



# Greeters Ministry Handbook

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*A detailed guide for all*  
Ushers & Greeters



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St. John of Damascus Church  
300 West Street, Dedham, MA 02026

Version 1.0  
*Last updated: September 1, 2012*

*“I was a stranger, and you welcomed me.”*  
*— Matthew 25:35*



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## Introduction

In 2012, the parishioners of St. John of Damascus Church embarked on many changes to set a new direction for the future of our parish. One of the major thrusts was to change the culture to become a more welcoming parish, both to our parishioners and to our visitors.

In the past, we've had a bengari team, consisting of four members of the Executive Board. This team changed each month. While this concept served us well for many years and took care of the basic ushering and church business each Sunday, there were a lot of challenges with this concept. Our focus moving forward is to eliminate the old bengari team concept and move towards the concepts of **Ushers** and **Greeters**.

In general, Ushers will be responsible for coordinating the activities in the vestibule, or narthex of our church. *(For purposes of clarity, the entrance to the church will be referred to as the vestibule throughout this manual)*. The Ushers will handle all the donations and Sunday collections. They will also coordinate all ushering required for Communion, Sunday Collections, Dismissal and any other special services that week. There will be 2-3 permanent head Ushers assigned and will rotate over the course of the year. A second Usher, assigned from the Executive Board, will assist the head Usher in these duties.

Greeters will be responsible for greeting parishioners and visitors to Liturgy each week. They will focus on making visitors feel welcome by showing them key areas of the church complex as needed, asking them to sign the guestbook, handing them our Welcome Card, inviting them to our coffee hour and following up with them after Liturgy. Greeters are volunteer parishioners with a passion for making all feel very welcome at Liturgy each week. There will be 2 Greeters assigned each Sunday and they will serve for the month. It's our intention to build the number of Greeters to 6-8 parishioners so they can rotate on a regular basis.

This manual has been written to document the duties and responsibilities of both the Ushers and Greeters. Usher specific duties will be designated in Green as follows – **USHERS** Greeters will be designated in maroon as follows - **GREETERS**

All Ushers and Greeters should be familiar with each other's duties in this manual, should there be a need to help each other out. In addition, the pastor, church secretary, executive board chairman and treasurer should also be familiar with this manual.

Any questions or changes to the process should be directed to the executive board for review and approval.

<p>This manual was written in August, 2012 by the newly formed Greeters Ministry Team. The softcopy of this manual will be kept on the computer in the church office and should be maintained by the Religious Committee of the Executive Board as changes occur.</p>
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### Version History

<u>Version #</u>	<u>Date</u>	<u>Revisions made</u>
1.0	August 30, 2012	Original manual written – John Haddad and Greeters Ministry Committee

## Arrival on Sunday mornings

**Ushers** Arrive at least 15 minutes before the start of Divine Liturgy

**Greeters** Arrive at least 15 minutes before the start of Divine Liturgy

## Preparation & Set-up

**Ushers** **Vestibule table** - Each Friday, the Church Secretary will put the following items on the vestibule table:

- **Epistle** – will be bookmarked to the reading for the current week. Ushers should check the Church Bulletin to make sure the reading matches where the bookmark is.
- **Donation Slips Box** – will be in a small index file box containing the outstanding donations that need to be paid.
- **Secretary and organizations folders** – to be used as communication medium between church secretary and Ushers team. There are envelopes for each church organization within the folder.
- **Ushers Summary Sheet** – this will be a summary of all the activities that the Ushers need to be aware of for church services that Sunday (e.g. 40 day memorial, churchings, organization to read Epistle and basket collections, etc.)

To set up the vestibule table area:

1. Take out supplies needed for the donations ... pens, paper clips and blank donation slips. These supplies are in the top drawers of the vestibule table.
2. Check in the organization folders for “mail” envelopes labeled for the various organizations. Distribute the “mail” in the envelopes to the individuals of the organizations (Treasurer, President or Vice-President) as they enter or leave the church. If you cannot find anyone, leave the mail in the folders for the following week.
3. Take out the collection tray and put on the vestibule table in the upper right corner.
4. Put on Usher’s pins so parishioners and visitors can easily identify you.

