

Boy Scouts of America
Troop 23, Mt. Prospect, IL
Chaplain's Guide

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Description and Duties

Description

Within the Boy Scout code of ethics is a reverence towards God. This is found within the scout law (“a scout is reverent”) and within the Scout Oath (“do my duty to God and my country”, “obey the scout law” and indirectly as “keep myself morally straight”). Faith, religion and reverence toward God are an essential part of the Boy Scout program. This makes the position of Chaplain an important part of the troop leadership.

Duties and Responsibilities

1. Provides leadership for all religious aspects of the troop program
2. Provides resources for the Chaplain's Aides the help them with their duties
3. Provides for prayers and inspirational readings at troop functions
4. Provides leadership in planning religious observances in Troop activities
5. Informs Scouts about the religious emblem programs for their faiths
6. Provides for accident, illness and bereavement comfort
7. Monitors up-to-date records of the church/religious affiliation of Troop members
8. Makes sure religious holidays are considered during Troop program planning
9. Acts as a Chaplain's Aide to the adult patrol on outings
10. Attends Parent Committee meetings as head of the Chaplain function
11. Takes pride in wearing the Scout Uniform correctly
12. Sets a good example
13. Lives by the Scout Oath and Law
14. Shows Scout Spirit

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Duty / Responsibility Details

Provides leadership for all religious aspects of the troop program

The Chaplain is the spiritual leader for the troop, which should govern all the other responsibilities for this position. This is a unique opportunity to minister to people of a variety of faiths and to help them to have a reverence toward God. There are a number of scouts whose only exposure to religion is through the scouting program.

While it is an opportunity to minister and even express beliefs, it is not a place to proselytize. Since our troop is made up of scouts of different faiths, the Chaplain needs to be sensitive to this diversity and to help scouts to be reverent toward God in the faith of their choosing.

Provides resources for the Chaplain's Aides the help them with their duties

The Chaplain's Aides are responsible to lead the Scout's Own services, table graces, invocations and benedictions. For these occasions, it is easier for them to pick from existing material rather than creating it from scratch.

The Chaplain is their primary source for these resources. This would include using the troop Interdenominational Worship Book as well as other inspirational sources, readings, hymnals, and other material that may be found on the Internet. By anticipating these needs, the Chaplain can be prepared to provide materials for the Chaplain's Aides.

Provides for prayers and inspirational readings at troop functions

During the course of troop activities, there arise times when it is appropriate to show reverence toward God. These times would include saying a table grace when eating a meal or having a reading during a religious holiday. The troop Interdenominational Worship Book has a variety of prayers and readings. These activities may be delegated to the Chaplain's Aides or recruited within the troop under the leadership of the Chaplain's Aide.

Provides leadership in planning religious observances in Troop activities

The Boy Scouts of America recognizes that there are a large number of faiths represented in our communities and in our troops. Religious observances are an important part of the lives of the scouts in our troop.

As part of the Boy Scout program, there is a religious observance called a "Scout's Own" service. This is a short interdenominational religious service that includes inspirational readings and songs, prayers and an inspirational message.

While the Chaplain's Aides are responsible for leading these services, it is the responsibility of the Chaplain to help lead and manage the Chaplain's Aides in this activity. This includes having planning meetings and helping to find appropriate materials to be used in the services. Since this is a leadership opportunity for the Chaplain's Aides, it is important to give them a chance to do a majority of the planning.

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Informs Scouts about the religious emblem programs for their faiths

The Boy Scout program includes religious emblem awards that are issued by the scout's religious organization. The specific requirements of each emblem depends upon the individual organization. It is similar to a merit badge, except the reading material is specific to the organization and the counselor is a member of the clergy.

By encouraging the boys in the troop to participate in this program, they get a better understanding of their faith and how it relates to their lives.

Depending upon the faith, the scout may need to meet with the Scoutmaster as part of earning the emblem. In our troop, the scoutmaster has delegated this responsibility to the Chaplain. In this meeting the Chaplain is to encourage the scout to explain what he has learned.

