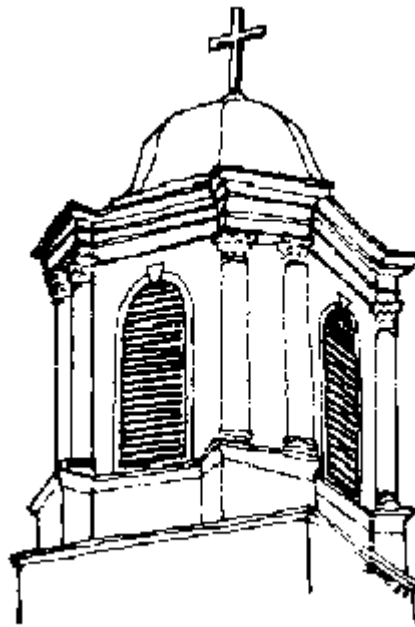


St. John's Episcopal Church
Norwood Parish

Welcome Team Guidelines



1st Edition
March, 2005

The Welcome Team's Mission

The mission of the St. John's Welcome Team is to ensure that everyone who walks through the doors at St. John's for worship feels that they are welcome, desired, and significant and that their return is important to the Church. It is also to ensure participation by parishioners in important roles of services.

To first-timers this means that they should feel free to sit anywhere, participate in whatever way they are comfortable in the service and communion, and should be encouraged to ask questions and pursue their potential involvement at any level with anyone in the Church. To newcomers this means they should be encouraged, but not pushed, to meet members of St. John's, become more familiar with the people and activities of the Church, and be encouraged to take the next step in participation.

To regular parishioners, this means that they should feel at home and an important part of St. John's, and should be comfortable being an unofficial greeter to all first-timers and newcomers. It also gives the parishioner an opportunity, through important participation in services, to learn in greater depth the workings of the Church, and in doing so increase their faith and commitment.

There is no mission more important to the Church than extending the hospitality of the Kingdom of God. You, the greeter and welcomer, are the first impression, the invitation to return, and the source of information for further involvement. And, most importantly, you are the messenger to newcomers and first-timers that we have a wonderful program we wish to share with them. It is up to you -- with God's help!

Welcome Team Guidelines

These Welcome Team Guidelines are intended to make the Welcome Team duties and responsibilities very straightforward and clear for those persons volunteering for Welcome Team assignments. They were produced for the first time in March, 2005 by the Welcome Team Committee which was formed in the fall of 2004 with the mission to revitalize the approach that St. John's takes to encouraging new members to the Church. This effort includes not only the greeting and encouragement of newcomers, but also the inclusion of parishioners in the processes of the Church.

It is vitally important that the welcoming process constantly be reviewed and improved. Therefore, it is requested that all persons who participate on Welcome Teams or those who observe their efforts communicate with the Welcome Team Committee or its successors and the leadership of the Church with their comments for improvement.

The Welcome Team Program has the following positions.

Welcome Team Members

Most services will have a Welcome Team. Usually each Team will have five or six members including an appointed Captain. The Welcome Team members will perform the duties previously performed by Greeters and Ushers but more as a team effort, with a greater overlap of duties and a greater duty of welcoming all who enter the Church. Under this issue (March 2005) of the Guidelines there will not be a Welcome Team for the 8:00 service, and the 5:00 service will have only one or two persons assigned as a Welcome Team member due to the casual nature of the offering and communion.

A Welcome Team for any given service will ensure that all persons entering the Church are greeted, that new members/visitors are identified and hosted, and that certain functions of the service are accomplished. Welcome Team members shall attend 'Meet and Greet' receptions that are held following their appointed service. The Welcome Team will be guided by the Welcome Team Guidelines.

Welcome Team Captain

Each Welcome Team will have a Captain. This position has the responsibility for ensuring that the Team is fully staffed for his assigned service, and that Team members accomplish all of their responsibilities. The Welcome Team Captain will also train new Team members and provide feedback to the Chairman of the needs of the Team and ways to improve the program.

Welcome Team Recruiter/Scheduler, 9, 11:15 and 5

Welcome Team Recruiter/Schedulers are responsible for finding and getting the commitment of parishioners to be on Welcome Teams. Recruiters will strive to make the Welcome Team well staffed, including substitute persons for regular Team members not being able to participate on an assigned Sunday. The scheduling effort will be to ensure that all services have a full compliment of Welcome Team persons.

Welcome Team Committee

The Welcome Team Committee has the responsibility of seeing that sufficient numbers of parishioners participate in the program and that all persons volunteering fulfill their positions. The Committee promotes the program and works for broad participation by the parish and to continually improve the program. The Committee is also responsible for maintaining, improving, and stocking whatever materials are needed by the Welcome Teams.

