

# The Hat in the Pew

St. Bartholomew's Episcopal Church is a historic parish founded in January 1835. It is located on the east side of Park Avenue between 50<sup>th</sup> and 51<sup>st</sup> Streets in Midtown Manhattan, New York City.

St. Bartholomew's is noted for its music program and, in particular, for its pipe organ, the largest in New York and one of the 10 largest in the world.

In this very proper setting, just before the beginning of the Sunday service at the church, a man wearing a large hat was noticed sitting in the front row. That was something one just didn't do in this famed old church.

An usher moved to his pew, leaned in, and discreetly asked him to remove his hat. The man replied that he would not.

The head usher was then summoned, made the same request, and received the same answer. About that time, the president of the women of the parish arrived and was asked to assist. She had the same dismal result.

Finally, with only two minutes remaining before the opening hymn, the senior warden of the parish was summoned. He tiptoed up beside the man and tried to seize the hat, but the man nimbly dodged, and there was not time for further attempts.

As the opening hymn began and the procession entered the church, the man stood, removed his hat, and did not put it on again.

At the conclusion of the service, the four frustrated people waited for the man at the rear of the church. The senior warden approached him and said, "Sir, about the hat. Perhaps you don't understand, but in the Episcopal church, men do not wear hats at worship."

The man replied, "Oh, but I do understand. I've been an Episcopalian all my life. As a matter of fact, I've been coming to this church regularly for two years, and I've never met a soul. But this morning, I've met an usher, the head usher, the president of the church women, and the senior warden."

Before we offer a criticism of this man's experience at the church, we should ask ourselves: How much attention do visitors to our buildings receive? Are they greeted warmly? Do we respond courteously and in a helpful manner to requests for information they may present? Once we hear their names, do we repeat those names in conversation?

And what about our residents and their families? Do we really listen to them – or look beyond them as we concentrate on a long list of duties before us? Do they feel they are being served?

Paying attention is a key component of customer service.

– Beecher Hunter