Current List of Religious Emblems

Faith	Emblems
African Methodist Episcopal (A.M.E)	God and Church God and Life God and Service (Adult)
African Methodist Episcopal Zion	God and Church God and Life God and Service (Adult)
Armenian Apostolic Church of America (Western)	Saint Mesrob
Armenian Church of America (Eastern Diocese)	Ararat
Baha'I	Unity of Mankind
Baptist	God and Church God and Life Good Shepherd (Adult)
Buddhist	Sangha
Catholic, Eastern	Light is Life Pope Pius XII Saint George Catholic (Adult)
Catholic, Roman	Ad Altare Dei Pope Pius XII Saint George Roman Catholic (Adult)
Christian Church (Disciples of Christ)	God and Church God and Life God and Service (Adult)
Christian Methodist Episcopal Church	God and Church God and Life God and Service (Adult)
Church of Christ Scientist	God and Country

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Faith	Emblems
	God and Service (Adult)
Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints	On my Honor On my Honor (Adult)
Churches of Christ	Good Servant Faithful Servant (Adult)
Community of Christ	Liahona Life and World International Youth Service (Adult)
Eastern Orthodox	Alpha Omega Prophet Elias (Adult)
Episcopal	God and Church God and Life Saint George Episcopal (Adult)
General Church of the New Jerusalem	Open Word Open Word (Adult)
Hindu	Dharma Karma Dharma Saathi (Adult)
Islamic	In the Name of God Allaho Akber (Adult)
Jewish	Ner Tamid Etz Chaim Shofar (Adult)
Lutheran	God and Church God and Life Lamb (Adult)
Meher Baba	Compassionate Father The Ancient One (Adult)
Moravian	God and Country The order of David Zeisberger (Adult)
Polish National Catholic Church	God and Country Bishop Thaddeus F. Zielinski (Adult)
Presbyterian Church (U.S.A)	God and Church God and Life God and Service (Adult)
Protestant and Independent Christian Churches	God and Church God and Life God and Service (Adult)
Religious Society of Friends (Quakers)	Spirit of Truth Friends (Adult)
Salvation Army	God and Church God and Life Scouter's Award (Adult)
United Church of Christ	God and Church

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Faith	Emblems
	God and Life God and Service (Adult)
United Methodist	God and Church God and Life God and Service (Adult)
Unity Churches	Light of God Award Distinguished Youth Service (Adult)
Zoroastrian	Good Life

Provides for accident, illness and bereavement comfort

The Chaplain has the opportunity to minister to the members of the troop at the time of their greatest need. When there are accidents, injuries, illnesses, and loss, people will be seeking larger answers to life's big questions. Usually these questions will be directed toward God and toward those who represent Him.

It is at these times that the Chaplain needs to be ready to help in a special way. This can be anything from sending "get well" cards to visiting somebody in the hospital to organizing meal delivery for a family in a special need. Specific tasks may be delegated to the Chaplain's Aides and other adult or scout members of the troop as needed.

Monitors up-to-date records of the church/religious affiliation of Troop members

As scouts enter the troop, it is important to obtain their religious preference or affiliation. This way, various faith aspects (religious emblems, holidays, rituals, prayers, dietary restrictions, etc.) may be considered during troop activities.

While it is the responsibility of the Chaplain's Aide to implement these records and keep them up to date, the Chaplain will lead and manage this activity. The Chaplain and Chaplain's Aides should coordinate their records with the Advancement Chair who maintains the troop database.

There is an existing "Religious Preference Survey" that may be used to query the preferences of scouts as they enter the troop.

Makes sure religious holidays are considered during Troop program planning

Throughout the year, most religions recognize certain days as being important. This may be the birth of their leader, a time of festival, a remembrance of deliverance, a time of fasting and prayer or some other date of significance. These dates will be important to the scouts that observe them.

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When troop activities are planned during the Parent's Committee (outings, projects, etc) they should not be on days where scouts may be observing a religious holiday. To ensure this, the Chaplain needs to maintain a calendar containing the various religious holidays that are observed throughout the year. Some holidays occur on the same day every year. An example of this is Christmas, which occurs on December 25 of every year. Other holidays may be part of a lunar calendar and change from year to year. An example of this is Passover, which is observed during the first full moon following the Vernal Equinox. These holidays may be obtained from the various institutions that observe them, either directly or on the internet. A web site that contains a number of religious calendars is www.calendarzone.com/Religious.

Acts as a Chaplain's Aide to the adult patrol on outings

While on outings, there arise opportunities for reverence toward God. This may include table graces and inspirational readings. As part of the adult patrol, the Chaplain has the opportunity to lead the rest of the patrol to be reverent. This also sets an example for this type of reverence for all the other patrols in the troop. Resources for this include the troop Interdenominational Worship Guide as well as a number of web sites.

Attends Parent Committee meetings as head of the Chaplain function

Troop activities and policies are discussed and planned at the Adult Committee meetings. The Chaplain position is one of leadership within the troop. As the leader of the religious aspects of the troop program, the Chaplain is responsible to the Parent Committee to make reports on activities and to interact with this level of troop leadership. This is where religious considerations may be entered into the discussion and included in the planning. This makes reverence toward God an integral part of the Boy Scout program rather than just being an afterthought.

