



TRINITY BIBLE CHURCH

# Welcoming Ministry Handbook

Guidelines and Policies for Greeters and Ushers

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Version 1.2

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## Introduction

It is no small matter to consider how we have been freely welcomed into the family of God by the sacrificial grace of our Lord Jesus Christ given to us through the life-giving work of the Holy Spirit. The true worshipper of God is called to imitate Him in the beauty of His goodness. While welcoming people into a church is not the same as God's welcoming us into His eternal family, the principle of imitating His kindness and love should mark the way we welcome people into the church as we keep an eye toward how we ourselves have been welcomed by God. This principle is evident even in a context of admonishing love where differences among saints exist: "welcome one another as Christ has welcomed you, for the glory of God" (Romans 15:7).

It is no exaggeration to maintain that our Lord makes much of welcoming others. A welcoming ministry is a ministry of stewardship over the hospitality of the local household of God (cf. 1 Tim 3:5, 15). As Christians, graciously welcomed in by God, we are exhorted to "show hospitality to one another without grumbling" (1 Peter 4:9; cf. Romans 12:13). We are reminded: "Do not neglect to show hospitality to strangers, for thereby some have entertained angels unawares" (Hebrews 13:2). Jesus commends the faithful hospitality of His servants with these stunning words, "I was a stranger and you welcomed Me . . . Truly, I say to you, as you did it to one of the least of these My brothers, you did it to Me" (Matthew 25:35, 40). This was the testimony of the apostle Paul who was confined in prison for "two whole years at his own expense, and welcomed all who came to him" (Acts 28:30). "Unusual kindness" is linked to the manner in which the natives of Malta "welcomed" Paul (Acts 28:2). How much more should beneficiaries of God's extraordinary welcome reflect and demonstrate unusual kindness in our welcoming of others into the midst of the local household of God.

At Trinity Bible Church, we value the contributions of the men and women who serve as Ushers and Greeters. This handbook has been created to provide guidance for those serving in this capacity, in what we call our *welcoming ministry*.



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## The Importance of Welcoming

Greeters serve a vital role in forming a visitor's first relational impression of our church and, to some, their first impression of the living hope that we have in Christ. We must guard from underestimating the value of welcoming people into the midst of an assembly that is gathering for the express purpose of worshiping God. A Greeter is a kind of "first representative" of the faith that we profess to know, live, and speak—a very important role that requires spiritual readiness. In a very practical way, Greeters and Ushers impact the mood and disposition of a person's experience in our midst, which sensibly impacts the ministry of the Word of God.

Greeters serve in that unique capacity to welcome visitors who come *from* diverse situations, *for* various reasons, and *with* a complex of interests, questions, hopes, fears, apprehensions, and needs. It is important to keep the visiting person in mind when serving in the welcoming ministry. Humility, care, sensitivity, and compassion for people should be in the forefront of the Greeter's service. It has been said that a visitor's "attendance has been motivated by a friend or a deep need. He brings his hurts, questions and apprehensions. He looks for warmth, acceptance and smiles. When he receives those things, he will return. When he returns, he will find God." Greeters and Ushers are ministers and ambassadors of Christ and His church.

A Greeter can have a remarkable impact on a person's visit. According to some research studies it is suggested that most people make up their minds as to whether they will return to a church or not within the first several minutes of a visit. Some studies suggest this critical assessment period is between four and eight minutes.<sup>1</sup> We recognize the value of a warm smile and a friendly greeting, a sincere handshake and a genuine offer of practical assistance. The experience of being greeted by a kind, pleasant, and caring person communicates the impact of the gospel in our lives in ways that words cannot. The goal of this ministry is to communicate the love of Christ in a compelling way that more effectively welcomes newcomers into the midst of the church family and welcomes believers into the corporate worship of God.

While the warmth and love of Greeters and Ushers should be no greater than the love found in the rest of the church family, nevertheless Greeters and Ushers perform a major role in ensuring that people see and experience that love. The welcoming ministry is important for this very reason, namely that it is, especially to newcomers, one of the most visible and personal ministry encounters in the church.