Chairman of the Committee

The Chairman of the Welcome Team Committee has the responsibility of leading the Committee to accomplish its duties.

Welcome Team Bulletin Board Organizer

The Welcome Team Bulletin Board Organizer will maintain the Welcome Team Bulletin Board. Among other items on the board will be the Welcome Teams schedules, promotional items to encourage parishioners to volunteer for Team participation, and general information about the Welcome Team program.

For each service the Welcome Team Captain will make the following assignments for his team:

- Preparation of the church before each service (usually this is the Captain)
- Welcomers for:
 - The front door (Narthex)
 - The West Avenue Lobby entrance
 - The Chapel entrance
- Collection of the Offering (two or more persons)
- Delivery of the Elements (two persons)
- Monitoring of the Communion (two persons)
- Counting attendance (one person)
- Collecting the children from the Children's Chapel service downstairs (one person)

Usually Welcome Team members have more than one assignment for each service.

These Guidelines are intended to give the necessary guidance and instruction for the duties and responsibilities of each Welcome Team member. It is important that each member give feedback to the Welcome Team Captain and the Welcome Team Committee to constantly improve the Welcome Team system.

Preparing the Church

The Welcome Team Captain usually takes the responsibility of preparing the Church for the service. This responsibility includes:

- ✓ Have a supply (5) of Newcomer Cards with pencils and “Welcome” brochures in the Narthex, West Lobby, and tower entrance.
- ✓ Ensure that the appropriate Bulletins (9:00 and 11:15) are available to hand out at the Narthex, West Lobby, and tower entrance (about 10). The Altar Guild places the bulletins in the Nave and at the table just inside the doors coming from the side entrance.
- ✓ Install the day caption and hymn numbers. (You get this from the Service Bulleting. (Selections preceded by an “S” will not normally be posted.)
- ✓ Turn on the lights in the chancel, including the pulpit light, if appropriate, nave, Narthex and exterior lights at the nave, tower and chapel entrances to make sure that ample lighting has been provided for the service. All lights will be at full level unless otherwise instructed. In warm weather, or at other times as appropriate, ensure that the fan or air conditioning equipment is operating.
- ✓ Check for any special instructions, see that the pews, book racks and “Voice From the Pew” cards are in good order
- ✓ Make sure that the public address system is turned on.
- ✓ Install the microphone at the lectern.
- ✓ See that hearing aid equipment is available for distribution in the Narthex. (These items are kept in a valise stored on a shelf in the sacristy robe closet.)
- ✓ Set up parking lot sign when attendance is expected to cause crowding in the adjacent parking lot.
- ✓ Set up the Children’s Chapel signs in the Narthex (stored in the north closet) and outside of the lounge (stored in the central stairway).
- ✓ Provide paper cups and a carafe of water for use by parishioners who may leave the service because they are troubled by a cough

Greeting and Welcoming

Every member of the Welcome Team is responsible for participating in the greeting and welcoming efforts for every service they attend in ADDITION to whatever other assignments they are given by the Welcome Team Captain or the schedule.

Assignment of greeting stations:

The Welcome Team Captain will assign the following positions for greeting and welcoming:

- ✓ The front door-Narthex(usually 2 or 3 persons)
- ✓ The West Avenue Lobby entrance
- ✓ The Chapel entrance

All Welcome Team members should participate in the following efforts except where one person is specifically assigned the duty.

Prior to the Service:

- Put on your Welcome Badge which is stowed on the Welcome Team bulletin board. (See Note 1).
- Become familiar with the activities of the church, the location of the Children's Chapel service, play room, meeting rooms, discussion groups, etc. so as to be able to answer questions asked by visitors, newcomers and uninformed parishioners.
- Open outer Narthex doors and generally prepare for the orderly seating of parishioners.
- Greet EVERYONE who enters. Be a warm smile and handshake for everyone, new and old. Stand outside in good weather, in the Narthex or West Avenue lobby otherwise. This is especially important at the Narthex/Wisconsin Avenue entrance so the general public can see our activity.
- Identify those you do not recognize, introduce yourself and ask if any guidance or information is desired.
- Hand each person a service bulleting and announcement sheet.
- Attempt to identify first-timers and newcomers with whom you should have further interaction before they leave church. Hand them a St. John's brochure and a Newcomer's Card
- Assist persons who are assigned reserved seats on special occasions, such as baptism services.
- When the church is crowded, Welcome Team members should help members of the congregation find seats. Always lead the way and then turn to face the person(s) as they enter the pew.
- Provide information in response to questions regarding the location of places and events in the Church (restrooms, nursery care, etc.).
- **If you determine an attendee is a first-timer or newcomer, let them know the following:**
 - They are welcome to sit ANYWHERE -- there are no reserved pews.
 - All persons are welcome to take Communion, or if they prefer, they can go forward and receive a blessing from the clergy and so signify by crossing their arms across their chests.
 - You are available for any assistance they need, from directions to hearing aids.
 - Request that they please identify themselves to receive a flower at the announcements and to please see you or the Clergy after the service
 - They are requested to fill out a Newcomers Card
- One Welcome Team member should remain in the Narthex for a few minutes after the start of the service to assist latecomers.

