

INFORMATION FOR TEMPLE SHALOM USHERS

Thank you for agreeing to serve as an usher. You are performing a *mitzvah* when you help make the services more meaningful, moving, and enjoyable for those attending. It is the usher who sets an appropriate mood as people arrive. We hope the following will provide you with the information you need. Remember, *anyone* can hand out books, but the following will help you be a *great* usher!

1. WHEN TO ARRIVE

Please arrive at least 15 minutes before the service is scheduled to start. This will give you a few minutes to get organized. First, check the weekly brochure to find out if there is any special event (such as a Bar or Bat Mitzvah, or a baby-naming). If there is, you'll be better prepared to know who to expect. Second, please touch base with the Hazzan, Rabbi, Lay Leader, and/or Gabbai Rishon¹ if you have any questions or to see if they will need any special assistance. Until Temple Shalom has a permanent Rabbi, we are using members of the congregation to lead services. For some special events, such as a Bar or Bat Mitzvah, we will have guest Rabbis leading the service.

You may wish to prepare the prayer books so that you can easily give them out as people arrive. Often, groups of people will arrive at the same time. Some ushers have found it convenient to organize the books and leaflets so they can be passed out as a set. (E.g., on Saturday morning, you can have one Siddur, one Chumash, and one leaflet already together as a set.)

To the left of the bookshelves, you can find a schedule listing the names of those with special assignments during the service (e.g., reading the Torah, chanting the Haftarah, or Gabbai Rishon). Also posted there is a summary of these instructions.

2. WELCOMING PEOPLE

Greet everyone with the appropriate greeting — “*Shabbat Shalom*” (Friday evening and Saturday morning) or “*Chag Sa-may-ach*” (Holidays).

Hand each person the appropriate book(s) for the service (Friday nights, Gates of Prayer and Etz Hayim – Saturday mornings, Siddur Sim Shalom and Etz Hayim) and provide them with the Weekly Temple Bulletin. When there is a Bar or Bat Mitzvah, also provide them with the booklet explaining the religious symbols and services.

Hand each man and boy a kippah. Especially on Friday evenings, men and boys following the reform tradition may decline to cover their heads. During morning services, you may wish to explain to non-Jews that it is a sign of respect for men to cover their heads in the sanctuary. (However, it is not a rigid requirement if they would rather not do so.)

1. Gabbai Rishon — On a Shabbat or festival morning, this is the person who is in charge of the Torah service. He or she assigns honors such as aliyot, English readings, and special blessings. Upon arriving, some people may inform you of an event or situation that would entitle them to an honor or special blessing. This could be a recent birth or death, *yahrzeit* (anniversary of a death in the family), or return from a trip. Please let the Gabbai Rishon know. Also, the Gabbai Rishon may ask you to let him or her know when a particular person arrives.

If there is a Bar or Bat Mitzvah, inform members of the family and relatives that they should sit in the first few rows of the sanctuary.

3. RESPONSIBILITIES DURING THE SERVICES

Inform people when they may or may not enter the sanctuary. They may enter before and during the service, except when:

- a. The congregation is standing;
- b. When the Rabbi or lay leader is giving a D'var Torah or sermon;
- c. When the Torah is being read & the Haftarah is chanted (People may enter between aliyot);
- d. The Bar Mitzvah, Bat Mitzvah, or a parent is speaking; or
- e. When the Mourners Kaddish is being said.

When people enter the foyer from outside, and any of the above are occurring or about to occur, you may wish to tell them to please enter after this part of the service is over. Alternatively, you may close the left door to the sanctuary after the “*Bar’chu*” so people can see the sign on the door that informs them of this. If the wait is going to be very long, or if someone really wants to be in the sanctuary for a certain part of the service, you may allow people to quietly enter and stand along the wall to the left of the entrance.

If you are able to follow the services from the foyer and know what page in the Siddur or Chumash the congregation is on, feel free to inform anyone just arriving.

4. KEEPING ORDER AND ASSIST SEATING

Remind people in the foyer to keep their voices down so those in services aren't disturbed.

If the sanctuary is crowded, show late arrivals where there are empty seats.

If all chairs in the sanctuary are occupied, help set up additional chairs in the back of the sanctuary or in the aisle nearest the foyer. (Additional chairs may be found in the social hall.)

Do not collect books or perform any other activity during the services that might disrupt any of those who are praying or meditating.

5. AFTER THE SERVICES

Assist people in shelving the books as they leave services, by placing the Siddurim and the Chumashim on the shelves. Collect all the remaining books in the sanctuary and shelve them. Also, collect any bulletins and other leaflets that are left in the sanctuary.

Encourage everyone to go to the social hall for the Qneg Shabbat refreshments, or Kiddush lunch.

Thank you again for serving as an usher and contributing to the sanctity and decorum of the services.