



Usher Training Manual

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The Spiritual Significance of Ushers

An usher is a spiritual ambassador for the local church – God’s ordained and organized body of believers. The usher serves as a “first representative” of Jesus Christ for a worship service. Though we thoroughly enjoy the creative edge of our 12Stone services, make no mistake, this is a holy event where God is meeting with His people.

From the tabernacle in the Old Testament to the temple and synagogue in the New Testament, God’s presence and the teaching of His word is of supreme importance.

³⁴ Then the cloud covered the Tent of Meeting, and the glory of the LORD filled the tabernacle.
Exodus 40:34

They went to Capernaum, and when the Sabbath came, Jesus went into the synagogue and began to teach. ²² The people were amazed at his teaching, because he taught them as one who had authority, not as the teachers of the law.
Mark 1:21-22

² At dawn he appeared again in the temple courts, where all the people gathered around him, and he sat down to teach them. John 8:2

When you serve as an usher, you set the stage for the worship experience. You are literally part of the continuing story of God’s redemption. Your spiritual readiness and act of service plays a huge role in the life-change that takes place that day.

Three Critical Gateways to Worship

Virtually no one enters a worship experience without passing through one or more of these gateways. Any of these three gateways/ministries can make or break a person’s entire worship experience.

- **Parking Lot Attendants** – If the people get frustrated in the parking lot, they will not be receptive to what God has in mind.

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- **Nursery Care Givers** – If the people don't feel their babies are safe and secure they won't be able to focus on what's happening in the service, let alone hear what God has to say.
 - **Ushers** – The ushers (and greeters) play a big role as the third and final gateway to the worship experience. If a 12Stone regular attender, or visitor had a less than positive experience finding their way to the Worship Experience Center, an usher can play a significant role in turning that person's experience around by helping them find not just the right seat but the right frame of mind.

We cannot overestimate the importance of the front line. Whether a clerk at a hotel desk, a bank teller, or a teenager at your favorite fast food restaurant, you know what a difference it makes to be served well. It makes so much difference it can determine whether or not you ever return.

Three Things That Can Really Hurt a Worship Service

- **Distractions**
Our goal is not to achieve a perfect environment; however, the number of “common” distractions that can occur in an auditorium that seats approximately 2500 people is staggering. Any one of these distractions can bring a spiritual moment to a complete stop for the people in that area. If the distraction is large enough, it can affect the entire service.

Examples:
 - Small Children
 - Cell Phones
 - Leaving and entering the service
 - **Discouragement**
One of the top tactics of the Enemy is to discourage believers. This form of spiritual attack is common in a worship service. An usher's quick moments of prayer can literally turn a service around and make or break a life-changing experience.
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- **Disorganization**

All large churches, no matter how well organized, will have their own form of chaos. This is unavoidable when dealing with such a large number of people in relatively small increments of time. The more you do as an usher to reduce disorganization and increase the quality of experience for each attender, the more likely they will be able to hear and respond to the voice of God and the promptings of the Holy Spirit.

Who Can Be An Usher?

Not just anyone can be an usher. In the same way that not just anyone can sing in the choir, work in children's ministry or lead a small group. The right gifts, passion, and ability make a big difference.

As you recruit new ushers keep spiritual qualities, characteristics and usher responsibilities in mind. Please make sure you work in coordination with your Section Leader or a Service Leader rather than practicing "random recruiting."

Spiritual Qualities of an Usher

The fruit of the spirit found in Galatians 5:22-23 is a solid guideline for a good usher. This is not about perfection, but a heartfelt motive and desire to live a life of a spirit-filled believer.

- **Love** – In I Corinthians 13:13 the apostle Paul says that love is the greatest of these things. If you choose to genuinely love the people you serve as an usher, God will bless your actions.
- **Joy** – Take God seriously, but don't take yourself too seriously. Lighten up and enjoy the moment. Your spirit will be contagious to others. If you are cold, aloof, and don't smile (basically you are a grumpy usher) you will discourage others around you.
- **Peace** – You can add peace, calm, and order to what might otherwise be an overwhelming and hectic experience.