During the Service

- Ensure that the outer doors to the Narthex are kept closed during the service to reduce noise and distractions. In order to minimize noise and disturbances while the congregation is worshipping, doors to the nave from the tower, West Lobby and chapel are normally kept closed and are opened only at propitious times during the service.
- Help parishioners who are infirm or become ill during the service. In serious cases, seek the assistance of a physician and/or phone 911 to summon the Bethesda Rescue Squad.
- Turn off the fans or air conditioning units during the sermon or when necessary to allow special programs to be heard.

- Get the children from the Children’s Chapel. The person assigned this duty should leave the service as soon as the sermon is over, and hold the children in the Tower entrance area until the Prayers of the Day are completed.
- Count the attendees and report that count by the count is recorded on the attendance sheet located in the sacristy. This must be done after the children have come up to the Nave for the Communion. This must be done as quietly and inconspicuously as possible. A hand-held counter is kept in the ushers’ drawer in the sacristy for this purpose. The count includes the organist, all Welcome Team members, all members of the processional, and all worshipers seated in the nave and balcony. Following the service, the counter is returned to the Sacristy.
- At random times during each worship service, a Welcome Team Member shall conduct a security check of the undercroft, the church office suite and the sacristy in accordance with instructions provided by the vestry.
- Sitting toward the rear of the church also allows you to see who receives flowers after the Peace in order to approach them after the service.

After the service:

- As the choir is passing down the aisle, you should go to the exit doors and again try to identify newcomers and then approach them warmly.
 - Look for anyone you have identified as a first-timer or newcomer to the Clergy as they leave the Nave. If the Newcomer is amenable, escort them to meet the clergy.
 - Attempt to engage all those you have identified as a first-timer or newcomer.
 - Be sure they have filled out a Newcomer Card; collect it
 - Ask if they have any questions
 - Encourage them to join the coffee in the West Avenue lobby or any other event taking place after or between services
 - Attempt to engage them in conversation with you and others
 - Thank them for joining us and encourage them to return
 - Ensure they have something in their hand to allow them to easily reach the Church or the web site (at a minimum the “Welcome” brochures)
- When all opportunity to be with the newcomers is over, review the Newcomers cards for completeness and legibility, note your name and any information you have learned about the newcomer, and put all of the Newcomer Cards in the office on the secretary’s desk.
- On “Meet & Greet” Sundays (2nd Sunday of the month), we request that you join the group in the Lounge and ensure that new people have a familiar face to talk with.
- Make sure that the pews are policed. Remove bulletins and litter; straighten out and, if necessary, redistribute prayer books and hymnals; fold back kneelers;
- If no service is to follow in the main church, remove and stow microphones and hearing aid equipment, turn off P.A. system, turn off lights, fans or air conditioning units and close all doors. (Note: NEVER turn off the nave or chancel lights until after the organ postlude has been concluded.)
- Take any personal articles left in the pews to the church office.
- Recover parking lot sign if in use.
- Sort collected service bulletins and other collected paper material for deposit in recycling containers in the church office. Place white papers in the white collection bag and colored papers in the green collection bag.

Collecting the Offering

The Welcome Team captain will appoint two or more persons to collect the offering.