**Greeters** **Church Bulletins** - Each Friday, the Church Secretary will put the current week’s Church Bulletins on both the vestibule table and the counter across from the candles.

Greeters should prepare as follows:

- Each Greeter will take some Church Bulletins, Welcome Cards and Visitor Cards to pass out to visitors. (The Church Bulletin can also be handed out to parishioners)
- Review the Church Bulletin and Usher’s Summary Sheet (see above) for any special services being held that day.
- There should be one Greeter who stands at the front door in the vestibule and the

other Greeter who stands in the doorway between the church hall and the vestibule. This will cover both entrances to the church.

- Put on Greeters pins so parishioners and visitors can easily identify you.
- Check the entry area (foyer, narthex) for cleanliness and tidiness. Fix what needs to be straightened up.
- Be sure that you are familiar with some basic information about our church service and answers to common questions like “where should I sit”, “where is the bathroom?”, etc.
- Check the pamphlet rack to make sure it is stocked with pamphlets needed

## General Responsibilities

### Ushers

In general, it's the responsibility of the Ushers to:

- Process Donation Payments
- Usher Parishioners at dismissal after Liturgy
- Coordinate Epistle Readers
- Coordinate Weekly Collections
- Assist pastor in services where needed
- Usher parishioners and visitors as required
- Ensure that parishioners do not walk in to church during reverent times during the Divine Liturgy (Little Entrance, Great Entrance, Epistle, Gospel, Trisagion Hymn, Cherubic Hymn, Creed, Anaphora and Lord's Prayer, etc)
- Count donations and collections received and put money in safe
- Special Services – especially during Holy Week and Christmas will require special ushering schedules
- Keep reverence and quiet – The vestibule is a part of the church proper. It is the responsibility of the Ushers to politely ask people to refrain from talking in this area.

### Greeters

In general, it's the responsibility of the Greeters to:

- Greet and welcome both parishioners and visitors.
- Hand out Church Bulletins to all who want one.
- Identify visitors, hand them the Welcome Card and provide basics of church complex layout (rest rooms, where to sit, church hall, etc.)
- Invite visitors to join us in our social hall for coffee hour.
- Remain in Vestibule until after the Gospel is read, or soon thereafter, depending on the volume of visitor activity.
- Return prior to Holy Communion in order to usher everyone to Holy Communion
- Follow up with visitors and meet them after Liturgy to invite them to coffee hour
- Introduce visitors to pastor and other church members.
- Make visitors feel welcome and offer to follow up with them with any questions they may have.

## USHERS - Specific Duties

### Proper times for parishioners and visitors to enter the church

It is the responsibility of the Ushers (and Greeters) to keep the reverence throughout the service. Here are the guidelines for ushering parishioners and visitors into the church:

- *Prior to the start of Divine Liturgy* – parishioners and visitors may enter through the middle aisle or any of the side aisles
- *After the start of Divine Liturgy* - parishioners and visitors may only enter through the side aisles
- *Inappropriate times to enter the church* – Ushers and Greeters should guide our parishioners and visitors to not enter the church during the following parts of the service:
  - Trisagion Hymn
  - Epistle Reading
  - Gospel Reading
  - Sermon
  - Cherubic Hymn and Great Entrance
  - The Creed
  - Anaphora (“Let us stand aright” through “Especially our all-holy Lady ...”)
  - The Lord’s Prayer

### Epistle

The Ushers are responsible for securing a reader each week for the Epistle. Each month, one of the church organizations will be assigned to read the Epistle and will be noted on the Usher’s Summary Sheet from the Church Office. The Ushers should do the following:

1. Ensure the Epistle reading bookmarked matches the reading in the Church Bulletin.
2. Secure a reader for the Epistle before the start of the Divine Liturgy based on the who is noted on the Usher’s Summary Sheet. If a reader cannot be secured, then the Ushers should ask one of the parishioners if they would like to read. As a last resort, one of the Ushers should be prepared to read if no one is available to read that day.
3. Ensure the reader is ready right after the Little Entrance. The Usher should coach the reader in advance as to what to do and when to come to the Vestibule for the Epistle reading. There is a sheet of paper that is in the epistle that explains what the reader should do.