- **Patience** – This is a great quality of a good usher. Most of us are impatient by nature. Many of the people will have waited in line to park, waited in line to drop their kids off, and waited in line for coffee. Their patience will be running thin. You can set a good example with your patience toward them.
- **Kindness** – This is the attitude that makes you approachable as an usher. Going the extra mile can make all the difference in the world! Be imaginative. Think of all the ways you could show kindness to someone as they come to worship.
- **Goodness** – The inner quality of goodness is a gift that results from the Holy Spirit's power working within us. This state of being will naturally spill over into our service and bring an intangible but powerful presence into the worship experience.
- **Faithfulness** – Faithfulness as a Christian bleeds over into your faithfulness as an usher. Showing up, being responsible and doing your ministry well matters to all of us on the 12Stone team. It matters to God, and it matters to all those who call 12Stone home.
- **Gentleness** – A mature usher never throws around his or her authority. The best usher is a humble one who seeks to put others first no matter how much pressure may be present in the moment.
- **Self-Control** – It is impossible to control a large crowd if we cannot control ourselves. In calm moments self-control is easy, it's under the pressure of hectic moments and last minute changes that your grace and self-control will shine.

Qualifications of an Usher

- You understand the vital role of the usher ministry.
- You enjoy and care about people.
- You possess a servant heart.

- You are committed to the vision of 12Stone.
- You are supportive of the leadership at 12Stone.

Responsibilities of an Usher

Committed leadership

- Prepare yourself spiritually.

A good usher comes prepared mentally, physically, emotionally *and* spiritually. This is not to be seen as a duty, but a privilege to connect with God as part of your preparation. Don't feel like this requires an hour of Bible study before you show up. God is far more interested in the commitment of your heart than the amount of your time. Take a few moments at home to connect with God and ask Him to use you as a representative of his love and an agent of His redemptive plan.

- Take initiative!

This is huge. The cardinal sin of an usher is to not pay attention. At all times watch what is going on in your section and jump in to handle it. If you aren't sure what to do, ask your section leader. The only wrong choice is to do nothing. Never assume "someone" else is taking care of the need. Pay attention, take initiative, make it happen!!

- Absorb the pressure of the moment, don't transfer it.

Most of the ministry of an usher is pure joy. Seriously, it's a lot of fun. But on occasion there are moments of pressure when someone is upset or something isn't working right. In these moments never transfer the pressure to the person entering into their worship experience. You are the leader. You absorb the pressure. Get help if you need it, but never make the issue their problem. You help deliver a solution.

- Own your section, lead your section, shepherd your section.

This is exciting. In an average environment with average ushers, once the seats are filled the ushers relax and mentally check out. As a leader at 12Stone you are empowered to take ownership of your section and give leadership where needed. Think of your area like you are responsible to do everything in your power to ensure that all those people have the best opportunity possible to connect with and hear from God. You can shepherd the people by getting to know them, praying for them, learning their names, and meeting appropriate needs.

- Follow the direction of your Section Leader.

All good leaders are good followers. It is important that you follow the leadership of your Section Leader. Be supportive and encouraging. Offer suggestions if you have good ideas, but don't be overly sensitive if your ideas aren't used. Your section leader will do his or her best to serve and lead you and the rest of their team well.

Core tasks

In each of these areas you will receive practical hands-on training.

- Help people find a seat

This seems obvious, but there is an art to it. The art is all about making people, especially new people and people far from God, feel comfortable. In an auditorium of 2500 seats, and especially in the round, people feel exposed because everyone can see them. Their insecurities can rise and their feelings of self-consciousness prevent them from connecting with God.

