

Part 1: Considerations When Selecting Greeters and Ushers

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Greeters and ushers serve a truly important purpose in any church or place of worship. Often, their actions can become deciding factors for whether individuals and families will return to your services. Greeters and ushers should be welcoming to all attendees, but are used to help make services and special events less stressful, more accommodating, and more centered on the services.

How do you know what a good greeter or usher looks like? Here are a list of several things to consider before choosing someone to fill these positions. Remember, these are only considerations.

1. Is the applicant an active member?
2. Has the applicant been a member for at least 6 months?
3. How often does the applicant attend services?
4. When is the applicant available?
5. Do physical or medical issues hinder the ability to perform essential tasks?
6. Is the applicant able to pass a background examination and medical release?
7. Does the applicant possess good communication/people skills?
8. Does the applicant possess good observation skills?
9. Can the applicant provide several personal and professional references?
10. Does the applicant possess special skills or abilities that would make them a great candidate (i.e., prior work in the security, law enforcement, fire/EMS, or nursing fields)?

Just as guests and visitors come and go, so may greeters and ushers. There are a number of reasons that someone may no longer be able to work in this capacity (i.e., health issues, time constraints, attendance issues, etc.). If you need greeters and ushers or just need to add a few extra individuals for an upcoming event, here are a few more suggestions to get things going. Try providing a short presentation prior to or during services stating that greeters and ushers are needed. You can say something like: Interested members can report to this designated individual after services, or a designated date and time can be established to meet with interested individuals.

It is recommended to have additional greeters and ushers on-hand to account for those on vacation, illness, events that may require additional assistance, and in cases where current

participants may not be used. It is also suggested that only “members” be used to fill the rolls of greeters and ushers, and only those members who have been members for at least 6 months and are currently “active.”

These are merely suggestions, but remember, safety and security of guests, visitors, and members is paramount and the individuals designated as greeters and ushers will be fulfilling positions of trust and may be required to assist children and others with minimal or limited capacities. In addition, keep an up-to-date list of greeters and ushers. Update whenever gaining or losing individuals. This list should be kept in a secure place and should include at a minimum: Full names, addresses, phone numbers, emails, and next of kin.

About the Author: Dr. Olivia Johnson holds a master’s in Criminology and Criminal Justice from the University of Missouri, St. Louis and a doctorate in Organizational Leadership Management from the University of Phoenix – School of Advanced Studies. Perseverance in raising awareness to officer wellness resulted in her being named the Illinois State Representative for the National P.O.L.I.C.E. Suicide Foundation. This role led to her being invited to speak at the FBI’s Behavioral Science Unit’s 2010 – Beyond Survival Toward Officer Wellness (BeSTOW) Symposium. Dr. Johnson is the Founder of the Blue Wall Institute, which trains first responders about health, wellness, stress, depression, and suicide. Dr. Johnson is a veteran of the United States Air Force and a former police officer; she collaborates with several law enforcement publications and is a columnist for PoliceOne.com. She is the Director of Security for a church in the Metro-East. Her services were contracted out by Crisis Systems Management to train military personnel worldwide on Critical Incident Peer Support (CIPS). She was recently invited to present at the FBI National Academy Associates Conference in Orlando in July 2013 and at the International Association of Chiefs of Police Conference in October 2013. Correspondence can be sent to: johnsonolivia@sbcglobal.net

Additional Resources:

- Aloha Church of God. (2009). *Usher/greeter handbook*. Retrieved December 21, 2013, from: http://www.alohacog.org/Resources/Usher_Greeter/UG%20Handbook%20Master.pdf
- Hawkins, L. (n.d.). *How to train church ushers*. Retrieved December 21, 2013, from: <http://www.slideshare.net/awesomeinsight/how-to-train-church-ushers-11821823>
- Johnson, O., Schardan, R., Lane, M. (2013). Safety, security, and contingency planning for places of worship and faith-based organizations. *The Journal of Law Enforcement*, 3(1).