Here are the instructions for the Epistle reader:

- a) While the choir is singing "Holy God..." (or on certain Sundays, "As many as have been baptized...") get ready to come up to the front of the church by standing at the end of the first pew (either side of the church is fine).
- b) After the priest/deacon says "Dynamis" ( or “With strength “) come to the microphone facing the altar.
- c) The priest/deacon will say "Let us attend." And you will say the prokeimenon and its verse. The priest/deacon will then say "Wisdom" and you will say "The reading is from....." still facing the altar.

- d) The priest/deacon will then say again "Let us attend" and you will face the people and read the epistle.
- e) After reading the epistle, the priest will say "Peace be unto thee who readest." Come forward to kiss the cross and then return to your seat. After church, please be sure to return the epistle book to the ushers at the vestibule table.
- f) Remember to read the epistle slowly, loudly, and clearly.

## Donations

### Introduction

Donation requests to the church and the various organizations are either called in to the church office or sent in online via the website. These donations will be in the index file and will consist of a yellow copy and cardboard copy. Donors can also fill out new donation requests at the vestibule table for new donations. The donation slip consists of 3 copies:

- *White Copy* – this copy is used by the church secretary for putting donations in the Church Bulletin. The church secretary always gets the white copy.
- *Yellow Copy* – this copy is used as a receipt to the donor. If the yellow copy is still on the donation slip, it indicates that the donation has not yet been paid.
- *Cardboard Copy* – this is the last copy and is used for a record of payment. This copy is also returned to the secretary.

It is important to understand the various copies of the donation slip and how they are used in order to minimize any confusion to the church office and the donors. The sections below will show the Ushers how these are used.

### Church Donation Funds

As of August, 2012, the only valid church funds where people can donate are:

Church	Kurban (Holy Bread) & Flowers	Assistance Fund
Teen SOYO	St. John's Scholarship Fund	Ayoub Memorial Fund
Church School	Virgin Mary Society	Cardoos Library Fund
Choir	Fellowship of St. John Divine	Zahka Memorial Fund

### Processing Donation Payments and New Requests

This section describes the process for handling all donations and payments handled at the vestibule table. There are two situations that can arise:

- 1) **Existing donations** - When a donation is being paid for an existing donation (one that is already in the index file – yellow copy showing), perform the following steps:
  - a) Initial donation on the church representative line with your initials and mark paid (pd) with date
  - b) Give yellow copy to the donor as a receipt



- c) Attach payment with a paper clip to the bottom copy (cardboard) and put it in the church secretary's envelope in the folder.

**2) New Donations** - When a new donation is being made, in other words, donor fills out new donation form at the vestibule table, perform the following steps:

Ensure donor fills out all information on the donation form, including

- Who the donation is from
- What the donation is for (e.g., in memory of, good health of)
- What fund or organization the donation is being given to (see valid funds in previous section)
- The amount of the donation
- What date they want the donation in the Church Bulletin. The date they tell you is the date you will mark in the lower left corner of the donation form. (If they do not give a date, by default, mark the date of the following Sunday).

If the donor **pays** for the donation at the time they are putting the donation in:

- a) Initial donation on the church representative line with your initials and mark paid (pd) with date
- b) Attach the check to the white copy AND the cardboard copy. Place in the church secretary's envelope in the folder.
- c) Give yellow copy to the donor as a receipt

If the donor **does not pay** for the donation at that time, just put the entire donation slip (all 3 copies) in the church secretary's envelope. Make sure it is not marked paid. The donor does not get a receipt until paid.

