At the Peace, one usher will carry a collection plate to each narthex to check the balcony collection boxes for parishioner donations. This collection should be completed before the elements are carried to the altar.

Food Basket Procedures:

The “Men On a Mission” ministry began a food initiative starting in October 2024. Food wagons/baskets will be placed in both narthexes and kept there indefinitely so that parishioners can donate food items all throughout the year. Recommendations of food and supplies needed by the local food banks will be posted in both narthexes near the wagons/baskets.

Head Ushers: Once the service has begun, start preparing the wicker food basket for the offertory. The food basket will be raised and blessed; this will require you to hand select a few lighter weight items (i.e. cereal, paper products, etc.) and remove heavier items (canned goods, glass jars, etc.). It is NOT necessary to fill the basket completely because it is representative of the entire food gift/donation. Do NOT make the basket heavy to lift. Once the food basket has been prepared, bring it into the sanctuary and place it in the rear of the sanctuary until it is carried forward.

Offertory: Before the Collection

- **8:00AM:** At the signal from the Priest for Deacon, two ushers will proceed to the altar. Concurrently two ushers will proceed down the side aisles and stop at the first row. The two ushers approaching the altar will carry the wine and bread+count card (wine on left and bread/count card on right). The ushers will hand the elements to the vergier or EM and receive the collection plates. Once the ushers have received the offertory plates, both will bow and proceed to pass the plates across the pews.
- **10:00AM:** At the signal from the Celebrant, four ushers, in a 2x2 configuration, will proceed to the altar. One usher will carry the wine and the second usher will carry the bread plus count card (wine on left and bread/count card on right). Once the ushers reach the altar, hand the elements to the vergier or Eucharistic Minister (EM). The trailing ushers should move the right and left of the usher in front of them, respectively. Standing at the altar rail, four across, ushers will receive the collection plates from the Vergier or Crucifer. Once the ushers have received the offertory plates, all four ushers will bow. Two ushers will walk down the center aisle and the other two ushers down the side aisles to pass the plates to each row alternately.
- As soon as announcements begin, the Head Usher will direct one of the ushers to both Narthex entrances to collect offerings from the balcony offering drop boxes, located at the bottom of the balcony stairways. These offerings will be combined with the sanctuary collection, prior to the Doxology.
- **5PM Celtic Service:** No formal collection taken.

Offertory: After the Collection

- In the back of the Sanctuary, combine the collection from the four plates into one or two plates. If two plates are used, stack them on top of one another. Only one usher will carry the offertory forward. The second usher will carry the wicker food basket forward.
- **8:00AM and 10:00AM:** At the signal from the clergy, two ushers, one with the offertory and one with the food basket will proceed towards the front of the altar. Once both ushers reach the altar, the food basket is handed to the Verger (or crucifer) and the offertory is handed to the clergy. The offertory and food basket will then be raised to be blessed by the celebrant. The Head Usher will be one of the ushers taking the collection and food basket to the altar. While the Doxology is being prayed or sung, the Head Usher will place the altar rail in position for communion and move the center cushion to the middle area of the altar kneeling position. The Head Usher may ask the assisting usher to move the kneeling cushion while he or she is attaching the altar rail. Once the Doxology is over, bow and return to the back via the center aisle

Communion Procedures

8:00 AM Service:

- Just prior to the communion service beginning, the ushers will insure the kneave doors to the Sanctuary are opened for parishioners coming down from the balcony to receive communion.
- Three ushers will proceed down the center aisle (one proceeding and two trailing side by side). The Head Usher will not be one of these three ushers.
- The Head Usher will immediately release parishioners from the acolyte seating area and direct them to move to the center aisle for communion.
- The lead usher will move to either the left or the right side of the front pews and prepare to direct parishioners to the altar rail for communion, filling the rail from left to right.
- The remaining two ushers will act as herders and on an alternative basis release parishioners from the pews, front to back, to form a single line up the center aisle.
- The Head Usher will have previously identified what parishioners need to have communion brought to them in their pews and will ensure he or she knows where these parishioners are seated.

- The Head Usher will be the last usher to receive communion. He or she will have the responsibility for notifying the Priest/Deacon if there are parishioners requiring communion in place at their pews/seats. The Head Usher will immediately take the center rail down and remove the cushion from the center kneeling position on the altar. Once this is done, the Head Usher will escort the Priest/Deacon to those needing communion in the pews/seats.