- Welcome Team members who are assigned to collect the offering should assemble quietly in a column of pairs at the rear of the center aisle of the nave during the announcements that normally precede the offering. Immediately after the officiant has said the offering sentence, the procession moves two by two toward the altar in step. As the procession arrives at the foot of the steps to the chancel, the lead members come to a halt. Others that follow file off to the right and left of the leaders. As all reach the foot of the steps they should be in a line parallel with the chancel steps with hands folded in front.
- The alms basins are brought from the altar by the acolytes and distributed to the Welcome Team members. The basins should be taken by both hands. When all the alms basins have been given out, the Welcome Team members to the right of center shall turn to the right and those to the left of center shall turn to the left.
- Welcome Team members assigned to the side aisles and/or balcony will proceed by way of the side aisles. The lead Welcome Team members will work in the center aisle. The Welcome Team members shuttle the alms basins back and forth to each other by alternate rows until the collection is completed. If no Welcome Team members have been assigned to cover the balcony, one or two should continue to the balcony, as necessary.
- At the conclusion of the collection, Welcome Team members shall proceed quietly but rapidly to the Narthex where the sleeve inserts shall be removed from the alms bags and the bags tied. They then reassemble in the same order as in the earlier procession at the rear of the center aisle of the nave. The alms basin will be carried in both hands. At the singing of the anthem, the Welcome Team members will proceed in step toward the altar and assemble in a line as they were when they received the alms basins from the acolytes. The alms bags are placed in a tray that one of the acolytes will bring to the line. Another acolyte will collect the empty basins.
- When element bearers are included in the worship service, the Welcome Team members will move to the left and right of center after they have handed over their plates to allow the element bearers to pass through the line and then close the gap after the element bearers have proceeded up the chancel steps. The Welcome Team members will remain at the foot of the chancel steps with hands folded in front until the elements have been received by the clergy and the bearers start to exit via one of the side cancel doors. On cue from one of the lead Welcome Team members the leaders will turn toward each other and recess in step to the rear of the center aisle of the nave, followed by the other Welcome Team members in a procession.

Delivering the Elements

The welcome Team Captain will ask two Welcome Team members to deliver the Elements during the service. You will deliver the elements by following those carrying the offering to the altar. If you are an Element bearer you may wish to sit toward the rear of the Church.

One of the greatest honors of being a Greeter is the opportunity to carry the elements to the altar for communion. The vessels are the Flagon for the wine and Plate or Ciborium for the bread, and will be

located on the small table in the rear left (facing the altar) corner of the Nave. The Altar Guild is responsible for ensuring the elements are in place before the service.

The steps for delivering the Elements are:

- Go to the rear of the Nave after the Offering has started. As the collection process is completed, you should gather the Elements and meet those delivering the offering at the rear doors of the Nave.
- For the presentation, follow the Offertory by a few steps. As you face the altar the bread should be on the right. The cue to start forward with the offerings is the singing of the anthem.
- The plates will be handed to the acolytes/LEM and then those carriers should step aside for the bearers to move forward
- Proceed to the Clergy, or to the altar, and hand the Elements to the Clergy.
- Return to your seats through the side altar doors if you are at the altar and by way of the side aisles.

Monitoring the Communion

The welcome Team Captain will ask two Welcome Team members to monitor the flow of parishioners to the altar to receive communion.

- During Communion: Normally at the 11 a.m. service the center aisle will be monitored by the senior and junior wardens and/or members who are former senior wardens of the parish. In the event that neither the senior nor junior warden nor any former senior wardens are present, the Welcome Team captain will assign Welcome Team members to fulfill this function.
- The monitors try to ensure that those who are to receive communion move forward in sufficient numbers to keep the altar rail filled and about five people cueing along the choir pews.
- Two other Welcome Team members will be assigned to open the side doors at the front of the nave and the exit doors at the choir, and then stand at the base of the steps in the side hallways to assist those who may have difficulty descending the steps as they return to their pew. These Welcome Team members will proceed by way of the side aisles at the same time as the monitors proceed up the center aisle.
- The Welcome Team member on the chapel side of the Nave will also ensure that the door to the sacristy is ajar and the exit door from the altar is opened slightly to permit unobstructed access for the removal of sacraments at the conclusion of the Eucharist.
- The lead Welcome Team member will notify the others attending the steps when it is time for them to receive communion. On the way out, these Welcome Team members will close the exit doors at the altar and choir and the side doors leading to the nave and retire to the rear of the nave by way of the outside aisles.
- After the monitors have received communion, they will close the exit doors at the altar and choir and the doors leading to the Nave (Chapel and Tower sides) and retire to the rear of the Nave by way of the side isles. If enough Welcome Team members are present, two may be assigned the duties of opening and closing the side doors and attending the steps. One monitor should leave by the altar door towards the Sacristy and ensure that this path and the Sacristy door is open for the Elements to be taken there by a LEM.

Notes

1. Welcome Badges and Bulletin Board

The Welcome Team badges will be stored on the newly created WELCOME TEAM bulletin board. It is located in the corridor of the Sacristy. The bulletin board will include schedules, Welcome Team information and name badges which should be retrieved and returned to this location each Sunday. The Welcome Team Committee has the responsibility of maintaining these important identifiers. If a badge is missing or needed, please note it on the sign up sheet on the bulletin board, and a new one will be made.