In summary, all donations paid or new donation requests made at the vestibule table must be put in the church secretary's folder, no matter which organization the donation is for. The church secretary needs to record all payments made in the computer, then will distribute receipts and checks to the church organizations via the organizations folder.

## **Sunday Collections**

Money for the Sunday collections comes in 3 different ways: Collection Tray, Candle Boxes and Collection Baskets:

1. **Collection Tray** - The collection tray is simply the plate on the vestibule table where donors put money as they enter the church. Keep this tray neat.
2. **Candle Boxes** - There are 2 candle areas to the left and right of the entrance to the church. The Ushers should regularly check the candle donation box and baskets and take out all the money from them. Put this money in the collection tray for now. After Communion, do one more final check of the collection boxes and take out all monies.

**3. Collection Baskets**

The Ushers are responsible for coordinating the Sunday basket collections. The following details the steps required in doing the Sunday basket collections:

- In advance, make sure there are four (4) basket collectors assigned before the Great Entrance. There should be a church organization responsible for doing the basket collections

as noted on the Usher's Summary Sheet. If no one shows up after the Creed is recited, then the Ushers should get 4 people to do the collections.

- Basket collectors should arrive at the vestibule table immediately **after** the Creed.
- Baskets are found in the lower left cabinet of the vestibule table.
- Basket collectors line up at the center entrance of the church (double doors) after "Thine own of Thine own" is finished
- They proceed down the aisle, 2 by 2, when the priest says "Especially our all holy, immaculate, most blessed and glorious Lady Theotokos and ever Virgin Mary" (page 114, bottom of page in the Maroon Hard Covered Service Book or on page 19 of the blue or cream, soft covered The Divine Liturgy of St. John Chrysostom of the Eastern Orthodox Church).
- Collectors will stand in front of the sanctuary and kiss the cross offered by the priest, then proceed to do the collections. Two basket collectors are on each side of the church (one on the outside, one on the inside).
- The collection basket will not be passed to a family sitting for a 40-day memorial service.
- When basket collectors arrive back at the vestibule table, the Ushers quietly and discreetly moves the money into one basket. Please do not count the money. The money can be stored under the vestibule table until after Liturgy has been completed.
- Examine the collection money for any pledge envelopes or any loose checks. If the checks have an envelope number on them or state that they are for "pledges" or "dues", take them out and put them in the church secretary's folder.
- All church school envelopes and loose change received should be taken out and put in the church school folder at the vestibule table.
- After Divine Liturgy, the head Usher will take all the money into the church office and count it. See section on Post Divine Liturgy Duties.

### **Holy Bread (Kurban)**

After the Sunday basket collections an altar boy will bring Holy Bread to the vestibule table. There is a section of Holy Bread that is wrapped and labeled for each donor who donated for Kurban (Holy Bread) and Flowers. There is also a section that is given for the members of the Usher's team.

The Usher's team should attempt to locate the donors, if in church, and give them their Holy Bread. If the donor cannot be located, the holy bread should be given to other family members, or as a last resort, the Ushers can take home.

### **Ushering after Liturgy**

Once Liturgy has ended and the pastor comes out with the cross for the final blessing, two users will usher all parishioners and visitors to kiss the cross.

## **Special Services**

### **Churching of Baby**

Typically, the service of the churching of a baby happens after Matins and before Divine Liturgy. Other times it could happen after Divine Liturgy. Check the Ushers Summary Sheet for specifics.

When the parents and baby arrive, fill out the Churching Form in the vestibule table with the information indicated. Have a messenger send the form to the priest (deliver via the church school hallway to the Dean of Altar Boys) to let the priest know of the arrival.

Have Mother and baby wait for priest in Vestibule at center entrance to church. The priest will then come to the back of the church. The mother will then follow the instructions of the priest when he arrives to take the baby to be churched.

### **Removal of Crowns**

When the newlyweds arrive, fill out the Removal of Crowns Form in the vestibule table with the information indicated. Have a messenger send the form to the priest (deliver via the church school hallway to the Dean of Altar Boys) to let the priest know of the arrival.

