



GREETER MINISTRY

A MANUAL
FOR MINISTRY AT THE DOOR
OF THE CHURCH

GREETER'S MINISTRY IN THE ARMENIAN CHURCH was created by the Diocese to be read, explored, and discussed in a 2½ hour session. This can be accomplished on a Saturday morning, a Sunday after church, or a weekday evening. Because ministry participants will invariably change, it is advised that the workbook be reviewed annually, especially since activities and insights will be periodically updated by the Diocese, making for a slightly different discussion.

Text can be read aloud, in turns. Session sections are timed for a sense of approximately how long they might run. However, if you have a large group or if discussions are lasting (profitably) longer, go with it! Just make sure that everyone's agreed on end time.

INTRODUCTION

“Greeters” are often thought of as those assigned to be in the church narthex or vestibule Sunday mornings and this is indeed the most specific of greeting tasks. However, the ministry of greeting others, as St. Paul so warmly did in his letters to communities and individuals, is really one shared by all who participate in a faith community and should ideally pervade all church activities and events. It is a ministry that wells up from a soul filled with the Living Water Himself and who then naturally yearns to share the Lord’s welcome with one and all.

Sunday morning (or any time worship is taking place), however, is a unique time to practice this welcome. The Divine Liturgy is the place where so many lives intersect: parishioners, visitors, first-timers, visitors from other parishes, young and old, men and women, Armenian and non-Armenian. What an opportunity to extend the love and hospitality of your parish, which is an extension of the love of Jesus Himself!

1

OPENING PRAYER (30 MIN.)

Hayr mer vor hergeens yes soorp yegheetsee anoon ko, yegest-seh arkayootyoon Ko; yegheetseen gamk Ko, vorbes hergeens yev hergree. Uzhats mer hanabazort door mez aysor. Togh mez uzbardees mer vor bes yev mek toghoomk merots bardabanats yev mee daneer uzmez ee portsootyoon, ayl purgya uzmez ee chareh...

Lord, as we study your Word and your ways in an effort to be the Church of open arms and open hearts born on the day of Pentecost, born out of the fire that rested over the men and women gathered in the Upper Room in fellowship, open our hearts and minds also that we might feel that fire and embody that loving fellowship here, among us, and to all your people, always, Amen.

Take a moment and answer the following questions silently (make notes). Then share your answers in groups of three.

- A.** What is your earliest memory of church?
- B.** Which word in the following pairs would you choose to describe the Badarak? Explain your choice.
Looking up.....looking down
Inside.....outside
Lake.....ocean
- C.** Does thinking of greeting others as a ministry change how you think of that role?

Why is this ministry important?

When people arrive for Sunday Badarak, the priest is already at work at the altar, as celebrant. His warm greetings must be reserved for after worship, not as people arrive. So, when people come through the door — and they may be parishioners, out-of-town visitors or newcomers — it will be the warm, friendly faces of those in the foyer who will give them their first taste of what your community is like. You are not only ambassadors of your parish, but you are ambassadors of Christ. A smile and a heartfelt handshake may be the cup of refreshing water given in Christ's name to a thirsty soul.



A PARTIAL LIST OF THE “ONE ANOTHERS” OF THE NEW TESTAMENT

Look up the following Scripture verses and record the many ways we are called to minister to one another. (If you need help, answers appear at the end of this manual.)

- | | | |
|-----------------|------------|-----------------------|
| Galatians 5: 13 | S _____ | one another |
| Romans 15:7 | A _____ | one another |
| Colossians 3:13 | F _____ | one another |
| Romans 16:16 | G _____ | one another |
| Galatians 6:2 | B _____ | one another's burdens |
| Romans 12:10 | Be d _____ | to one another |
| Romans 12:10 | H _____ | one another |
| Romans 15:14 | T _____ | one another |
| Ephesians 5:21 | S _____ | to one another |
| 1 Thess. 5:11 | E _____ | one another |

Which of these are most evident in your parish? Which need work?

“How lovely is your dwelling place, O Lord Almighty! I would rather be a doorkeeper in the house of my God than dwell in the tents of the wicked.” (Psalm 84:1,10)

What is the Biblical precedent?

