

Worship Assistant's Handbook

Our Redeemer's Lutheran Church

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Evangelical Lutheran Church in America
God's work. Our hands.

Introduction

Thank you for stepping up and being willing to help with service at Our Redeemer's! We are grateful that you are willing to use the gifts God gave you in his service and in the service of the church. Please feel free to volunteer for any roles which you feel you have a skill or gift to provide the church.

Take a moment to consider what we are doing here. When you volunteer to help at worship, you are not simply putting your name down for an hour of community service on Sunday morning. You are taking on a ministry. You are taking a leadership role in the family of God. You are committing to serve God and your brothers and sisters. We hope you take this role very seriously. We seek to serve every person that comes through the doors of the church in whatever way possible during worship. Remember to show love and respect for all God's children, for they are all his creation!

Captain

Arrive 20 minutes before service

As captain of the worship assistants, it is your job to oversee the ushers, greeters, lectors, and communion assistants for the coming service.

Roll Call

Make sure your worship assistants have all arrived and are prepared to serve God. If there is an absence, it is that individual's responsibility to find a replacement, but you may need to help them. Captains are often more seasoned members of the congregation; you know who can and will step up, help your team fill in gaps as necessary. Have a few "back pocket" folks that are always willing to chip in and help.

Know Your Role

Be familiar with the different roles and duties so that you may step in as needed. If a worship assistant is making a mistake or missing a duty, be ready to provide loving and supportive feedback. Help all worship assistants succeed in as loving a way as possible.

Assist the Staff

Be ready to serve God and to assist the staff as required. The pastors or another staff member may have a last-minute change or emergency that requires your attention in some way. Be willing to help in whatever way is necessary so that worship service can be executed as smoothly as possible. In general, your 'job description' is: whatever is necessary to ensure a successful worship service.

Communion Assistant

Arrive 10 minutes before service

Your job as a communion assistant is to help distribute the bread and the wine to God's people during communion. Note we do not restrict age of communion or require a rite of passage before receiving the elements. Anyone is welcome to receive, and parents usually make the decision for their young children.

Steps to Success

1. Immediately after reciting the Lord's Prayer, as the congregation is asked to sit, approach the altar (**don't wait to be called up**).
2. The first time you step upon the altar during a worship service, bow briefly as a sign of respect.
3. Quickly serve the musicians as needed.
4. Look to the pastors or other leaders, as to where you should stand and distribute communion.
5. Determine if there is a need to go out into the congregation for special distribution (to those that cannot move to the front, the choir, etc.).
6. Afterward, step onto the altar and serve bread and wine to fellow servants as needed.

Communion assistants will now be served at the end of communion.

Body

1. If the recipient indicates non-gluten, they are in the small glass ramekin
2. Break off a small piece of bread and hold it up
3. Say, "this is the body of Christ, given for you," and place it into their open hands
4. Blessing: when someone approaches with arms folded, indicating they will not be taking the elements, make the sign of the cross on their forehead and say a quick blessing, (Pastor Arne says, "Jesus loves you and calls you his own") but you may say something different

Blood

1. The small chalice is grape juice, the large chalice is wine
2. Say, "this is the blood of Christ, shed for you," and indicate they are to dip the bread

Sanctity

A brief word regarding the hallowedness of the elements you distribute: the consecrated bread and wine are filled with the spirit of Almighty God. We should show absolute respect and reverence for the bread and wine while handling them, treating them the same we would Jesus' body and blood. Consecrated elements are never poured down the drain or thrown in the trash. Unused elements should be returned to the earth (pour the wine out on the grass or dirt and toss the bread into the field behind the church for the birds). This is the duty of the altar guild, but good for you to know also.

Communion Assistant – Continued

Oops

- If someone drops their bread on the floor, give them a new piece, leave the bread on the floor, then at the end of communion, pick it up, place it on the counter in the sacristy, and notify someone from the altar guild of the situation. It will be thrown to the birds in the field behind the church.
- If someone accidentally puts their piece of bread in their mouth, then takes it back out to dip, ask them to eat that piece of bread and give a fresh piece for intinction.
- If wine or grape juice is spilled on the floor, leave it and work around it as best as possible. It will be properly cleaned up after service.
- If some un-thought-of situation arises, deal with it to the best of your ability, always showing grace and reverence for the bread and wine.

Greeter

Arrive 15 minutes before service

Your primary job as a greeter is to make all people feel welcome as they enter the worship space. Shake their hands and call them by name wherever possible. If we are a church family, you are the jovial aunt/uncle that comes for Christmas dinner and is never not smiling.

If a face is unfamiliar, introduce yourself and be their ally. Ask them their name, be friendly, and help them feel welcome. Work in tandem with the ushers to make the worship space feel as inviting as possible. If someone has a special need, deal with it yourself or find an usher to deal with it, so that everyone may worship God as fully as possible.

Finally, keep in mind that outer appearance may have very little to do with inward heart. It is not our job to pass judgment based on appearance. We are to invite and welcome all of God's children into this space and leave the judging to Jesus, for only he truly knows each of our hearts.

Special Accommodations Include

- Large Print Bulletins
- Listening Assistance Devices (Telex)
- Children's Bulletins & Crayons
- The Pray Ground
- Nursery Care
- Communion Delivered to Seat

Lector

Arrive 15 minutes before service

To be a lector is much more than simply reading aloud words inked on a page. You are proclaiming the word of the Almighty and Eternal God. These proclaimed words should rouse the weary, inspire the hungry, and teach the entire congregation. You are not a radio DJ or a shock-jock (and you should not inflect your words as if you are), but you *should* add emotion and command into the page in front of you. Bible readings are not textbook excerpts, they are living pronouncements from a living faith, inspired by our living God.