10:00 AM Service:

- Just prior to the communion service beginning, the ushers will insure the kneave doors to the Sanctuary are opened for parishioners coming down from the balcony to receive communion.
- Two ushers proceed down the center aisle and stop on the altar side of the front row of pews and will act as Gate Keepers.
- One usher will immediately release parishioners from the acolyte seating area and direct them to move to the center aisle for communion.
- Two ushers will act as Herders and will initially let parishioners from the acolyte section and from the balcony fill two rows down the center aisle preparing to receive communion.
- The usher acting as a Gate Keeper nearest the choir will move over next to the choir and prepare to release the choir to the altar for communion. Once the serving Deacon or Priest is finished serving communion to the EMs and acolytes, he or she will give a head nod or indicate to the usher next to the choir to release the choir to the communion rail for communion. The communion rail for the choir will be filled from left to right.
- Once the choir is finished receiving communion and has completely cleared the altar rail section, the two Gate Keepers will direct parishioners from both lines to fill the altar rails inside out (parishioners at the altar will receive communion from the center position first and then leave the altar returning down the outside aisles, allowing each Gate Keeper to backfill the altar rail as they leave). This allows two serving clergy to provide communion on both sides of the altar rail simultaneously.
- Two ushers will act as Herders and will release parishioners from the pews, front to back, to fill both lines leading to the altar.
- The Head Usher will be the last usher to receive communion. He or she will have the responsibility for notifying the Priest/Deacon if there are parishioners requiring communion in place at their pews/seats. The Head Usher will immediately take the center rail down and remove the cushion from the center kneeling position on the

altar. Once this is done, the Head Usher will escort the Priest/Deacon to those needing communion in the pews/seats.

End of Worship Service Procedures

- Open Nave and Narthex doors, weather permitting, during the closing hymn.
- During the final hymn, move wheelchair assisted parishioners toward the respective exit, out the narthex doors, and into their vehicle.
- Ushers are encouraged to greet parishioners leaving the Sanctuary when a Priest or Deacon may be needed elsewhere.
- Walk the pews and seats (main Sanctuary and balcony) to collect all remaining bulletins and trash. Arrange hymnal and prayer books in the correct order (prayer books in center and hymnals on outside, book spines should be on the left side). Balcony hymnals and prayer books should be stored under the pews.
- Return any left/lost items (glasses, purses, etc.) to the parish administrator (Lorraine Beamer) or clergy.
- Head Ushers will check the balcony offertory boxes after the service. If there are any balcony offerings, immediately give them to the Vestry Person of the Day (VPOD). If the VPOD cannot be located, then seek another vestry member or person counting the offering.
- Pick up and return the Handicap and No Parking cones (after the 10:00AM service only) to the Usher closet.
- The Head Usher will make sure the lit prayer candles located in the rear of the Sanctuary are extinguished .
- Make sure all sanctuary Nave doors (interior) and narthex doors (exterior) are closed and locked before leaving the church. Turn all door signs over to their original position. Refer to the "Security" section of this Customary. The sexton will ensure the church is secure after all clergy, staff, and parishioners exit the church after the service ends.

Celtic Services in the Sanctuary - 5:00PM Saturday. One usher is required for this new worship service. It is prayerful in nature with passive offertory and communion procedures. Ushers are NOT required to assist during communion or the offertory.

- Usher responsibilities are as follows:

- Arrive 30 minutes prior to the service.
- Greet arriving parishioners at the Bell Tower narthex doors. The Moore Street narthex doors are not used for entrance to the Celtic service and should remain locked at all times.
- Handout worship bulletins
- Once the service has begun, take attendance using the count card. At the end of the service hand the count card to the celebrant.
- Monitor the Bell Tower narthex doors during the entire service. An usher should sit in a chair near the nave doors with a clear line of sight to the Bell Tower doors.
- Open the door for any late arriving parishioners.
- Collect bulletins at the end of the service and shut the nave and narthex doors after everyone has departed.
- Assist the celebrant/deacon as needed or requested.

Services in the Chapel of the Cross. Services held in the Chapel of the Cross can include worship services, funerals, weddings, and holy day services. Most of the usher customary procedures remain the same. Only one or two ushers are needed with duties are as follows:

- Warmly greet worshippers at the entrance and hand them bulletin.
- The doors between the Chapel Narthex and the Nave should remain closed whenever possible to maintain quiet and temperature control.
- The collection plates are in the back of the Nave and should be brought to the altar by ushers at the appropriate times during the service.
- During the offertory collection, one usher should pass the plate on each side.
- At communion, one usher should be on either side of the center aisle to release rows to receive communion.

Wednesday Noon Service in the Chapel of the Cross (COC)

One usher is required for the COC noon service.

- Arrive by 11:20AM
- Pick up the readings from the church office or ensure the celebrant will bring them.