Imagine what it feels like to walk into an unfamiliar restaurant or other environment and not know what to do. Do I seat myself or do I wait to be seated? Who do I talk to if I have a question? Who do I tell if I have special circumstances (e.g. potential medical condition)

Your job is to move toward and engage people quickly and with confidence to help them know what to do. Don't leave people hanging. Let them know that you can handle anything they need, and that you are

the one that can make this a smooth and enjoyable experience. (We know that no one person can handle “everything” but there is always someone to help you with the really tough situations.)

Let’s look at another example, if you are seating someone who is a little late and you need to seat them front and center because that’s all that is left, walk with them. Stay close to them. Don’t make them feel like they are clueless. Make them feel like you are seating a king or queen, not the social outcasts who are “late again.”

Don’t make them come to you and ask, you approach them with confidence and a smile. Take charge with grace and poise.

Bottom line. . . treat them like you would want to be treated!

- Collect the offering.

On a divine level, the offering is part of worship. It is the opportunity for 12Stone worshippers to express their love, trust and obedience toward God. On a practical level, the financial needs of a large church are significant. Your smooth and coordinated execution of an offering can and does impact the resources that fund the Kingdom. On a security level, this is one of the most detailed functions of an usher.

You will be trained in the actual physical process for receiving an offering in a live session.

The following outline will help us ensure compliance with legal guidelines and practical security issues.

- There must always be a minimum of two, unrelated, ushers present when collecting / transporting the offering.
- As each usher completes the collection of offering from his/her assigned section, they will join the usher in the adjacent section so they can exit together. Once the ushers exit the worship center, they’ll join ushers from the remaining sections at the central meeting location.

- Once the ushers meet at the central location, the offering baskets will be placed on a rolling cart. Two to four ushers, along with a 12Stone employee, will take the baskets into the church office where they will sort, bundle, and deposit the offering in the drop safe.
 - Ushers collecting / transporting the offering needs to be rotated on a periodic basis.
 - If a 12Stone attender misses the offering basket, the ushers need to direct them to one of the two offering drop boxes located adjacent to the Bridge entrance or the Children's' Ministry entrance.
- Assist in the execution of special moments

12Stone is known for creativity in the worship services. From motorcycles to doughnuts, to tractors and bottles of coke, you just never know what may be coming down the isles! Some of the special moments are fun, some are crazy, and some are deeply spiritual. Things like crossing a bridge, writing in journals, or taking communion. The service of an usher is crucial to these moments being leveraged toward life-change.

12Stone is also depending on your flexibility. Don't get flustered when last minute changes are made. That will happen. Just keep positive, stay flexible and know that creativity is at work "making the magic" that makes all the difference.

- Get an accurate people count

Why does this matter so much? Why must these numbers be so accurate? Why can't we just make a good estimate? The answer is that every number represents a person. We want to be good stewards of all that God has entrusted to us and therefore it matters that we know how well we are reaching people. Just like in the book of Acts, they counted, recorded, and celebrated how many people were saved . . . we count too!

The counting process is simple enough. The unique feature is requiring two people to count until the same number is agreed upon.