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The welcoming ministry is not only a ministry to guests. Greeters and Ushers serve to minister to a variety of people: both worshippers and unbelievers, and both regular attenders and first-time visitors. In addition to first impressions, the importance of welcoming is also realized in its ministry of encouragement to members and regular attenders. Those in the church family sometimes come burdened, hurting, sad, or discouraged. A warm welcome by a caring brother or sister in Christ can have a tremendous impact on a member's spirit and focus, and can aid in preparing their hearts for corporate worship.

Because worship is the end for which we serve, your effectiveness to minister in the welcoming ministry will be measured by your personal preparedness to worship God. You cannot assume to be authentic and effective in aiding others to worship the Lord when you yourself are not. As a ministry designed to prepare and encourage the proper worship of God, personal worship must be our highest goal—both in ministering to others *and* in preparing our own hearts to be ministered to by the preaching of God's Word, prayer, praise, and participation. If service in the welcoming ministry hinders your personal worship, then please give careful consideration as to how you might serve so that (a) your service is an expression of worship that (b) does not interfere with your corporate worship during the service. If you cannot do both, then we would encourage you to talk with the welcoming ministry Coordinator. We encourage you to maintain your personal worship to God as priority.



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## Service Positions

### Coordinator

The Coordinator is the Lead Usher for the day. The Coordinator may or may not be the same person each week. The welcoming team should be notified who the Coordinator is for any given service. This notification may be disseminated by the church office or in person.

If the Coordinator is not able to perform his duties at the date and time scheduled he is responsible to (a) find someone who is willing and able to serve in the capacity of Coordinator and (b) notify the welcoming team of the change. All substitutions must be confirmed by verbal communication (either by phone or in person).

Qualified men are appointed to serve in the Coordinator position by the Overseers.

### Greeters

Greeters are responsible for greeting and welcoming all attenders, assisting newcomers, and dispatching attenders to Ushers. Greeters must be members in good standing. Married couples are encouraged to serve together in this position.

### Ushers

Ushers are responsible for assisting people to be seated, escorting people to the children's ministry (or elsewhere), escorting people to other ministers, answering questions, offering assistance to the disabled, being available to potentially lead or assist a person in prayer, and directing people in emergencies. It is generally encouraged that men are appointed to serve in the capacity of Usher as it may involve demanding leadership responsibilities, especially in the case of emergencies. Ushers must be members in good standing. Ushers are not Greeters.



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## General Guidelines

Serving the Lord in His church in any capacity is a privilege, responsibility, and blessing. The welcoming ministry is no exception. Service that is rendered from the heart is an act of worship and should be approached as such. We are called to live in the mindset that “whether you eat or drink, or whatever you do, do all to the glory of God” (1 Corinthians 10:31). Moreover, we are instructed that when we as a church come together, “all things should be done decently and in order” (1 Corinthians 14:40). For these reasons, the following guidelines are recommended.

### *Overview*

Greeters and Ushers should be well groomed, friendly, and pleasantly attentive to the arrival of people. Welcomers (Greeters and Ushers) should be dedicated to their service, available and ready to greet, usher, and assist people as they arrive and enter the auditorium. Greeters should offer a kind handshake to all. They should ask the names of people they do not know, hand out visitor cards and packets to newcomers, and offer assistance and directions (for childcare, bathrooms, water, etc.). For newcomers, Welcomers should offer to escort parents to the children’s ministry area and introduce them by name to the children’s ministry volunteer(s). If available, Welcomers should introduce newcomers by name to the Pastor. Welcomers are encouraged to move in an easy and unhurried manner, speaking softly and respectfully to help foster an atmosphere of worship.

### *Expectations*

We greatly appreciate responsible and joyful Welcomers (Greeters and Ushers). Again, Welcomers are stewards of the hospitality of Christ’s church among us. Welcomers should be considerate of attenders and other serving members, sensing their feelings, aiding in the cultivation of loving service to one another, and minimizing one’s own convenience. This may mean enduring some personal discomfort in order to aid in providing a comfortable and reverent environment for others.