O Lord, open my lips and my mouth shall declare your praise -Psalm 51:15

Prepare

1. Read the passage several times at home before Sunday morning
2. Review any hard-to-say words, ask for help with pronunciation from a pastor or other authority
3. Before service, approach the altar and ensure the text you are reading is prepared available; also take this time to pull out and adjust the lectern step, **it should not be moved during service**
4. Pray before service and ask God for wisdom and an authoritative voice with which to speak
5. Upon approaching the altar for the first time in a service, bow briefly to show respect for God and for the church
6. Do not touch or move the microphone, do not lean in to the microphone, but stand up straight with good posture
7. Speak clearly and slowly

Contemplate the Context

Some readings are poetic (such as 1 Corinthians 13, “love is patient, love is kind...”), some is narrative (like Acts of the Apostles) that describes a scene or tells a story, some is historical (much of Kings from the old testament, etc). Different genres will lend better to different types of reading. Practice at home and find a style that fits the context of the reading. Contemplate meter, pauses, inflection, emphasis, crescendo, etc.

Take Your Time and Speak Clearly

It is almost a universal rule that, when speaking in public, time behaves in a peculiar way, so that we rush our speech. Slow down, take your time, and enunciate each word. Consider words such as, “ship” and “shift” and how they have very different meanings but sound nearly identical. Speak slowly and clearly enough so that each word can be clearly discerned. Ask a family member to listen to you read and offer feedback.

Also, take a brief pause occasionally, at the end of a paragraph or after an important statement. Adding silence at the end of a sentence adds weight to the statement (try it here!). It also gives time for the congregation to process and understand what is being said.

Finally, consider the volume of your voice. Try this exercise: in a very shy, muted voice recite the below bible passage, *“Sing aloud O daughter Zion; shout, O Israel!” -Zephaniah 3:14.*

That was a bit silly, wasn't it? Now read it aloud again, but boisterously, as if you are proud to have such a mighty God.

Stage Fright

FDR's words ring very true, when considering that fear, in and of itself, is the only thing that ought to be feared. It is entirely normal to have butterflies and feel nervous early in your public speaking career. Be assured that, the hundredth time you lector, nerves will have long subsided. Also, use that energy that underlies the fear and inject it into your reading. Finally, find comfort in the fact that every person in attendance is a brother or sister. Every one of them is sitting there in love, and they are much more focused on the words being spoken, than the reader him/herself.

Usher

Arrive 15 minutes before service

The duties of an usher are to welcome and pass bulletins out to people as they enter the sanctuary (which is mirrored in the greeters), to provide assistance for those searching for seating and for others that require special assistance, to act as guardians of the sanctuary and worship space, to collect the offering, and to generally provide aid as required to ensure the worship service is executed as smoothly as possible.

Welcome

We are all brothers and sisters in this building, regardless of race, clothing, age, appearance, etc. Accordingly, we should welcome each other cordially into worship, as we all prepare to praise God.

Seating

Generally, folks will find their own seats, but keep an eye out for those arriving late or, in a very full service, individuals may need help finding a seat. It can be awkward to ask someone seated to scoot down, so step forward and ask for the person needing a seat. Pay attention to families with young children or large groups that may have trouble finding seating all together.

Extra Care

Keep an eye out for those that may require extra attention. A person in a wheelchair may not know the best place to locate. Step forward and offer to help them find a place they can easily see, while staying tucked out of aisles. Likewise, those with walkers or crutches, help them find discrete places to stow the walking aids. Keep your eyes out for people that may appear to be struggling or be uncomfortable in other ways. Approach them with gentleness and, in love, ask if there is anything you may do to help. Be aware of the listening assistance devices (in the storage cabinet in the narthex) and offer them to those that may not hear well. Generally, consider yourself a host of God's house of worship. Your goal is to make everyone feel as welcomed, accommodated, and comfortable as possible, so they are not distracted, and they can fully participate in worship.

Guardian of Worship

In the very rare event there is a disruption or emergency during service, you should be the first to respond. If there is a disruptive member of the congregation, approach them with love and address the situation as discretely as possible. Remain positive and ask the person to step out into the narthex, if it becomes necessary. If there is an emergency of a hostile nature, keep the people calm and alert the authorities immediately. Escort people to emergency exits as necessary. In medical emergencies, alert the authorities and know members of the congregation that may have medical training. Your goal in all these situations will be to act as guardian of God's worship space and make sure situations are dealt with discretely and in love, wherever possible.

AV Operator

Arrive 15 minutes before service

Running the computer and/or sound board during worship is a valuable offering to the congregation and to God, as you are helping to facilitate the praise and worship of God. We strive to accommodate and make it as easy as possible for all people to worship God in the space we have been given. This includes displaying slides with song lyrics, congregational prayers, and responses, and providing ample sound reinforcement for easy listening.

Running the Computer

- Always pay close attention during service, following along, to ensure you are on the right slide
- Advance slides with enough grace time to keep up with lyrics
- Follow instructions of the pastor, music leader, in special circumstances, such as “back to verse 1”, “can you go to the next slide in my sermon”, etc.
- Use alt-tab to quickly switch before PowerPoint and EasyWorship

Running the Sound Board

- Run the decibel meter (in slow mode) and monitor it periodically, ensuring the RMS sound level is around 62-66 dB
- Make sure the lectern mic is on only when someone is at the podium using it
- If a pastor is at the lectern, make sure only one mic is active (either their headset or the lectern mic); never both
- Listen carefully to the balance of the music, all singers and instruments should be well blended
- Hit the “record” button for sermons
- In an emergency feedback situation, hit the red “kill” switch as quickly as possible

Contact Information

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