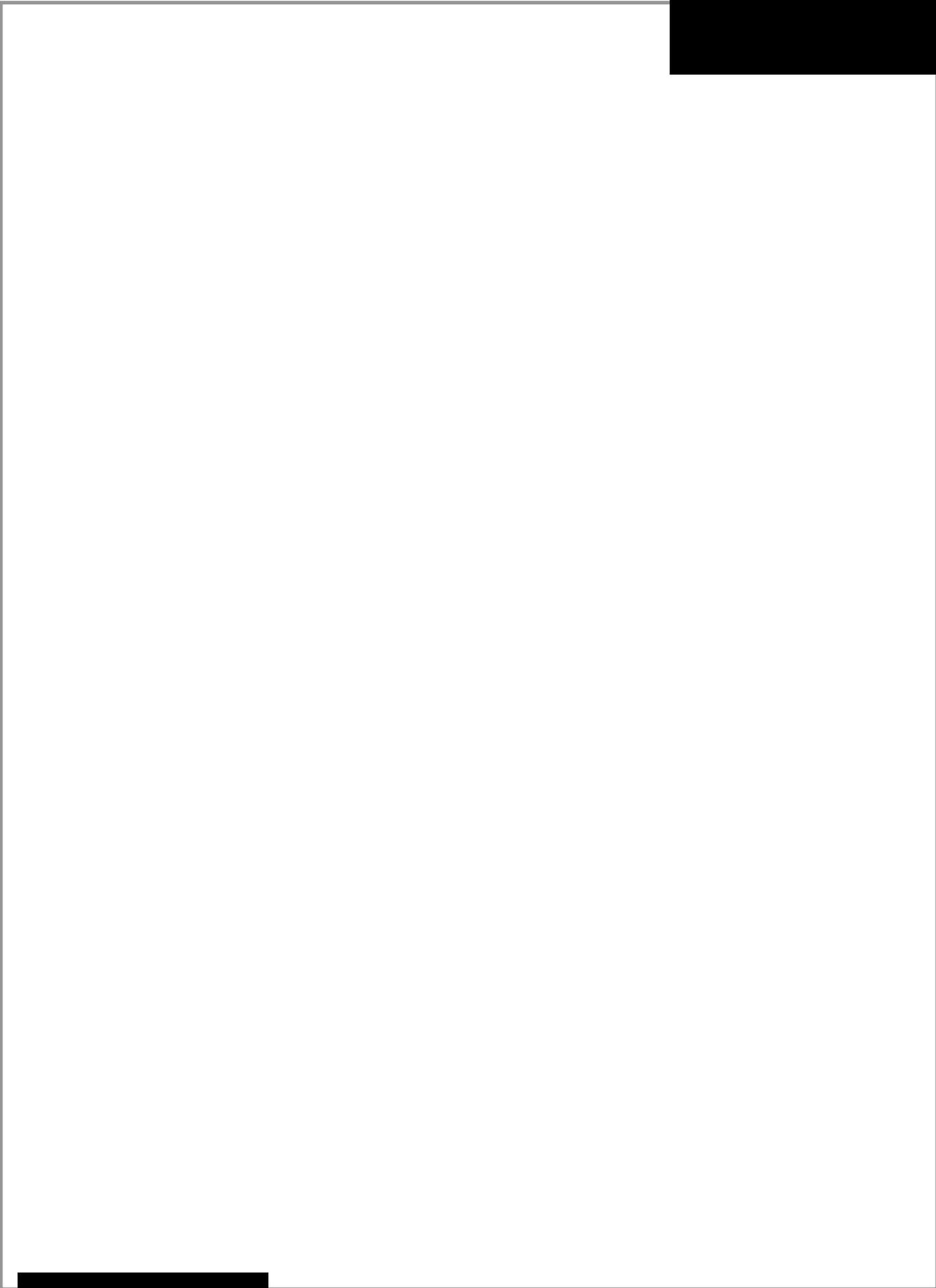
- Re-set and clean up the auditorium

People will leave papers, cups and “stuff”. The glamorous part of an usher’s ministry is cleaning up after each service. In addition, supplies such as Bibles and pens are replenished.

Remember, many hands make light work. If all ushers jump in and help, it takes about 10 minutes.

Common sense

- Maintain proper appearance and personal hygiene.
- Show up on time.
 - Section Leaders 40 minutes before the service
 - Ushers 30 minutes before the service
- Read the bulletin – get informed, stay informed.
- Wear your name tag.
- You are not required to usher every Sunday, but when you are on the schedule, give it 100%.
- If you are on the schedule and can’t make it, it is imperative that you call your Section Leader.
- Smile, talk to people, and learn their names!!



Handling Emergencies

Emergencies are rare, but they do occur. When they do the ushers function as a team in cooperation with the greeters, medical team, pastoral staff and parking lot attendants.

- Medical Emergency

Contact medical team personnel seated in designated place in the Worship Experience Center for assistance. The medical team will decide if 911 needs to be called.

If the need for emergency treatment is obvious, anyone can call 911, however, our police officers (parking team) can expedite a much faster response.

