

**ASSISTING MINISTERS**  
**@ Immanuel Lutheran Church**

The very title of the role you have accepted implies two things: 1) you will assist; and 2) you will minister. Please note: you are an *assisting* minister, not an *assistant* minister. You are not “second in command” at liturgy—for no one, save God, commands liturgy. You are not assisting the presiding minister (the pastor), but assisting the “liturgy”—the “laity-energy,” the “work of the people” itself. You work with all the leaders and with all the people in worship to assist them in praising God. And you are a *minister*—one who serves. Your service involves doing those things that make it easier, more natural, and more graceful for the whole assembled body to unite in communion with God.

Samuel Beckett once wrote about his own death: “I shall be natural at last.” It is this attitude we strive for in preparing work worship—a self-diminishment, a naturalness, that allows us to minister almost invisibly. If you do nothing else as an assisting minister, strive and pray for the grace to disappear in your serving so effectively that people don’t realize you were even in their midst. The best way to accomplish this is to let the words and actions for which you are responsible determine everything you do, and the way in which you do it.

**Preparation**

- Get up early enough to be fully awake when you arrive at church.
- Hum during your morning routine of showering and dressing to gently warm up your vocal cords. Be careful with caffeine and antihistamines which can dry your throat; and avoid dairy products which can put a “frog” in your throat.
- Arrive at church early enough to check in with the pastor for specifics about the day’s service. (You should know from the previous week and/or your own prior questioning of the pastor what setting we will be in and whether there is a baptism, etc.)
- Find a moment to pray for patience, grace, confidence and the help of the Holy Spirit.
- Enter the worship service during the Processional Hymn on the Presiding Minister’s left.
- If the Brief Order of Confession and Forgiveness is used, the Presiding Minister may ask you to pour water into the baptismal font at the appropriate time.

**Kyrie, Hymn of Praise (10:30 service)**

- During the processional or the opening hymn, the Assisting Minister walks around the Table on the organ side to joining the Presiding Minister in facing the congregation.
- You may hold your printed materials or you may prop them up on the missal stand. If so, you can more naturally stretch out your hands, palms upward, in the traditional position of prayer (called *orans*).
- After the Prayer of the Day (which the Presiding Minister will offer), you may be seated with the other ministers.

**Psalm**

- After the first lesson, step out near the pulpit so that you can be seen easily as you announce and lead the psalm (you may step out as soon as the reading is completed.)
- Remember to turn on your microphone.
- Announce the psalm simply, noting any special instructions. Usually it’s enough to say: “The psalm for today (or “for the fifth Sunday of Easter”) is Psalm 23 which is printed in your bulletin. We will chant the psalm responsively.”

## **Prayers**

- The prayers will be on the pastor's desk prior to the 8:15 service, marked to indicate which service they will be used in. Read them through at least twice to discover difficult words or syntax.
- Remember you will offer them TO GOD and FOR the people assembled; it's important to offer them naturally and well.
- Note that the first sentence is ALWAYS the introduction to the prayers, not the first petition. There is no need to say: "Let us pray."
- Know by heart the seasonal call and response (it won't always be, "Lord, in your mercy..."). There will often be seasonal offertory and post-communion prayers as well. These will be with the other prayers and/or printed in the bulletin. (NOTE: If you get to the Table and neither you nor the Presiding Minister has the prayers, you may turn to page 72 in the front of the ELW and use some of the petitions offered there.)
- Share the peace following the prayers, and (at 10:30) go to the sacristy to use hand sanitizer.

## **Receiving the Offering**

- After the Peace (8:15) or during the Offertory (10:30), approach the back of the Table with the other ministers.
- Once you have set down your book/bulletin, step down to receive the offerings from the ushers. Presiding minister will receive the wine and bread first.
- Place the offering plates on the south (organ) end of the retable.
- Once the Table is set, begin the Offertory Prayer.

## **Holy Communion**

- When the elements have been consecrated, the Presiding Minister will commune you, and then commune the other ministers moving south to north. Presiding Minister communes after distribution.
- The Presiding Minister moves with a communion assistant to commune those who remain seated, during this time, the Assisting Minister will give chalices and trays to the communion assistants for distribution.

### The Distribution:

8:15 Communicants kneel or stand at the railing to receive Communion. Serving begins at the organ end and proceeds around to the pulpit end. The order is bread, individual cups, chalice, and empty tray.

10:30 Whether serving communion pilgrim style or at the railing, there are two serving teams. Once the ministers have communed, one bread server and one individual-cup server will commune those in the center aisle that are unable to come forward. A similar team will commune those in the designated section near the north aisle that are unable to come forward. If communion is at the railing, there is need of only one such team, and the other team (and related servers) will commune the choir while the first team is among the congregation.

When all those that are unable to come forward have been communed, the following procedure is used to serve the congregation:

At the railing: One team serves the choir from organ side to pulpit side, then when the second team arrives, the teams start distribution in the center and move to the sides. The order is: 1)bread, 2) chalice, 3) individual cups, and 4)empty tray.

**Pilgrim:** The two sets of ministers stand on either side of the aisle in front of the railing. The order is: 1) bread, 2) chalice, 3) individual cups, and 4) empty tray. Choir communes last. The ushers may encourage those coming from the balcony to receive only from the pulpit-side team in order to permit the other team to commune the choir. When serving the choir, the distribution team reverses its order.

**Serving:** When serving the wine/grape juice, lift the *chalice* to the communicant (don't lift it higher than your collarbone), and let her/him grasp or tip it in order to drink; lift the *individual cup* from the tray and hand it to the communicant. Say simply: "The blood of Christ given (or shed) for you." If you wish to offer a longer statement (perhaps for a festival day) such as, "The blood of Christ, the Cup of Salvation," please be sure to inform the other ministers for consistency's sake.

To bless young children or others who come forward for a blessing, say simply: "May God bless you today and always," as you make the sign of the cross in front of an older child or above an infant.

There will always be a Steward whose job is to replenish supplies. If you are running low, gesture to the Steward to get more (before you are completely out!). Don't bother transferring remaining full cups to another tray. We rarely need every single cup and it disrupts the flow of distribution. It is best to exchange trays after you have finished a complete cycle of serving rather than in the middle of a cycle.

Once everyone is finished, the elements are returned to the table and the Presiding Minister will indicate to the congregation that it is time to rise for the last verse of the distribution hymn or the table blessing. Remember that the final line of liturgical leadership is yours: after the Benediction or the Sending Hymn(whichever is later), you proclaim: "Go in peace. Serve the Lord;" or, the dismissal printed in the bulletin.

## **Baptisms**

- During baptisms you will assist with pouring the water during the baptismal prayer, placing the gown on the newly baptized; presenting the candle along with the words: "Let your light so shine..." (ELW, p. 231); and presenting the newly baptized to the congregation: "Let us welcome..." (ELW, p. 231).

## **Other**

- Remember that you have been called to and gifted for this ministry. As you focus on the liturgy you are assisting, you will automatically "die" to your self and disappear into the service you offer. Enter it with prayer and humility, and with a sense of God's grace that will allow you not to fret over the occasional mistakes that are bound to afflict us humans even as we strive to avoid them.
- Last, and most important, *Thank You* for responding to this call with care and commitment. Though you may succeed in becoming invisible in this work, you will never become unnecessary—and you will never be taken for granted. You are appreciated!