

The Chinese Martyrs Catholic Church
Usher Group - Group Leader's Manual
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Content

1. Mission Statement
2. Duties of the Group Leader
3. Performing Duties
 - 3.1. At Mass Services
 - 3.1.1. Assigning Duties to Usher
 - 3.1.2. Bringing Gifts to the Altar
 - 3.1.3. Holy Communion
 - 3.2. Traffic Duties
 - 3.3. Administrative Duties
 - 3.3.1. As a Manager
 - 3.3.2. Recruiting New Members
 - 3.3.3. Taking Attendance
 - 3.3.4. Certifying Volunteer Work
 - 3.3.5. When Help is Needed
4. Handling Emergencies
 - 4.1. In Case of Fire
5. Communicating with the Committee
6. Getting More Involved
7. Resignation

The Chinese Martyrs Catholic Church

Usher Group - Group Leader's Manual

1. Mission Statement

To serve the parishioners of The Chinese Martyrs Catholic Church by maintaining order, providing convenience and assisting in the needs of all people attending masses.

2. Duties of the Group Leader

Unlike a member usher, your duties are more towards the group than the actual performance of usher duties. You are the person that has to see “the big picture” instead of involving in doing the work. You are a manager and an agent between the committee and your members. As a manager, you are asked to plan, lead, organise and control your group. As an agent you are the voice of your group and the ears of the committee. You have to assign duties for your mass group, take attendance, assist in certifying volunteer work and perform general managerial duties of your group.

3. Performing Duties

3.1 At Mass Services

3.1.1. Assigning Duties to Usher

As the leader of your group, you are free to assign usher duties to your members. Try to have your group assemble about 10 minutes before the mass so that you do not have to tell them what to do during mass. Rotate the duties so your members will receive new challenges. Designate one usher who usually comes in early to prepare the church hall before the mass. If you have more than enough ushers to serve, try to set up a roster. If you spot any ushers in your group that are willing to take up more challenge, give them more responsibility and help them getting more involved.

3.1.2. Bringing Gifts to the Altar

You could either arrange the family yourself or you could designate an usher to carry out the duty. If you decide to let some of your members to try, make sure your delegate knows the procedure. He/She should arrive at the Church at least 10 minutes before the mass and invites a “family” before the mass begins. Pay attention to the “Offering Family Time Table” for parishioners volunteering to bring the gifts. Do not wait till the mass has started to invite the family, as it will disturb the parishioners.

3.1.3. Holy Communion

Assign ushers to guide parishioners for communion as early as you can. Confirm with the Eucharistic Ministers to find out how many Ministers are available for the two floors. Let your ushers know so that they know how to co-operate with the Ministers.

3.2 Traffic Duties

Every mass group having substantial attendance should designate a traffic team to direct traffic before and after the mass. The size of the team will vary depending on the number of mass attendees. One team member will become the traffic team leader and co-ordinates with the team leader of the previous and the next mass. The traffic team is not an independent organisation but belongs to the usher mass group.

3.3 Administrative Duties

3.3.1. As a Manager

A group leader is the highest administrative position of an usher mass group. It carries a much wider and different responsibility to an ordinary member. Being the manager of the group, we rely on you to set good examples for your group members. The committee has repeatedly asked our members to be punctual, to refrain from unnecessary talking, to observe the dress code and the spirit of service as outlined in our mission statement. When you become a group leader, you are expected to display conformance to these guidelines.

To assist you in administering your group effectively, you are encouraged to hold regular meetings with your group members. During the meeting you may exchange comments, review the quality of your members' work and show appreciation for their efforts. There is also a mechanism in place that allows us to discipline our members if they show repeated disregard of the Usher's Rules and Regulations and your warnings. However disciplinary action is a negative way of delivering a message and tends to provoke hard feelings. Use it sparingly.

3.3.2. Recruiting New Members

When your group needs help on a long-term basis, contact the Co-chairman or the Membership Co-ordinator who will arrange with the Pastor to post notices on our church's weekly bulletin. Let the Information Desk know about your recruiting so that they will direct the candidates to you. Membership application forms as well as the Volunteer Screening forms can be obtained from the Information Desk or the attendance book.

When you receive an application for membership, check if the preferred time of service is the same as your mass group and direct the applicant to the appropriate group leader if it is not. Check if the applicant fulfils our age requirement and briefly discuss with him/her about his/her intents and expectations. You may show the new member how to perform mass duties and start him/her on the job right away.

Mark the date of receipt clearly on the membership application form and forward it to the Membership Co-ordinator within the next week. The Membership Co-ordinator will then prepare for you a temporary badge, a copy of our Member's Manual and add the name of the new member to the attendance list. After you receive the Member's manual, arrange an orientation session with the new member within his/her probation period and explain to him/her our mission, duties and rules and regulations.