Takes pride in wearing the Scout Uniform correctly

The Boy Scout Leader's uniform is a badge of honor. It identifies the person wearing it with the honorable and wholesome Boy Scout organization. This is an organization that is recognized in most parts of the world and has a very good reputation. The term "being a Boy Scout" is synonymous with being a person with honor and good character.

The uniform, therefore, should be worn with respect and pride. This is expected of the scouts, so the leaders should set the example. The neckerchief is to be worn with an appropriate slider. The shirt is to be clean and properly tucked in to the pants. The pants are to be clean and worn at the correct height. The belt should be a scout-approved belt that is worn correctly. A web belt should not show any fabric between the buckle and the end-cap brass.

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Sets a good example

Every religion includes a moral code of ethics and behaviors. Since actions always speak louder than words, everybody expects religious leaders to adhere to the moral practices taught by their faith. This is why there is such a large scandal in the news whenever a religious leader does something immoral. A non-leader within the same religion could do the exact same thing, if not worse, and hardly get any notice.

The scouts in the troop are no different. They will be looking to the Chaplain for moral direction and guidance. This is why it is important for the Chaplain to set the example with his actions. This includes avoiding crude or inappropriate behavior and speech, being mindful of others and attending religious services regularly.

Lives by the Scout Oath and Law

The Scout Oath and Scout Law are the foundation for everything in scouting. The Scout Law lists a code of ethics for life. The Scout Oath is a solemn promise to obey the Scout Law and to hold oneself to the highest code of ethics.

A leader that lives by the Scout Oath and Scout Law will strive to do so every day. While this sounds good on paper, it is the actions of the leader when he interacts with other people that will make the difference. The leader will look for opportunities to help others and he will commit to a lifestyle that is consistent with the 12 points of the Scout Law.

Shows Scout Spirit

Scouting is fun! We have more fun when we participate in the various outings, activities and meetings. This is also how we all learn from each other and teach each other. Scout Spirit is an integral part of the Boy Scout program. While Scout Spirit is a requirement for the scouts for advancement, it applies to the leaders as well. Scout Spirit is an overall enthusiasm for life, the outdoors, other people and the Scouting program.

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Chaplain's Aides

Introduction

The Chaplain's Aides are scouts within the troop. This is a position that qualifies for rank advancement for those ranks that require a position of responsibility. While they assist the Chaplain in the spiritual aspects of the troop, they also must be given opportunities to demonstrate leadership.

Scouts will learn leadership when they have a responsibility and must make their own decisions. As leaders, we can advise them and help direct them, but the scouts must make their own decisions. They will then learn from the consequences, both good and bad, of their decisions.

The Chaplain's Aides should show leadership during the various times when it is appropriate for the troop to be reverent. These times include Scout's Own Services, Table Graces, Court of Honor Invocations and Benedictions. Other times may be included as well.

Scout's Own Services

The purpose of the Scout's Own services are for the scouts themselves to express their reverence toward God. Because of this, the service should be lead by scouts, usually the Chaplain's Aides.

The Chaplain can assist the Chaplain's Aides in the Scout's Own services by promoting pre-planning meetings and by providing worship and inspirational materials. Usually this involves providing a location for Chaplain's Aides meetings and having worship materials on hand at the meeting. As with all meetings with scouts, it is important to always have two-deep leadership as outlined in the Youth Protection program.

Planning meetings should be at least a week before the outing to allow for any further preparation work that is required after the meeting. This may include creating handouts that may then be distributed during the service.

Table Graces

The Chaplain's Aides should take responsibility for promoting reverence through table graces. Whenever the troop is to have a meal together, the Chaplain's Aides should gather everybody together before anybody sits down to eat. They will then direct everybody to take off their hats during the grace. The grace may then consist of a short prayer or inspirational reading. Many table graces may be found in the troop Interdenominational Worship Book. After the grace, everybody will understand that the meal may be eaten, but the Chaplain's Aide can also invite everybody to partake.

Within each patrol, the Chaplain's Aides should organize an assistant to help with patrol table graces. These can be any scout within each patrol. In addition to providing for this aspect of reverence, these assistant scouts may be brought to full Chaplain's Aides later as existing Chaplain's Aides retire from their positions.

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Court of Honor Invocations and Benedictions

As part of each Court of Honor program, there should be a time for both an invocation at the beginning and a benediction at the end. The invocation is directly after the beginning flag ceremony and the benediction is just before the ending flag ceremony. The troop Interdenominational Worship Book includes the text of several invocations and benedictions. Additional readings may be found on the Internet.