

Jewish Center of Northwest Jersey
GUIDELINES FOR USHERS 5772 / 2011–2012
Shabbat and B'nai Mitzvah Services

The usher ensures that the service, whether for Shabbat evening, Shabbat morning, or holidays, runs without disruptions. It is crucial that the usher be an active and diligent monitor throughout the service.

For Friday night Shabbat services, one usher, who stands in the foyer, usually suffices.

- Make sure that the lift is open and operational. The key is kept in the lift-lock on the sanctuary landing (see below).
- Wear the emergency panic button on your person. (The panic button is kept in the rabbi's office in a box that has a key attached to it.)
- Greet worshipers as they enter, make sure that the men take a *kipah*, and help worshipers move into the sanctuary so that they do not congregate in the foyer.
- Ask guests to sign the guest book, if there is one (this would be for a bar/bat mitzvah).
- As people enter, try to notice if they have a camera. If they do, instruct the individuals that no photographs, flash or otherwise, may be taken during the service.
- Guide guests into the sanctuary. **Fill the front rows first. Ask people politely to comply with your request.** This is a security matter, as well as one of politeness and convenience. We don't want people tripping over each other nor do we want the front rows to be empty. Do what you can to encourage people to take seats **quickly** and quietly. **Do not permit a crowd to build up in the foyer.**
- Help worshipers to find prayer books in other rows, as necessary.

For a large crowd during the High Holy Days, at other holidays, or at a bar/bat mitzvah, there should be at least two, and sometimes three, ushers. It is essential that at least one usher remain close to the front door to greet arriving worshipers. This same usher should wear the emergency panic button. The second usher should be *in* the sanctuary, helping people to find the seats pointed out to them by the first usher.

Do not seat anyone at the following times:

- When the congregation is standing and singing—e.g., during the *Barchu*, the *Shema*, the *Amidah*, etc.
- During the Rabbi's sermon or when the cantor is singing.
- When the Ark is open.
- During the *aliyot*.
- During the reading of the Torah, whether by the rabbi, adult members, or the bar/bat mitzvah.

Keep lobby area clear and quiet. *No one is to stand in the lobby area during the service except the ushers.* This is another security measure.

If people leave the sanctuary (especially with children), find out if they are returning. *Children should not be out of the sanctuary unless they are accompanied by an adult*, although a child may leave to go to the bathroom alone; he/she must then return to the sanctuary.

In general, keep an eye on things, be **visible** and **available** if you are needed, and answer visitors' questions.

Keep people from walking in and out of the rabbi's office. During the service, keep the door to the rabbi's office closed so that if the phone rings, it does not disturb the service; answer the phone if you hear it.

If there is disruption during the service, especially during the sermon, from a crying or talking young child, please approach the parent(s) and say: "I'll help you out with your child" and then do so.

Be watchful that no food or drink goes into the sanctuary. This includes bottles and other nourishment for babies. If a child needs to be fed, that should take place downstairs in the *simcha* room—not in the classroom or in the lobby.

Opening and locking the building. *Call a board member if you do not know the code.*

To open the building:

- Use the key in the lock box to the right of the front door. To open the lock box, first push the reset button (the bottom black button in the middle) toward the ground. Then push the buttons for the code slowly, making sure you hear a slight click after each number. After the code has been entered, push the top black button toward the ground and pull out the key. Open the door with the key. Turn off the alarm, using the same code that you used to get into the building. Put the key back in the lock box. You have to use the same procedure to put the key back that you used to open it up.
- Turn on the lights in the hallway and stairwell.
- Then make the elevator operational: on the sanctuary level, turn the key so that it is in a horizontal position; on the ground level, outside, insert the second key in the key slot outside the elevator and turn it to a horizontal position. Test the elevator.
- Put the handicapped parking cones and signs outside.

To lock the building:

- Remember to set the alarm before leaving; use the same code that you used to get in. All contact-point doors must be closed before the alarm can be set: front door, sanctuary door, furnace-room door, and ground-floor back door.
- *Don't forget: after you turn on the alarm and leave, you must close the front door and lock the building with the key. Use the key in the lockbox to do this. To lock, turn the key to the right until it is vertical. You may have to pull the key toward you just a little to get the key to lock. Take the key out and return it to the lockbox.*