Ushers should tell newlyweds to come to the Vestibule near the end of the Liturgy before the Final Blessing. The newlyweds will wait at the center entrance for the priest to call for them to come forward for the Removal of Crowns Ceremony.

### **40-day Memorial Service**

The 40-day Memorial Service is typically held on a Sunday near the 40-day anniversary of the death of a parishioner. When there is a 40-day Memorial Service, the church office will note this on the Usher's Summary Sheet (It should also be in the Sunday Church Bulletin)

The family usually provides *immeh* (or wheat), which the priest blesses during the Memorial Service. There is a small tray of loose *immeh* on the memorial table in front of the church. There are also plastic containers of *immeh* in the vestibule that will be handed out to parishioners after Divine Liturgy.

After the 40-day Memorial Service, the Ushers should remove the tray of loose *immeh* and bring back to the vestibule table. This tray is given to the family after Divine Liturgy.

The Ushers should ask someone to hand out the containers of *immeh* after Liturgy, or plan on doing it themselves. Each parishioner gets a container and a plastic spoon. All extra containers should go to the family.

## **Post Divine Liturgy Duties**

This section describes the final duties and responsibilities of the Usher's team after Liturgy has ended.

### *Vestibule table Clean-up*

The vestibule table area should now be cleaned up and everything put back as follows:

1. Put any mail that was not distributed back into the secretary and organizations folder "mail" envelopes.
2. Take this folder and index box back into the church office and leave on church secretary's desk.
3. Supplies – put paperclips, pens and blank donation slips back in vestibule table drawer
4. Excess Sunday Church Bulletins – put on counter across from the candle offering

### *Count money from collections*

The head Usher should take all money from the trays, collections and candle offerings in the church office and count the money in the church office.

Any checks that were put in the collections should be set aside with a note to the church secretary and put in her folder, as they may actually be pledge payments. The church secretary will determine if they are pledge payments or just a donation.

If there are any church school envelopes in the collections, put those directly into the church school folder. Also, any loose change is also put in the church school folder.

Then, the head Usher bundles all the money collected with an elastic and writes the total amount collected on a slip of paper, writes "Trays and Collections" on the slip, signs the slip and dates the slip. They then put the counted money in the church safe, or in a designated area agreed upon with the church secretary and treasurer.

## GREETERS - Specific Duties

### General

Greeters are at the front lines of evangelism at St. John's. Studies have shown that 70% of all people who visit a church make up their mind about coming back BEFORE the pastor even gets up to speak. Each two (2) person Greeter Team will guide and steer newcomers (Orthodox and non-Orthodox) through an experience as welcomed guests on any given Sunday.

Please arrive at least 15 minutes before the start of Divine Liturgy. Wear your Greeter's "Welcome" badge to identify yourself as part of the Greeters ministry. Remain in Vestibule until after the Gospel is read, or soon thereafter, depending on the volume of visitor activity. Return prior to Holy Communion in order to usher everyone to Holy Communion

Remember, it takes at least 6 or 7 contacts with a visitor before a person will join our parish. Your objective as a Greeter is to make their visit to St. John's a comfortable and welcoming experience. So be patient and understanding of visitors.

### Initial greeting of parishioners and visitors

Typically the initial greeting will take place from 15 minutes before Divine Liturgy starts to 20 minutes after the start of Divine Liturgy.

One Greeter will stand at the front door (across from the vestibule table), while the other Greeter stands at the entrance to the vestibule from the church hall.