“How lovely is your dwelling place, O Lord Almighty! I would rather be a doorkeeper in the house of my God than dwell in the tents of the wicked.” (Psalm 84:1,10)

When it comes to the specific ministry of greeting people at church for worship, the Old Testament contains several references to ushers, though the title used then was “gatekeeper” or “keeper of the threshold.” Their ministry was so important they were assigned living quarters at the Jerusalem temple. 1 Chronicles 9:19 cites a man by the name of Shallum and his “fellow gatekeepers from his family... responsible for guarding the thresholds of the Tent just as their fathers had been responsible for guarding the entrance to the dwelling of the Lord.” Serving as a doorkeeper in the house of the Lord was no small matter in those days. Neither is it now.

From the tabernacle to the Temple to the synagogue to the New Testament church, the ministry of greeting took on increasing importance. For more than three hundred years, Christians worshiped mainly in homes or house churches. Therefore, the host actually welcomed the worshipers into his or her own home.

The “Other”

The treatment of strangers has a long history in Scripture and in ancient cultures. The earliest literature of thousands of years ago describes a hospitality towards strangers we find extraordinary. Travelers are welcomed into the household and helped to refresh themselves, have their feet washed and even given new clothes to wear, fed — often generously — and *then* asked their names and



origins (if the inquiry were made at all). A proper welcome came first. In Genesis 18:1-8, Abraham and Sarah's greeting of the three strangers is a perfect paradigm. Seated at the entrance to his tent, Abraham saw the three nearby and "hurried.....to meet them, bowing low to the ground." (v.2) There couldn't have been a more prompt or respectful response to their presence. Abraham humbly asks that they accept his offer to refresh them with water, have their feet washed after their dusty travels, and allow them time to rest. Sarah quickly bakes them bread with her finest flour; Abraham chooses his best calf to slaughter for a meal. The story continues with some of the most renowned anecdotes in Genesis; and ultimately these visitors are revealed to be angels. The Bible is filled with stories of this kind of hospitality.

Armenians also have an ancient and continuing culture of hospitality, much like that described above. The very word for hospitality in Armenian is *hyoor-a-see-roo-tyoon* which literally means "love of guest."

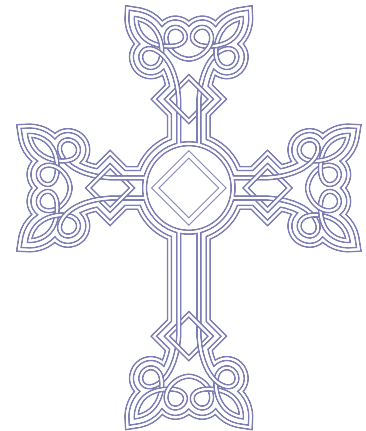
Even the letter to the Hebrews says, "Do not forget to show hospitality to strangers, for by doing so, some have even entertained angels without knowing it" (Hebrews 13:2), referring to Abraham's visit by the three angels mentioned above.

Fast forward, however, to today's hurried world of far less connectedness, the lack of time and experience for such generosity, and the strangely remote type of "intimacy" in today's modes of communication and we see that the genuine warmth embodied in a welcoming church would be welcome indeed.

3

THE CHURCH NARTHEX AS HOME, OFFICE, AND VISITORS' CENTER (30 MIN.)

The church narthex is the first thing people see as they come into church to worship. If someone were to walk into the narthex of your church on a Sunday morning, what would they see? Describe the furniture, the walls, the printed material you have available, the people "on duty" (their tasks, their gestures, their words).



WHAT ABOUT THE ABOVE EXPRESSES WELCOME AND WARMTH?

WHAT THINGS CONVEY WHAT YOUR COMMUNITY IS ALL ABOUT?

WHAT CAN YOU CHANGE?

4

A JOB DESCRIPTION (30 MIN.)

Discuss and list on a piece of paper all the tasks that need to be undertaken in the narthex or sanctuary by greeters/council members on Sunday morning and how they will be accomplished, all the while recognizing the need to pay sufficient, friendly attention to those who are coming through the door. Allow 30 minutes to create and discuss your list. Then check it against the list below.

