

**Christmas Eve Ushering**  
**St. Paul United Church of Christ, Taylor**  
**7 and 11 p.m. Services**

**Guidelines for Ushering**

**Arrival Time** - Ushers for Christmas Eve Services need to arrive 45 minutes in advance—6:15 p.m. for the 7 p.m. service and 10:15 p.m. for the 11 p.m. service. We will meet in the parlor for a brief orientation and assignment of duties.

**Dress/ Apparel** - Ushers are asked to dress up for the occasion. Men should be wearing ties and a suit or sport coat. Red carnations are available for all ushers so that you will be identified to worshippers who may need your help. Along with the carnation, all ushers are asked to wear their name tags.

**Ushering Begins** - Ushering on Christmas Eve will begin a half-hour prior to the start of the services. Ushers should be in place-at that time, ready to receive and welcome members, friends, and guests.

**Seating Worshippers** - Worshippers should be seated in the lower sanctuary. Only when no more pews are available there should balcony seating commence. Families with children should be encouraged to use the last two pews of the first floor sanctuary which have been reserved for them and discouraged from using the balcony altogether. Given the sensitive acoustics of our sanctuary, all talking and noise tends to resound more loudly from the balcony than the first floor pews. Ushers need to monitor available seating and escort worshippers to open pews. Communion will not be served in the balcony unless the lower sanctuary is at least eighty per cent full.

**Late Arrivals** - Late arrivals to Christmas Eve services should be personally ushered to an available pew, preferable along the side aisles, at times indicated by the order of service. No late arrival should be ushered into the sanctuary during prayers, readings from scripture, or anthems performed by the choir or soloists. In ushering late arrivals the goal should be to minimize the disruption to the worship experience of those already seated.

**Politeness, Courtesy, and Friendliness Matters** - In ushering on Christmas Eve, you will be greeting and meeting many who are visiting our church for the first time or returning to the pews after a long absence. As ambassadors of Christ, our politeness, courtesy, and friendliness matters, communicating our warmth and caring as a congregation. Please go out of your way to be friendly, helpful, and accommodating to everyone who enters our sanctuary. Smile!

### **Specific Assignments and Posting of Ushers**

Prior to the service ushers will be assigned different responsibilities and posted in different spots and locations in the narthex, sanctuary, and lobby areas of our church. In some cases, an usher may be assigned more than one of the responsibilities indicated below:

**Greeting** - Ushers should be posted as greeters (1) in the vestibule of the church, leading into the narthex; (2) in the west lobby; and (3) in the hallway in front of the St. Paul Courtyard. Besides vocally welcoming arriving worshippers, those assigned as greeters should provide directions to the sanctuary and lavatories, as well as answer any other questions that may arise. They should also be ready to provide welcome brochures to guests of members and first-time visitors.

**Distribute Orders of Service** — Ushers distributing orders of service will stand at each entrance to the church sanctuary where worshippers are seated for services. There should be one usher at each side aisle entrance off the narthex and two standing at the center aisle. One of the ushers at the center aisle should have large print bulletins in hand. Those who prefer large print hymnals should be asked whether they would also like a large print hymnal—available within the usher's easy reach. Ushers distributing orders of service should also be posted at the doors to the office and the hallway leading to the sculpture courtyard—both at the front of sanctuary—until just before the start of the service. In distributing orders of service focus on the arriving worshippers: courteously avoid distracting conversations with other ushers or others who are mingling near you.

**Distribute candles** — Two ushers need to distribute candles to arriving worshippers and collect them at the end of the service. Only those over twelve years of age should receive wax candles; battery-operated candles are available for children under twelve. Palm baskets are available for collecting all used candles at the service's conclusion.

**Distribute Assistive Listening Devices** — One usher will be charged with supervising distribution of assistive listening devices. He/she should be standing just outside the Ushers' Room, ready to help those in need of the available equipment. The small table in the narthex may be used for those retrieving and returning the equipment. It is important for the supervising usher to know how to operate the assistive listening devices in order to answer questions of those who have never used them before. All six assistive listening devices have been recently repaired and are in good operational condition.

**Assist Families with Young Children** - At least one usher should be attentive to the needs of families with young children attending services. The last two pews on both sides of the sanctuary are especially reserved for families with children. Please let arriving families know that the Ushers' Room is also available to them in the event that their child requires changing, begins to cry loudly, or becomes uncomfortable or disruptive during the worship service. Upon request, children's packets—including crayons and drawing materials—should be provided to families.