- If docents have been in the COC that morning, put away any items.
- Turn interior lights and fans on (switches are located on the back wall)
- Turn on light over altar (switch located to the right of the altar)
- If in place, lift and remove the center altar rail and cushion.
- Pull out worship bulletins from the top cabinet drawer in the narthex.
- Open inner and outer doors
- Stand and greet parishioners in the narthex or outside (weather permitting). Hand each person a bulletin and sheet w/readings.
- Usually, the celebrant will stand outside to greet parishioners (weather permitting).
- When the service begins, follow the priest inside, closing the outer and inner doors.
- Sit in the back and greet any late comers.
- Use a count card to take a head count. Following the service, give the count card to the celebrant or take it to the church office. Count cards and pens are in the top cabinet drawer in the narthex.
- After the final blessing, open the inner and outer doors.
- Collect bulletins from exiting parishioners and return them to the top cabinet drawer for future use.
- Close the outer door and **lock it**. Close the inner doors.
- **Ensure the altar candles are extinguished** (priest will normally do this).
- Turn off all lights and fans.
- Exit through the annex and check to ensure the exterior door is locked.

Funeral Services

- Arrive one (1) hour prior to the start of the funeral service (family members and guests typically arrive early). Ushers may be asked to adjust their arrival time due to large attendance or special circumstances.

- Coordinate with clergy to determine if copies of the funeral bulletin need to be placed in the Fellowship Hall for family members. All bulletins and readings will be in the main church Sacristy before the service.
- Install/remove Handicap Parking sign and red cones on Dry Street.
- Greet “family ushers” (if any) and assist them in procedures and assignments.
- Be attentive to guests outside of the church who may not be sure of where they should proceed.
- Coordinate with clergy to determine how the family will receive communion. (This procedure should also be followed for baptism services).
- If there is interment in the Memorial Garden:
 - Provide assistance for family members and guests walking from the church to the Memorial Garden. Direct/stop traffic on Dry Street during crossing.
 - Assist mobility challenged persons as needed.
 - After the service, store materials (table, silver bucket, and spade) used at the grave site in the Chapel Annex.

Safety and Security Committee. The St. Philip’s Episcopal Church Safety and Security Committee (SSC) is responsible for developing policies and procedures. Upon approval by the Executive Committee and Vestry, everyone, including ushers, is responsible for adhering to these policies. The SSC continues to develop and revise safety procedures and policies which could impact usher responsibilities moving forward.

Medical Emergencies: Ushers provide the first response to medical emergencies during worship services. The Head Usher, with the assistance and advice of medical professionals or first-responders in attendance will:

- **Call 911 immediately!**
- Aid the parishioner in place or move the parishioner to one of the Narthex areas for treatment, if advised to do so.
- The First Aid kit and Automated External Defibrillator (AED) are both located in the Bell Tower Narthex near the water fountains and fire extinguisher.
- If necessary, advise the clergy to suspend or cancel the service in order to attend to the afflicted parishioner. This will be done by the Head Usher, walking directly to the altar, and advising the presiding Priest or Deacon.

Fire Evacuation: The clergy or Head Usher will direct the congregation to evacuate in the case of a fire alarm or sprinkler activation. It is unlikely that an active fire will be encountered, regardless ushers should assist parishioners in an orderly and calm exit from the church. The following evacuation procedures are to be followed:

- Two ushers should immediately prop open all doors, including interior (nave) doors and exterior (narthex) doors at the Bell Tower and Moore Street exits.

- Two ushers should begin directing parishioners towards the exits, starting from back to front using the outside of each row rather than down the center aisle.
- The two ushers that initially propped open the doors, should station themselves at the exterior narthex doors (one at each exit) and direct parishioners toward the exit and rally point. Once parishioners are headed in the right direction, these two ushers should immediately return to the sanctuary to assist any/all mobility challenged persons.
- **The rally point is located at the intersection of Moore and Atlantic streets** (first intersection to the left after exiting St. Philips along the Moore Street sidewalk). **For safety, no one should cross this intersection!**
- The Gospel/acolyte side should exit through the Bell Tower narthex side door and down the handicap ramp, straight ahead along the church sidewalk until it meets the Moore Street sidewalk. Turn left and proceed to the rally point.
- The choir side should exit through the Moore Street narthex door, down the left-hand sidewalk to the Moore Street sidewalk. Turn left and meet at the rally point.
- Balcony parishioners should exit via the Moore Street Narthex doors.
- The choir and clergy should exit after the pews have been evacuated (per the back to front evacuation procedure).
- Mobility challenged persons should remain in place until an usher or a physically capable person in proximity can assist them to the labyrinth area.
- The Head usher may solicit help from anyone to help during an evacuation.
- Once everyone has evacuated, the head usher plus a second usher (buddy system), are to conduct a walk-through of the sanctuary, balcony, hallway, sacristy, flower room, bathrooms, and fellowship hall. Once these areas have been checked and cleared, the ushers return to the rally point.
- The clergy and head usher will determine whether to remain in place, reenter the church, or depart.