1. Arrive early to check narthex and sanctuary for cleanliness. Make sure display material in vestibule is complete and tidy. Most new people are not like Armenians and arrive before services begin.
2. Be familiar with answers to common questions about parish programs and the appropriate contact person at church.
3. Know where the first aid kit, fire extinguisher, and defibrillator are.
4. Hand out the church bulletin and children's Raising Saints bulletin with crayons or coloring pencils. If the person is someone you don't seem to know, don't commit a potential gaffe by saying "Welcome to our church!" as the person may well be a long-time member you've just never met. Instead say, "I don't believe we've ever met. I'm _____", or "You look familiar".
5. Hand out a welcome packet (if you have these available).
6. Prepare mahs for distribution. This may be a matter of placing pieces in plastic bags or simply cutting the mahs into small pieces that can then be distributed in the traditional manner. Gloves are recommended.
7. Help people to a pew when necessary. Show them how to use the Badarak Book and what page the service is on when they walk in. Monitor them throughout the Divine Liturgy in case they get lost in the service.
8. Pass the kiss of peace.
9. Pass the collection plate and then count the money with a church associate in the church office (*not* in the narthex). (*This may be given to a Parish Council member to do*)

- 10.** Give people pertinent information about upcoming events.
- 11.** Politely ask those ready to enter the sanctuary at times that might disrupt worship to wait. Some parishes post these times on a board; others simply stand in the back and ask entering worshippers to do the same until they may go to their seats. Times we should not go to the pews: During the priest's procession through the sanctuary, the procession with the Gospel ("Soorp Asdvadz"), the reading of the Scriptures or chanting of the Gospel, the Creed ("Havadamk"), the procession with the chalice, and anytime the priest is facing the congregation.
- 12.** People who are visiting for the first time or are from out of town need special care. Tell them "basics" (how and where they may light candles and where restrooms, water fountain, etc. are) and be sure to advise them that there is a fellowship after church and that they should come and see you so that you may go with them and introduce them to others. Make an effort to locate them as they leave the church to either personally lead them to the hall or to connect them with another who will take them to the hall.
- 13.** At fellowship introduce them to your pastor, then sit with or if that's not possible, have the visitor sit with people who will be good companions. Get their contact information or give them a newcomer's packet and make sure you send a simple email or note or make a phone call during the week expressing the community's joy in seeing them and how you look forward to seeing them again.
- 14.** Give a parish "Welcome Gift." This can be baked banana bread, choreg, cookies, or something else to make visitors feel welcome and for them to take a little something from your parish family to their home.
- 15.** If your pastor agrees, give him new visitor names at the end of the service and have him introduce the visitors to the community either in the church (immediately following the final blessing) or in the hall, before blessing the food (if an appropriate time).

5

WHAT DO I DO IF? (30 MIN.)

Brainstorm what you would do and say in the following scenarios. You may only have time for a few or you may divide the scenarios and work in pairs, then discuss them all. After your conversation check your notes against suggestions listed below.

- A. A young mother comes in with a toddler and two children.
- B. A parishioner whom you haven't seen for a while comes in the door.
- C. Someone has a medical emergency (heart attack, asthma episode, faints).
- D. Someone is dressed inappropriately.
- E. Someone is disruptive, talking loudly, laughing, etc.
- F. An elderly or disabled person comes in the door.



A

A YOUNG MOTHER COMES IN WITH A TODDLER AND TWO CHILDREN. YOU DON'T RECALL SEEING HER BEFORE.

- DO introduce yourself warmly and say "I'm not sure we've met."
- DO add a welcome packet or welcome information with the bulletin, if they are visiting or new to the community.
- DO help her and the children to an accommodating pew. Provide the toddlers with activity books or children's Bible story books (many parishes have small cloth bags of resources including Bible coloring books to lend to families with little ones).
- DO check on the family a few times during the service.
- DON'T ask where her husband is today as she may be a single parent.
- DO give the young mother a Raising Saints with crayons or coloring pencils for the children.
- DO encourage the children to stay in the church and for the mother to be present with the children.
- DON'T try to remove the children from the church and go to Sunday School or the nursery. Remember, children must be in the presence of the Lord, Jesus Christ in Holy Communion.

B

A PARISHIONER WHOM YOU HAVEN'T SEEN FOR A WHILE COMES IN THE DOOR.