Basic duties of the Greeter at this time are:

- A smile and words of welcome. A good greeting if you are not familiar with the person attending is "I don't think we have met before, I am <name>, a member of the parish." That way if they are parishioners, you can get to know them as well as meet new visitors.
- Hand each person a Church Bulletin. If they are visitors, you may want to point out the Epistle and Gospel readings.
- Try to get their name and contact information. Offer to have them sign the guestbook or fill out the Visitor Cards (but with no pressure) so we can contact them if they need more information.
- Hand the visitors a Welcome Card and point out specific areas in the pamphlet that will help them during Liturgy. These pamphlets will also be in each pew, so not to worry.
- Ask ushers to usher visitors to pews. Best to usher towards the front of the church so visitors can better experience the overall service. Leave it up to the visitors.
- Offer an invitation to join them in the Parish Hall after the service for coffee and fellowship

### Familiarize visitors with the church

Help visitors to familiarize with information about the church and hall (as appropriate) by showing them:

- Where the candles are should they want to light a candle and offer a prayer

- Where the bathrooms are
- Changing rooms for babies in rest rooms
- Church School
- Coat racks
- Where additional information about the Parish and Orthodoxy is available (one pamphlet rack in vestibule & the other near the Church School entrance)
- Parking and entrances to the church (from front and hall)
- Where they might sit upon entering the Nave
- Offer to usher them if they would like (can usher up middle aisle before Divine Liturgy starts, but once Divine Liturgy begins, must use side aisles – See proper times for entering church in Ushers section)

## **Ushering Communion**

The Greeters are responsible for coordinating ushering at Holy Communion. The Greeters should come to the vestibule shortly after the Lord's Prayer is finished.

Typically, the church school students are ushered first, pew by pew. Here is what should be done for ushering communion:

1. The Greeters should proceed to the first pew and wait there when they see the altar servers come out.
2. Begin lining up the students for communion just right after the completion of the Communion Prayer. This helps expedite communion. Pay attention to how many chalices will be used (typically there are 2 if there is a deacon or another pastor serving with our pastor). Line up students in multiple lines.
3. The Greeters then walk together backwards and usher the church school students pew by pew. This keeps Communion reverent and orderly.

Once all the students have lined up for Communion, then the Greeters will proceed to the first pew once again. Then, they will usher Communion for the remaining parishioners, once again, ushering row by row. Once all parishioners have been ushered, then the Greeters can get in line to receive Communion and return to their pew for the remainder of Divine Liturgy.

## **Post Divine Liturgy follow up**

After Divine Liturgy, each Greeter should try to follow up with each visitor as follows:

- Each Greeter invites a visitor to coffee hour and goes with them.
- Offer a tour of the church complex
- The Greeter introduces the visitors to other parishioners at coffee hour who have similar interests to the visitor.
- The Greeter introduces the visitors to the pastor
- As appropriate, Greeters introduce to members of Teen SOYO, Fellowship, Church School or other organizations. (This may not be until second visit so not to overburden guests)

## **Write a personal note of thanks**

If we were successful in getting contact information about a visitor, the Greeter should write a personal, hand written note to the visitors using St. John's Greeters Ministry note cards. In the note, we should:

- Thank them for attending St. John's
- Offer if they have questions to contact the pastor or the Greeter
- Let them know we look forward to seeing them again soon
- If the visitors have children, have Church School and/or Teen SOYO also follow up with a personal note.
- If appropriate, there should be a follow-up call by either the Greeter and/or the pastor within two days of the visit to the church. This is based on the decision of the Greeter.

*Remember ...*

Treat the visitor as you would want to be treated in their situation.

Try to balance between providing just enough support to make the visitor feel welcome but not so much that "friendly becomes annoying".

Be a listener more than a talker. Hear their story. Really listen. Emphasize the things you have in common, especially the Bible, our common denominator.

Have fun! You are performing a very important job in St. John's overall outreach and evangelism. Make it a fun experience.

**What Visitors liked / What Visitors did not like**

*What Visitors liked*

- Nothing special during the service; treated no differently
- Greeted individually after the service by parishioners
- Information about the church was made available
- Received a thank you note from the priest and Greeter that week
- Voluntary, church sponsored reception after the service

*What Visitors did not like*

- Pastor or parishioner visiting their home that week
- Asked to wear a name tag at the service
- Asked to identify themselves, as a visitor, during the service
- Small gifts brought to their home as a thank you for visiting
- Preaching Orthodoxy to them or being pushy about joining the parish