Church Lockdown: The term “lockdown” means that all exterior church doors are locked, and no person would be allowed to enter or leave the church. The clergy or head usher may direct that the church be locked down. This action is usually reserved for potential external threats.

- Ushers are the first line of defense for both identifying and deterring intrusion by a person(s) considered a threat to parishioners and clergy inside of the church. The Head Usher is responsible for immediate notification to the serving Priest or Deacon that an external threat exists and recommending whether the service should be suspended, whether the church should be locked down, and whether parishioners, staff, and clergy should be evacuated from the sanctuary to safer locations within the church. The decision to stay in place or move to safer locations resides with the serving Priest or Deacon.

- The Head Usher or an assigned usher will call 911 and ask for an immediate police response when an external intruder threat exists.
- Ushers will ensure that all doors remain locked, allowing no one to enter the exterior door sensor areas (which would automatically unlock exit doors in either of the Narthexes). One usher will be assigned at each Narthex door to maintain this security posture and to identify any attempt to enter the church through either of these doors.
- The main sanctuary can be considered unsafe from an external threat for several reasons, the most identifiable are visual access from outside through the large church windows and proximity to external doors. Whether a potential intruder or violent weather outside, the Head Usher may make a recommendation to the serving Priest or Deacon to move the parishioners to safe areas within in the church, to include safe rooms and safe passageways. Ushers will assist parishioners to move to these areas.
- The Head Usher is responsible for requesting assistance from other parishioners to escort persons from the Sanctuary to safe locations in a calm and orchestrated manner.
- The SSC has identified Safe Rooms and safe area locations. Safe Rooms are required to have separate dead bolt locks with key access from the outside. The SSC will identify the recommended capacity for each Safe Room. Since the number of parishioners varies by each service, there is no viable way to assign parishioners for each Safe Room. Parishioners will be directed by ushers to safe locations based on their mobility and ability to climb stairs.
- The following rooms have been designated as Safe Rooms:
 - o Sacristy, Robing/changing room, flower guild room, Men's Restroom, Women's Restroom, Second Level Storage Room
- Once Safe Rooms have reached their capacity, ushers will ask parishioners to locate in protected passageways including:
 - o Hallway between the restrooms and the sacristy
 - o Upstairs area near the storage room Balcony

Church Intrusion. Church intrusion means that a person(s) has entered the church by force, to include physically breaking through church doors, and acts in such a manner as to be a physical threat to the clergy, staff, and parishioners attending a worship service or event. It also includes threat actions by a person(s) who has entered the church during normal church attendance activity. Person(s) in these categories will be identified as an "intruder." If that person(s) has weaponized themselves (gun, knife, etc.), then that person(s) will be designated as an "armed intruder." Ushers will function as initial responders to church intruders.

- The Head Usher will immediately call 911 and request police response to church intrusion.
- Ushers will immediately respond by restricting and securing any intruder.

- The Head Usher will request assistance from those parishioners in attendance who have identified themselves to assist when this security issue arises.

Southport Policing Program (Off Duty Management)

Beginning January 2024, St. Philips entered into a voluntary policing program with the town of Southport. This new program is administered by a third party, ODM (Off Duty Management) for convenience and ease of administration for all parties. An “off-duty” Southport police officer is assigned by ODM to St. Philips for a defined period of time during Sunday worship services. Although the officer is officially off-duty, he/she has the full capabilities of an on-duty officer. This includes a police cruiser, communications, with full gear. The primary objective is to exhibit a police presence as a deterrent factor at St. Philips when the largest gathering of parishioners occurs. Secondly, the officer is a trained resource should the need arise for a medical, intrusion, or other emergency. The officer is present at St. Philips from 7:30-11:30AM Sunday mornings.

On some occasions, officers may not be available to fill this shift. If so, the head usher should remain vigilant and ensure both exterior doors are monitored during both worship services.

Usher responsibilities and Safety & Security protocols do not change because of the policing program. The VPOD is assigned as the primary person to communicate with the officer if the need arises. This is to streamline communications in the event of an emergency incident or situation.

Vision statement of St. Philips Church (adopted 2021):

“We, at St. Philip’s Church, strive to love God and love others in all we do”

Many times, as an usher, you are the first person a parishioner encounters upon entering our church. Your welcoming spirit and attitude are reflected in those you greet.

Thank you for service to St. Philips!