- DO give them the same warm greeting you would anyone arriving at church.
- DO add that they've been missed and that you're so happy to see them.
- DON'T greet them with a judgmental "Well, we haven't seen you in ages!" or "What are you doing here?" or (in Armenian) "Vor hovuh kezee hos puchetz? (lit: "what wind has blown you here?")"

P.S. These questions have actually been heard uttered by church greeters.

- DON'T inquire where they've been or if they've been sick. After a warm welcome from you, they will feel free to share (or not) the circumstance of their absence.

C

SOMEONE HAS A MEDICAL EMERGENCY.

Caring for someone who has fainted

- DO help that person slowly to the ground if you see them falling. Preventing them from hitting the ground will protect them from head or other injuries.
- DO position the person flat on their back. Most people who have fainted regain consciousness quickly.
- DO help the person rest if they regain consciousness. Encourage them to stay lying down for 15-20 minutes which allows blood to flow to the brain. They may have water or juice.
- DO help them into a wheel chair—it would be helpful to have one on hand—and out of the sanctuary (if that's where the emergency occurred).
- DON'T hesitate to call 911 if the person is bleeding, or has additional symptoms (chest pain, difficulty breathing) or if they are pregnant.

C (cont.)

Caring for someone who is having a heart attack

- DO take immediate action and call 911.
- DO loosen tight or uncomfortable clothing (scarves, ties, coats)
- DO closely monitor the person until more advanced medical personnel take over. Note any changes in the victim's appearance or behavior.
- DO comfort the victim and remain with them at all times.
- DO assist the victim with medication if they are conscious, such as aspirin. Make sure there are no allergies.
- DO check if there is a medical professional available in the church, as they may need to perform CPR or use an AED if available.
- DON'T have the person get up quickly.
- DON'T panic! If you are calm, those around you will be calm.

D

SOMEONE IS DRESSED INAPPROPRIATELY.

- DO treat each person with dignity and respect, even if they do not dress to your taste.
- DO welcome them and smile as you greet them.
- DON'T make comments or give rude looks.
- DON'T judge a book by its cover—your clothing choices do not define who you are as a Christian!
- DO encourage your priest to speak with them after church politely and in private. It is not your job to do that.

E

SOMEONE IS DISRUPTIVE, TALKING LOUDLY, LAUGHING, ETC.

- DO deal with the situation with patience, dignity and respect.
- DO smile politely, and tell the person: "Please refrain from talking during Badarak," or "Excuse me, would you mind continuing your conversation after Badarak?" or (if someone has answered a cell phone) "Would you mind leaving the sanctuary to continue your call?"
- DO hang a sign over the entrance

doors to the church as a preventative measure or put up on an easel: "Silence is Golden in the House of God" or a sign that says "The church is God's house and a place to be respectful!"

- DO place the above in bold letters in the church bulletin.
- DON'T let your exasperation show.

F

AN ELDERLY OR DISABLED PERSON COMES IN THE DOOR.

- DO be exceptionally respectful and attentive.
- DO tell them "Thank you for being here today." They have surely made an extra effort to come to church.
- DO tell them "Let me help you with that," if someone is struggling with a cane, umbrella, purse; they will appreciate a gesture from a greeter to hold something for them.
- DO locate an empty seat, and ask them to follow you. Walk slowly as you guide them to the pew and wait until they are settled.
- DON'T be too intrusive or insistent.
- DON'T ignore them.

6

WRAP-UP (10 MIN.) *Read "Best Practices" and add some of your own. Conclude with the opening prayer from above.*