This section outlines four major categories of responsibility that are expected of all who serve in the welcoming ministry.



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## 1. Please Be Prepared

Welcomers who seek to honor the Lord in their service will prepare themselves mentally, physically, emotionally, and spiritually.

### *Spiritually*

Most important of all, please be prepared spiritually. Please take a few moments at home to set your heart on the Lord and honoring Him with joyful service. Again, this is an important ministry and requires preparation, and there is no more important preparation than your heart before the Lord. Personal devotions and prayer are encouraged.

### *Physically*

Personal appearance should reflect a respectful consideration of others. Although styles may vary, clothing should be clean, neat, and conservative (see below). Good grooming, with special attention to the nails, teeth, and hair, is important. Likewise, personal hygiene, with particular attention to body and breath odors, is important. Only light use of perfume or cologne is encouraged as some people are allergic.

### *Dress Code*

While we fully understand that styles vary with culture, manners, and customs, we encourage attire that is most widely recognized as respectful and modest. Please do not wear jeans, T-shirts, tank tops, sweats, shorts or tight-fitting apparel.

- Men should wear slacks and a dress shirt or sweater. Ties are recommended, jackets are optional.
- Ladies should wear modest dresses, skirts, or dress slacks. Skirts should be at or below the knees.

On occasion, a more formal (or informal) dress code may be recommended when the situation warrants it.

## 2. Please Be Reliable

Serving in the welcoming ministry is an important commitment. As a volunteer ministry, it is substantially dependent upon the reliability of its volunteers. If you volunteer to be a Welcomer we ask that you commit to serve on a regular basis for at least three months.

Welcomers are expected to be present when scheduled. If a Welcomer cannot fulfill their commitment, they should find a replacement and verbally notify the Coordinator as soon as

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possible. More than one absence without proper notification may result in being removed from the monthly schedule.

In order for this ministry to serve its purpose effectively, Welcomers should be prepared and ready to serve at least 20 minutes before the service begins. Your timeliness is important for all, both attenders and others serving. Habitual tardiness will negatively impact this ministry and may result in removal from the monthly schedule. Please be reliable.

## 3. Please Be Welcoming

Being “welcoming” involves being sensitive, considerate, caring, and genuinely interested in how others feel. The following list identifies several ways to be more welcoming:

- Smile
- Be attentive to those arriving and guard from talking with friends standing by
- Take initiative to greet people and offer a firm but warm handshake
- Speak to people in a kind and pleasant manner; be friendly
- If you do not recognize a person, ask their name and if they are a first-time visitor
- Address people by name
- Wear a name tag
- Show a genuine interest in people
- Give your undivided attention to those with whom you are speaking
- Show a readiness to serve or assist in any way, especially for the elderly and any who are disabled
- Thank newcomers for visiting and offer a welcoming brochure

### *An Important Note About Hugging*

Please remember that not everyone is comfortable with giving and receiving hugs. *Greeters do not initiate hugs and only shoulder-level hugs may be reciprocated by a Greeter.* There is to be absolutely no full body contact if you reciprocate a hug. Please be discerning.



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## 4. Please Be Helpful

Both Greeters and Ushers are commissioned not only to greet and help people find a seat, as “first representatives” they are also given the task of offering direction and assistance to any who may need it. A couple of very practical suggestions to improve helpfulness for newcomers include:

- Offer to escort a family with children to the appropriate children’s ministry area if they are interested; reassure parents that their children are welcomed to stay in the sanctuary with them if they prefer
- Point out the locations of the restrooms
- Offer visitor cards and packets to newcomers, encourage them to visit the Information Table, and offer to introduce them to the Pastor after the service
- Offer to answer any questions any may have
- If coffee, tea, hot chocolate, etc. are still available, invite them to help themselves in the designated area (please remember that food and beverages are not allowed in the sanctuary)
- Be familiar with the contents of the welcome brochure, the weekly bulletin, and all handout material. Make yourself available to answer questions and point people in the right direction (i.e. for sign-up forms, print materials, resources, etc.)
- When a question or need comes to you that you are not able or prepared to handle, please gracefully lead them to the Coordinator or other appropriate party