If the performance of the new member is satisfactory, inform the Membership Co-ordinator in advance and make sure the new member receives his/her personal badge after the probation period.

3.3.3. Taking Attendance

The attendance record is one of the tools that we can use to gauge members' participation. It is important that you should take the attendance every week and not leaving it up to the members to check in themselves. In case a member failed to report duty for a few weeks in a row, it might indicate that the member has come across a problem. Call the member and see if there is anything you can help.

The record is also referred to when the Church is asked to certify hours of volunteer work for our members (appropriate **only** to members who have joined **before August 16, 2003**). It may also form the basis for appreciation. The attendance book should therefore represent a genuine record of the member's participation.

3.3.4. Certifying Volunteer Work

From time to time, our members may require letters from our Church certifying their hours of volunteer work (appropriate **only** to members who have joined **before August 16, 2003**). It is our policy to issue certificates only after the member has been with our group for a minimum of 5 months. The individual should fill out a "Reference Requisition Form" (see Appendix B) which can be obtained from the Information Desk. After completing the form, the member should submit the form to you. Put down your personal comments on the front and sign it. Do not put anything on the back of the form as the reference letter will be copied on the back for record keeping. Send the completed form to the Membership Co-ordinator who will liase with our Pastor to issue the standard form letter. Allow two to four weeks for the whole process.

Sometimes, our member may require more than just the form letter. Discuss with your member and understand exactly what he/she needs. Draft out a letter and, with the

Membership Co-ordinator, submit it to our Pastor for his comment and signature. A copy of the signed certification must be returned to the church secretary for filing purpose.

3.3.5. When Help is Needed

During the summer time and at long weekends, there may be times that you will know in advance that you do not have enough ushers to serve an up-coming mass. Contact the Chief Co-ordinator a few days before the mass and the committee will try to arrange for extra help.

If you find out that you are short of a few ushers only moments before the mass begins, you are free to ask other parishioners to help you during that mass. Preferably, you should ask an usher who is serving another mass time or one of our previous members to help. The family members of an existing usher could be of great assistance. Also a lot of regular parishioners attending your mass would be willing to help. Give them a temporary badge and explain clearly to them what they are supposed to do.

4. Handling Emergencies

4.1 In case of Fire

When a fire broke out in the Church, or the fire alarm sounded, calm the people down and tell them that help is on the way. Instruct your group of ushers to help the crowd to leave the church building. Do not involve yourself into moving the people because you have the more important duty to supervise the complete situation.

Sound the fire alarm by pulling any one of the pull stations if it is not on already. Call 911 and the fire department to let them know there is a fire. It does not matter if someone else has already called. You can let them know one more time. Direct your ushers to areas that need assistance. Within the boundary of your own safety, inspect each room and make sure that everyone in the Church has left the building. You should be among the last few to leave.

5. Communicating with the Committee

As a group leader, you automatically become part of the committee and are requested to attend all committee meetings that are being held regularly over the year. If for any reason, you are not able to attend the committee meeting, hold a private discussion with your representative afterwards to understand what was discussed in the meeting. Minutes of committee meetings are usually ready within two weeks of the meeting.

During any other time, you are welcome to phone any committee member at any time, to discuss issues about your group. Frequently, the committee will send you minutes, agendas, notices, requests, newsletters or handouts for your distribution to your members. The committee will phone you in advance to let you know that some “mail” is waiting for you. Please pick up your “mail” promptly as there might be matters requiring immediate attention. Check your “mail box” regularly. If there is any thing you need to give to a committee member, you could follow the same route. Make sure you call the committee member before hand so that he/she knows that there is something he/she needs to pick up.

6. Getting More Involved

Leaders who are looking for a different type of challenge or wish to extend their effort to a bigger group of parishioners are welcome to hold other official positions in the committee. In order to co-ordinate among the different mass groups and participate in activities organised by the Parish Council, the group need a large administrative team to manage its operations. However to limit your workload, it is recommended that you resign from the post of group leader first before taking up other committee positions.

The committee is reformed once every two years. Prepare another member of your group to replace you as the group leader before the next committee is reformed. Volunteer to the new Co-chairman and you are on your way to new challenges.

7. Resignation

The usher mass group leader is a position that requires basic knowledge of the operations of our group, our mission, duties and some administrative skills. It is beneficial to all members of the group to have a smooth transition when an existing leader resigns and a new leader takes up his/her role. This transition could take up to several weeks when the resigning leader offers guidance and assistance to the new leader to allow him/her to familiarise with his/her duties.

Inform the committee at least four weeks before the date that you wish to resign. Proceed immediately to find a new leader and carefully taking him/her through the duties of a group leader. Hold a meeting within your group to officiate the transfer of duty and introduce the new leader to every member of your group. You would remain to be an ordinary member of the usher group after you resign as a group leader.