Best Practices for Greeters Ministry

1. Invite others to join the ministry. It should be open to all participants in the faith community.
2. Prepare yourself spiritually each morning; pray in advance for your ministry.
3. Prepare yourself physically: good grooming, appropriate clothing, fresh breath.
4. Show up on time.
5. Appoint a head greeter you can defer to in case there are questions you can't answer.
6. Create a schedule for all church services where greeters are required. Make sure there is sufficient coverage at all times.
7. Have a clear procedure for filling a "slot" should someone become unable to attend their scheduled day.
8. Have name tags for greeters.
9. Always smile and make eye contact. Greet everyone, including children!
10. It would be appropriate for greeters to receive CPR training including the use of defibrillators (which should be available). Emergency procedures should be reviewed and understood. Know which parishioners are doctors in case they are needed.
11. Meet annually to review this workbook and discuss any concerns needing resolution.
12. Extend the ministry into the fellowship. Work with your pastor to create an atmosphere of warmth and welcome, making sure everyone is engaged with others.
13. If you've met someone new, make an effort to remember their name and extend a personalized goodbye as they're leaving. It means a lot when our names are remembered!
14. Have clear signs (with arrows) for your after-church fellowship and for your Sunday School.
15. Grow in faith yourself—the closer you grow to the Lord, the more your heart opens to others.

WELCOMING MINISTRY GUIDELINES

TASKS AND RESPONSABILITES

1. Ensure that [Name] Armenian Church is an inclusive church that welcomes all. Greeting team members should be sensitive to the diverse backgrounds and needs of new members. They should respect people's personal space and cultural differences, avoiding making assumptions or judgments.
2. Create a loving environment for visitors by offering a sincere and warm Armenian greeting and acknowledging each person as they enter the church building. A warm and friendly demeanor is important. Members of the greeting team should have a warm and friendly attitude when welcoming people to the church. A smile, eye contact, and a genuine greeting can go a long way toward making visitors feel welcome.
3. Make everyone, especially the newcomers feel welcome and introduce them to others. Try to have them meet at least three other people. Try to connect them with people with whom they have a common connection, such as where they live, their occupation, their interests, or where they are from.
4. Have good knowledge of church and building layout. Greeting team members should be familiar with the layout of the church, including entrances, exits, restrooms, and important facilities. This will allow them to provide accurate directions and assistance to newcomers.
5. Be aware of any special or important upcoming events at church. Check out the Sunday Bulletin before the service for any information you may need. Greeting team members should have a good understanding of the church's programs, events, and ministries. This will enable them to provide accurate information and help visitors connect with the appropriate individuals or groups.

- 6.** Ask newcomers how they learned about us. Greet every person enthusiastically, as though you were expecting them. Show them you are glad they are here.
- 7.** Invite them to be on our mailing or email list and offer a form or an online link to sign up.
- 8.** Ask about how they would like to be contacted for the upcoming functions and events, if they prefer phone, mail, or email. It is important for the greeting team to actively listen to visitors' needs and concerns. They should be attentive, patient, and empathetic, offering support or directing them to appropriate resources within the church.
- 9.** Introduce the newcomer to the Pastor and a member of the Parish Council or other church committees if they ask any questions you cannot answer.
- 10.** Personally escort any guest who asks where something is located. This helps them feel valued. Avoid pointing or giving directions.
- 11.** The greeting team should be vigilant and attentive to any potential safety concerns within the church premises. They should report any suspicious activities or hazards to the appropriate authorities or church staff.
- 12.** Refrain from eating, drinking, or using your phone while serving.
- 13.** If possible, introduce newcomers to the pastor. Please let your pastor meet the newcomer and answer any questions, particularly about our faith and church service.
- 14.** Please DO NOT approach them and ask them for donations or to sign up for membership or the pledge program. Please allow the Parish Council and/or the Pastor to do that at the proper time.

15. After the initial greeting, the team should strive to follow up with visitors, providing them with additional information or support as needed. The welcoming committee member should call, email, or send a text (their preferred method) to the newcomer the Wednesday following their visit to say hello, how great it was meeting them, how we hope they visit us again, and/or to inform them of an upcoming event. If you do not see them for two weeks, you should give them a follow-up call, email, or text and see how they are.

16. Please give all newcomers' information to the Pastor so he can follow up and contact them as well.

17. Regular training sessions should be conducted to equip the greeting team with the necessary skills and knowledge. Additionally, establishing clear channels of communication among team members and with church leadership will ensure smooth coordination and effective support.



*Blessings and thanks for offering your
time and welcoming spirit.
May God bless each one of you and
remember— our work is for His Glory.*



EASTERN DIOCESE OF THE ARMENIAN CHURCH OF AMERICA
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630 SECOND AVENUE, NEW YORK, NY 10016 | WWW.ARMEIANCHURCH.US