### *Before the Service*

#### Coordinator

- Prepare spiritually, physically, emotionally, and mentally (see above).
- Please be ready to serve at least 25 minutes before the service.
- Put your name tag on, review the bulletin and any special material, and check with Pastor for any special considerations or instructions.
- Please ensure that the Information Table is setup (unless the weather does not permit).
- Be attentive to the direction and needs of other Greeters and Ushers as you serve in the same capacity.
- As you serve in one or both of the welcoming capacities, please model the respective guidelines.



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## Greeters

- Prepare spiritually, physically, emotionally, and mentally (see above).
- Report to the Coordinator and be ready to serve at least 20 minutes before the service
- Put your name tag on, review the bulletin and any special material, and take your station by the front entrance.
- Warmly greet and welcome all arrivers.
- Please kindly avoid excessive conversation with people you know, and be deliberately attentive for newcomers.
  - If engaged in a friendly conversation while a newcomer approaches, please politely ask if you can continue your conversation after the service and express your responsibility to greet others as well.
- Be sensitive and considerate of others, welcoming them according to the guidelines outlined above.
- Handout any print material appointed for that day (i.e. bulletins).
- In a friendly manner, dispatch arrivers who need assistance finding a seat to an Usher.
  - Sometimes Greeters will also serve as Ushers. In this case, it is still recommended that the front door remain attended at all times by at least one Greeter. Kindly ask the person to stand with you until you are able to either dispatch them to someone who can usher them or you are able to usher them to a seat while someone else attends the front door.
- During prayer, please do not talk or open/close doors; encourage attention and reverence to any who may be standing by.
- Please continue to make yourself available at the front door for at least 10 minutes after the service begins to assist potential late comers, especially first-time visitors.
- Doors should be quietly closed before Greeters take their seats.

## Ushers

- Prepare spiritually, physically, emotionally, and mentally (see above).
- Report to the Coordinator and be ready to serve at least 20 minutes before the service.
- Put your name tag on, review the bulletin and any special material, and take your station by the front entrance.
- Please kindly avoid excessive conversation with people you know, and be deliberately attentive to assist the Greeters.



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- Be sensitive and considerate of others, welcoming them according to the guidelines outlined above.
- When assisting people to find seating, please lead them to their seat and never follow.
  - You may have to kindly and discretely ask people who are already seated to move over in order to make room for those you are seating.
  - When adequate room is made available, stand beside the row that you have just prepared and kindly indicate that seating is now available to those you have led.
- During prayer, please do not talk, lead, or seat people; encourage attention and reverence to any who may be standing by.
- Please continue to make yourself available and assist the Greeters for at least 10 minutes after the service begins to assist potential late comers, especially first-time visitors.

### *During the Service*

#### **Coordinator**

- The Coordinator may take his seat with his family during the service, but should be prepared to assist or provide direction if needed. Alternatively, a Coordinator may stand or sit near the entrance. During prayer or any special time at the pulpit it is best to stand at the entrance so as to discourage passage through the doors. In the event of an emergency, the Coordinator should make himself available to assist and offer direction.

#### **Greeters**

- Greeters may take their seat with their families during the service once they have concluded their availability to latecomers. Greeters are encouraged to reserve a seat at the outside of the isle to minimize disruption when they take their seat.

#### **Ushers**

- Ushers may take their seat with their families during the service once they have concluded their availability to latecomers. The best time for Ushers to take their seat is during the final song.



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## *After the Service*

### Coordinator

- During the closing song, the Coordinator should resume his station near the entrance.
- The Coordinator should ensure that the Information Table is attended by a Welcomer.
- If possible, the Coordinator should assist in Greeting people as they depart.