**Assist Worshippers with Disabilities** — Ushers are needed to assist worshippers with disabilities on a one-on-one basis. Assigned ushers should greet any disabled worshippers in the narthex and personally usher them to an accessible pew. If they have arrived in a wheelchair and can transfer to a pew, please let them know that (1) we will park then folded wheelchair in the narthex during the service to avoid aisle clutter and (2) will return it to them promptly after the last hymn so that they can depart ahead of the other worshippers if they wish. Worshippers unable to transfer to a pew who intend to remain in their wheelchairs for the service should use the center aisle only—the space in the side aisles is too narrow to accommodate a wheelchair without safety hazard to others. In the event that the person arriving has an oxygen tank, let them know that to avoid a fire hazard during the candle-lighting portion of the service they will need to recess to the Ushers' Room or, alternatively, store their oxygen tank in the Ushers' Room prior to the lighting of candles. As usher, please offer to assist them in transporting their oxygen tank back and forth as necessary in a timely way.

**Light Altar Candles** - During the prelude, an usher needs to light the two altar candles in the chancel. The four Advent candles and Christ candle will be lit by a confirmand later in the service.

**Ring of the Church Bell** - An usher should ring the church bell at the start of the service. The timing is indicated by the order of service for worship.

**Assist with Communion** - Depending upon the size of the congregation for services, eight to twelve ushers may be needed to assist with pew communion in the lower sanctuary and balcony. With a simple nod of the head the pastor dismisses all communion servers from the chancel once they have received their trays of wafers or grape juice. However, the head elder, standing next to the pastor, signals when ushers should begin serving the communion elements to those in the pew, as well as when you should return with your empty trays to the chancel. Please watch and wait for that nod. Ushers serving communion to worshippers in the balcony do not travel between the chancel and balcony. Instead, communion trays—blessed with prayer prior to the service—will already be available in the balcony for distribution.

**Sharing the Light** - Ushers assisting with communion will also be "sharing the light" during the candlelight portion of the service. At the close of communion, the pastor will descend to light a large candle from the Christ Candle at the center of the Advent stand. He will then step to the center of the chancel steps facing the congregation. Ushers who have just returned their communion trays and joined in the closing prayer will then descend from the chancel on either side of the pastor, lighting their candle from his candle. You should then proceed to your station in the center or side aisles. At the signal from the pastor, after all ushers in place, you should extend your candle to the worshipper in the first pew next to you; then proceed down the aisle pew by pew. Only unlit candles should be tipped in order to avoid the dripping of wax and other hazards. In other words, your lit candle should remain straight up at all times as you "share the light."

**Fire Extinguishers** — During the last minutes of the candlelight services, four ushers should be poised with fire extinguishers in case of need. Two ushers should be stationed at the rear of the sanctuary; two up front. Following the 11 p.m. service, ushers should return the fire extinguishers to their proper location in the building.

**Dim Lights** - As the service shifts to the lighting of candles by worshippers for the singing of "Silent Night" and the Lord's Prayer, the lights in the sanctuary need to be dimmed. An usher should be posted at that time in the hallway between the chancel and the pastor's office where the light switches are located to dim the lights and then turn them on once more as the service finishes.

**Distribute Friendship Books** - At the beginning of the service, during the Prelude, four ushers are needed to distribute Friendship Books to each pew from the center aisle. Immediately afterwards, the ushers should return to the Narthex. The completed pages of the Friendship Books need to be collected after worshippers depart from the service.

**Assist Worshippers with the Sleaving of Poinsettias** - At least one usher should be on hand in the parlor to assist worshippers who wish to "sleeve" or wrap their poinsettia in paper before departing from the church. The usher should make sure that the parlor lights are on and that the sleeves are ready on the parlor table for those who wish to use them.

**Monitoring Front Stairs and Side-walk/ Emergency Assistance** - At the conclusion of the service, an usher should be positioned at the bottom of the outside front steps to provide any necessary assistance to departing worshippers. A bag of ice melt is stored in the closet under the stairway to the balcony for last-minute use on the front church stairs and walk. In addition, in event of emergency, both a First Aid kit and a blanket are available in the Ushers' Room. EMS services can be directly called on the telephone also located in the Ushers' Room. It is not necessary to dial "1" for outgoing calls. Ushers monitoring the front stairs and side-walk should dress warmly for their own nighttime comfort.

**Clean-Up of Sanctuary** - Immediately following services, the assistance of all ushers is needed to remove candles, worship bulletins, and other papers left behind as well as to straighten the Bibles, hymnals, and envelopes located in the pew racks. By working together we can quickly insure that the sanctuary is ready for the next worship service.

*Please note: ushers need to be security-conscious. The doors to the office from the west lobby should be kept locked during the service. All office doors should be locked as the offering is being safely secured.*

Prepared G. Drutchas 12/12/2011

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