2. Newcomer Cards

Newcomer Cards are critical. A supply of them will be found on the counter top in the Narthex, on the West Avenue Lobby Newcomer table (in the top drawer of the small West Lobby table), and in the display rack in the West Lobby. Your opportunity to get the card into the newcomer's hand is both before the service and after, but BE SURE IT GETS THERE. Even if the newcomer wishes to fill it out later they should be encouraged to take one. You should also have a supply of pencils to give out with the card. The supply of Newcomer Cards is in a box in the Xerox room of the office.

Before the newcomer leaves the church you should try to get their card if they have completed it. Gracefully try to ensure that it is complete. Add YOUR name and date any comments you have. (If you do not get their card, consider completing one with whatever information you have established and submit it.)

3. Information Documents for Distribution

Other information documents are stored at the same locations as the Newcomer cards: On the counter top in the Narthex and on the West Avenue Lobby Newcomer table (as well as in the top drawer of the small West Lobby table).

Handouts that should be readily available at these locations include:

1. Welcome to St. John's Brochure
2. Opportunities to Serve booklet
3. Intro to St. John's class information
4. Christian Education Schedule
5. And others.

Each Welcome Team member should at least be familiar with this information, so go over it before the service of your first day.

4. The Schedule

Schedules for assignments are mailed out about a month before the period begins. Please be sure you put your dates into your personal calendar and double check yourself on the Worship Bulletin Board.

The Welcome Team Scheduler may be contacted at any time.

5. Missing Your Scheduled Day

As with all commitments, there will be times when you cannot make your scheduled assignment as a Welcome Team member. When this happens you should make the effort to find your replacement from the list of potential members provided to you or on the bulletin board. If your absence is anticipated, you should notify your Team Captain and the office by the preceding Wednesday so that the bulletin can be correct. In any case, please notify the Welcome Team Scheduler for information and assistance.

6. Usher Pocket Inserts

At more formal services some persons wish to display colored breast pocket inserts with emblems which depict the church seasons. They are kept in the ushers' drawer in the sacristy. The Welcome Team captain will distribute these to Welcome Team members and collect them at the end of the service.

7. Helpful Hints

- A clever way to entice people to follow you to a desired pew is to not hand them the service bulletin until they arrive at the pew.
- An effort should be made to direct latecomers to the side aisle so as to minimize disruption to the service. Do not permit latecomers to mix with or follow too closely behind the processional. Restrain parishioners from entering pews when the congregation is kneeling.
- It is suggested that rubber heeled shoes be worn to reduced the danger of slipping on the tile floors within the nave.
- Being late to your assigned service hurts everyone's efforts. Please arrive at the Church at least 25 minutes before the service is to begin.
- If you are not sure if someone is a newcomer or first-timer, a subtle way to introduce yourself is to approach them saying "I don't believe I have met you" or something similar. Thus you avoid the chagrin of being told they have attended St. John's for 20 years!
- If at all possible, walk around with a Newcomer, show them the Church and important locations such as the Children's Chapel, the bathrooms, the West Lobby and the Parish Hall.

8. Checklists

In the near future, checklist for the assignments below will be prepared and laminated. They will be in strategic locations for use by the Welcome Team.

- Preparing the Church
- Collecting the Offering
- Delivering the Elements
- Monitoring the Communion

9. The 5 o'clock Service

Due to the casual atmosphere of the 5 o'clock service, the only need for the Welcome Team is to greet persons as they enter the Church and to identify first-timers and newcomers. If you are serving in this capacity you should be familiar with these Guidelines in general, but the only true assignment is to get to the service about 15 minutes early to welcome all and entice newcomers and first-timers to fill out Newcomers Cards and to come again.

10. Modifications for the 11:15 Service

As a result of there being a fairly consistent group who serve as the traditional ushers and greeters for the 11:15 service, the assignments of the Welcome Team will vary significantly from the full duties contained in these Guidelines. There will be a Welcome Team Captain appointed for the 11:15 service, and he will be assisted by other Welcome Team members. However, their main roles will be to serve as Welcomers at the entrances and the obligations of identifying and encouraging the completion of Welcome Cards and the return of newcomers and first-times. These duties are well describe in these Guidelines.

11. Continuous Process Improvement

We can always improve our processes and efforts for the betterment of St. John's. It is the obligation of every Welcome Team member to share with the Committee their experiences as a Team member and how they feel the system can be improved. Please express your thoughts with your Captain or the other members of the Welcome Team Committee.