### Greeters

- During the closing song, Greeters should take their station at the entrance.
- Doors should remain closed until the congregation is dismissed.
- A Welcomer should take their place at the Information Table just outside the entrance.
- Upon the conclusion of the service, Greeters should immediately seek out people who identified themselves as guests.
  - Make sure that all of their questions have been satisfactorily answered.
  - Ask them if they filled out their visitor card.
  - If the church is offering a free gift for first time guests, direct them to the information table to pick up theirs.
  - Offer to introduce them to the Pastor.
  - Tell them how much we have enjoyed having them with us for the service.
  - Invite them to join us again at the next week's service.
  - Be prepared to direct people to the Pastor, any of the Overseers, or an Usher for prayer if the need is expressed.
- Follow-up with information and assistance to anyone who expresses interest in our church.

### Ushers

- Immediately after the service, Ushers are encouraged to assist the Pastor with any special requests that he may have and with any prayer needs that attenders may have.
- Ushers are also encouraged to offer assistance to Greeters or serve at the Information Table.



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## Handling Emergencies

In the rare occurrence of an emergency, the Coordinator and any available Overseer assume charge to carry out emergency procedures. Ushers are expected to respond as a team prepared to assist at the direction of the Coordinator.

- **Medical Emergency** — In the event of a medical emergency, an Overseer or the Coordinator (whomever is located first) will decide if 911 needs to be called. If emergency treatment is obvious, others may call 911 before the Coordinator or Overseers are notified. The Coordinator should be prepared to direct assistance as needed, which may include parking lot control and clearance for emergency vehicles, the removal of people from the sanctuary, the removal of chairs, furniture, etc., or appointing personnel to comfort and possibly redirect others.
  - The Coordinator and Ushers should all know where the first-aid kit is located (in the first kitchen cabinet near the entrance to the kitchen) in the event of a minor incident.
- **Security Situation** — Remember that Greeters and Ushers are representatives of the church, they are not responsible to police potentially dangerous situations. The security role of Greeters and Ushers is as follows:
  1. Your primary security tasks are to *observe* and *assess* people and situations and take appropriate action.
  2. *Get assistance rather than trying to handle a situation on your own.* Do not attempt to detain a person who wants to leave before the police arrive. Get a good description and write it down and watch or follow to see where he or she goes.

Call the police or have someone else call immediately, if the person:

- Appears under the influence of alcohol or drugs.
- Says or does anything that indicates he or she may harm anyone, including comments that he or she doesn't want to harm anyone.
- Does not immediately cooperate with requests to leave or stay out of the sanctuary or other parts of the building, or to stay away from members of the congregation if he or she is disturbing them.



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- **Fire** — The Coordinator and Ushers are to guide everyone out of the building. Children's ministry workers are responsible for evacuating the children according to the designated emergency exit routes. The parking lot will need to be kept open and the building accessible for emergency vehicles.



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## Volunteer Considerations

- You understand the importance of the welcoming ministry
- You enjoy and care about people
- You possess a servant heart
- You are committed to the vision of Trinity Bible Church
- You are supportive of the leadership at Trinity Bible Church

## Welcoming Checklist

- Prepared (spiritually, physically, emotionally, and mentally)
- Name tag
- Bulletin reviewed (and any special material)
- Information Table is properly setup
- A seat is reserved for you near the outside of the isle
- Smile

Let us serve as unto the Lord and let us build one another up for the worship of God in all things:

*“Let us draw near with a true heart in full assurance of faith, with our hearts sprinkled clean from an evil conscience and our bodies washed with pure water. Let us hold fast the confession of our hope without wavering, for he who promised is faithful. And let us consider how to stir up one another to love and good works, not neglecting to meet together, as is the habit of some, but encouraging one another, and all the more as you see the Day drawing near.”*

Hebrews 10:22–25

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<sup>1</sup> Lynette Hawkins, *Ushers: Creating An Extraordinary Welcome* (Greensboro, NC: Beyond Marketing Group, Inc., 2010), 15.