Quickly contact key personnel from the parking team so they can clear a path for emergency vehicles.

- Security Situation

The most common scenario is someone acting aggressively or inappropriately and beyond your ability to control. Contact the point person (Chris Ethridge) or other staff member to summon police officers (parking team) into the building.

- Fire

The 12Stone Children's ministry team is responsible for evacuating the kids.

Ushers guide everyone out of the building and stop parents from running to get their kids. Just imagine the utter chaos and danger of 2,000 panicked parents all running to get their kids before they evacuate the building! Parents must run toward exits, the volunteer leaders will get the kids out.

The parking team keeps the lanes open for emergency vehicles and guides them to the building.

Responsibilities for Service Leaders

To provide leadership and coordination for the Section Leaders and Ushers in order to ensure the smooth and efficient operation of all related functions (seating, offering etc.) for each worship service.

The ultimate objective is to enhance the overall worship experience so that God and His people may experience life-changing connection.

The responsibilities include but are not limited to:

- Provide leadership and team building for 5 section leaders for one worship service each week.
 - Identify and develop one or more assistant(s) to give leadership when you cannot be present.
 - Recruiting of ushers
 - Organize meetings as needed
 - Current and rapid communication
 - Encouragement of all your Section Leaders and Ushers.
- Participation in the selection and approval process for replacing section leaders.
- Attention to overall quality and standards for all usher functions.
- Coordinate section leaders on Sunday morning and give guidance to all special circumstances as they arise.
- Careful observation and a quick solution oriented approach to challenges and difficulties during that service.

- Attention to security related issues with the process of offering collection.
- Ensure that all new ushers receive training.
- Serve as liaison to staff representative.

Responsibilities for Section Leaders

To provide leadership and coordination for the Ushers in a specific assigned section in order to ensure the smooth and efficient operation of all related functions (seating, offering etc.) for each worship service.

The ultimate objective is to enhance the overall worship experience so that God and His people may experience life-changing connection.

The responsibilities include but are not limited to:

- Provide leadership and team building for 10-12 ushers for one worship service each week.
 - Identify and develop one or more assistant(s) to give leadership when you cannot be present.
 - Recruiting of ushers
 - Organize meetings as needed
 - Current and rapid communication with Service Leader and your team
 - Encouragement of all your ushers!!!
- Organization and communication for the monthly schedule of ushers serving each week. (Email that schedule to your Service Leader.)

- Heart and passion into the shepherding process with the people in your section.
- Work in close coordination with Service Leader for the world class execution of all functions from seating to offering each Sunday.
- Attention to overall quality and standards for all usher functions.
- Model excellence in attitude and attire for your usher team.
- Ensure that all new ushers receive on-the-job training.
- Exercise the utmost in care for the security of the offering process.

Just for Fun! 😊

Good usher : “Just a moment, I’ll be right with you to help you find a seat.”

Bad usher: “Hey, for what I’m paid you should find me a seat.”

Good usher: “The worship experience center is full, but I’ll be happy to walk with you to the Cafe Theater.”

Bad usher: “Look idiot, you’re late again. You’re lucky I even let you stay here.”

Good usher: “Let’s huddle for a quick prayer before the offering.”

Bad usher: “Check out what this guy gave, what a loser.”

Good usher: "The pastor has started the message so would you please join those who are in the Cafe Theater? May I walk you there?"

Bad usher: "I don't really give a rip if you have bladder problems, once you leave, you're out!"

Good usher: "Would you mind turning off your cell phone?"

Bad usher: "Either turn that stupid phone off or watch how far I can throw it!"

Good usher: "We have some good seats up front where you can see really well."

Bad usher: "At your age, you're lucky you can see at all."

Good usher: "We have a policy that children younger than Kindergarten age do not attend the service so we may provide the best possible experience for everyone attending. May I walk you to the children's ministry area or the Cafe Theater.?"

Bad usher: "Look lady, I know you think your kid is special, but do I look like I care!?"