



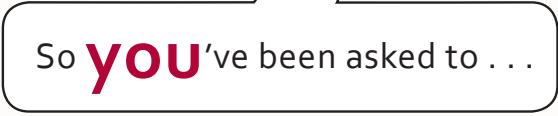

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So **you**'ve been asked to . . .

Greet or Usher



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Acknowledgments

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Can you recall what it feels like to be a stranger? To be the one “new” person in a situation or to navigate your way through a place that is unfamiliar to you? To watch as those around you gravitate toward familiar faces, easily making conversation with each other? To find yourself completely befuddled by a maze of strange hallways and doors and rooms? To have no comprehension of what those around you are talking about? To feel like you simply don’t belong?

Remembering what you experienced in those situations will help you identify with those who visit your church. It will help you understand what will make them feel welcome. When you warmly welcome visitors or members of your church to worship, you extend to them hospitality. This ministry of hospitality extended through the roles of greeting and ushering is a means of honoring God’s larger command that the church “practice hospitality” (Romans 12:13).

This pamphlet will offer practical tips on how to offer hospitality through the roles of greeter and usher, as well as ways to view these roles as a ministry of hospitality. If the practical suggestions become merely skills and techniques, our welcome will be lukewarm and half-hearted. However, when we connect our hospitality with our story of being welcomed and embraced through the grace and love of Christ, it becomes more than technique. Hospitality embraces people with God’s heart of love, creating a warm and welcome space where people can feel at home, where strangers become friends and family. If hospitality is connected to these passions, you will be able to develop and sustain a ministry of hospitality in your congregation.

Part of our congregation’s training for Churchbeing must be to nurture in all the members a spirit of hospitality. May the infinitely welcoming triune God teach us all to embrace our neighbors with the fullness of his love through our care and witness. Then, if they are drawn to worship the Trinity, may we each greet them warmly with graceful assistance and gentle mentoring and kindred ardor for all the ways in which God will teach us about himself through our corporate praise.

—Marva J. Dawn, *A Royal “Waste” of Time: The Splendor of Worshiping God and Being Church for the World*, Wm. B. Eerdmans, 1999, p. 134

Hospitality in the Name of Christ

In worship we are uniquely called to be both guests and hosts. Christine Pohl says that recognizing the church as God’s household has profound

implications for our ministry of hospitality. “More than anywhere else, when we gather as church our practice of hospitality should reflect God’s gracious welcome. God is host, and we are all guests of God’s grace. However, in individual churches, we also have opportunities to act as hosts who welcome others, making a place for strangers and sojourners” (*Making Room: Recovering Hospitality as a Christian Tradition*, Wm. B. Eerdmans, 1999, p. 157).

God invites and welcomes us into his presence to worship him. Christ is our host when he feeds us at the Lord’s Table. This grace-filled hospitality nurtures our passion for hosting and welcoming others. We long for others to experience the vitality of life in Christ. Because we belong to Christ, we become hosts that reflect the gracious character of God in Christ. Every believer then has the responsibility to offer and practice hospitality. Some people have a natural gift, and others learn to nurture and practice the skill of hospitality.

Creating a Hospitable Space

Greeters, ushers, pastoral staff, and members must work toward congruence in their message and practice of hospitality. Suppose the pastor or worship leader says something like this: “We welcome you in the name of Christ. If you are a guest, we hope that you will experience the presence of Christ and the warm fellowship of God’s people.” If the guest chooses to linger for coffee after the service and no one talks with him or her, the message given in the service does not match the person’s experience. The greeting and welcome in worship sets up an expectation for a more personal greeting before and after worship. You want the message of hospitality given in worship and in church literature to be consistent with the actual welcome that people experience—before, during, and after the worship service.

In your efforts to establish this hospitable space, the roles of greeter and usher will inevitably overlap. These ministries relate to one another and share similar tasks. Greeters and ushers can assist each other in their roles and should work together in anticipating people’s needs and knowing how to fill them.

A Note to Coordinators

Your church may ask one person to organize and create schedules for the ushers and greeters, or it may have a Welcome or Hospitality Com-