

Supporting the Scout Oath: A Scout is Reverent



***He is reverent toward God.
He is faithful in his religious duties
and respects the convictions of others
in matters of custom and religion.***



Introduction

From the very beginning, the Scouting movement has encouraged its members to be faithful in the practice of their religious beliefs:



The Tiger Cub Promise asks young boys to love God.



The Cub Scout Promise, the Scout Oath, and the Venturer Code each call upon Scouts to pledge themselves to do their duty to God.

At the same time, Scouting espouses no creed and favors no single faith over another faith. Rather, Scouting provides programs and ideals that complement the aims of all religions.

The Charter and Bylaws of the Boy Scouts of America maintain that no boy can grow into the best kind of citizen without recognizing his obligation to God. Scouting is absolutely nonsectarian in its attitude toward that religious training. The Boy Scouts of America does not define what constitutes belief in God or the practice of religion. Membership in a religious organization is not required.

Scouting respects the convictions of those who exercise their constitutional freedom to practice religion as individuals without formal membership in organized religious groups. In all cases religious instruction is the responsibility of the parents or guardians of the Scout and the religious institution to which a Scout belongs. It is the policy of the Boy Scouts of America that the religious organization or institution with which a Scout is connected shall give definitive attention to his religious life.

REMEMBER:

Scouting encourages a Scout to recognize an obligation or duty to God, but does not define what a belief in God is or define what constitutes a religious organization. As Scout leaders, we must be careful not to favor one faith over another. In conducting Scouting activities, we must be sensitive to the need to encourage all Scouts to grow in their own religious beliefs and faiths. Remember that Scouts have a "Duty to God."



How do we support our Scouting oath to God?

1. Encourage prayer at meetings and activities.

If the group consists of members with mixed beliefs, or if the beliefs of the group are unknown, then prayers should be of an interfaith content. However, if the group is of like belief or the unit is chartered to a religious organization, then it is entirely appropriate to offer belief-specific prayer.



2. In troops, encourage filling the positions of Chaplain and Chaplain Aide.

The troop chaplain is an adult who may be a troop committee member, the executive officer of a religious chartered organization, or serves in another leadership capacity. It is customary that the religious leader, or an appointee of the chartered organization, will serve as chaplain if the troop is operated by a religious organization. A troop not operated by a religious organization may select a chaplain from local members of the clergy. The chaplain should:

- Provide a spiritual element for campouts and troop meetings
- Provide spiritual counseling when needed or requested
- Provide opportunities for all boys to grow in their relationship with God and their fellow Scouts
- Encourage Scouts to participate in the religious emblems program of their respective faith
- Encourage Scouts to participate in Boy Scout Sunday activities



The chaplain aide is an approved youth leadership position in Boy Scout troops. The chaplain aide should:

- Work with the troop chaplain to plan appropriate interfaith religious services during troop outings
- Encourage troop members to strengthen their own relationships with God through personal prayer and devotion and participation in religious activities appropriate to their faith
- Participate in patrol leaders council planning sessions to ensure that spiritual emphasis is included in troop activities
- Help the troop chaplain (or other designated adult) plan and conduct an annual Scout-oriented religious observance, preferably during Scout Week in February
- Present an overview of the religious emblems program at troop meetings at least once per year
- Help the troop chaplain (or other designated adult) recognize troop members who receive their religious emblems, perhaps during a troop court of honor (note: most religious emblems are conferred during a service at the Scout's place of worship, but the achievement should also be recognized at a significant troop event.)

Qualifications of the chaplain aide include:

- The chaplain aide must be mature and sensitive and have earned the respect and trust of his fellow Scouts.
- The chaplain aide must be at least a First Class Scout.
- The chaplain aide must have received or be working on the requirements leading to the age-appropriate religious emblem for his faith.

3. Encourage coordination with your chartered organization (if it is a church) or other local church to participate in Scout Sunday.



The Boy Scouts of America designates the Sunday that falls before February 8 (Scouting Anniversary Day) as Scout Sunday, which is the primary date to recognize the contributions of young people and adults to Scouting. However, each chartered organization can use either of two other options to celebrate this special day.

An organization can adopt a specific Sunday to celebrate. In the instance of the United Methodist Church, Scout Sunday is celebrated on the second Sunday in February. It also is permissible for a local church to celebrate on the Sunday most acceptable to the pastor and congregation.

4. Encourage participation in the Religious Emblem Awards.

Currently, the following organizations have endorsed the program of the Boy Scouts of America: African Methodist Episcopal Zion Church; American Baptist; Church of God (Indiana); Church of God International Offices; Church of God of Prophecy; Churches of God; Church of the Nazarene; Episcopal Church; General Conference, General Association of General Baptists; General Council of the Assemblies of God; Lutheran Church-Missouri Synod; Members of Churches of Christ for Scouting; Moravian Church, Northern Province; Moravian Church, Southern Province; Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.); Southern Baptist; The Salvation Army; The United Methodist Church; United Pentecostal Church; and West Virginia Baptist Convention.



The God and Country program series was developed and distributed by Programs of Religious Activities With Youth (P.R.A.Y.) and provides spiritual growth experiences for members of the BSA who are Protestant, as well as members of Girl Scouts of the U.S.A. and Camp Fire Inc., and other youth.

God and Me: For Tiger Cubs and Cub Scouts, grades one through three

God and Family: For fourth- and fifth-grade Cub Scouts and Webelos Scouts

God and Church: For sixth- to eighth-grade Boy Scouts and Varsity Scouts

God and Life: For older Boy Scouts, Varsity Scouts, and female and male Venturers

God and Country mentor program (adult curriculum): A mentor is someone who serves as a living example for another person. The God and Country mentor program is designed to help adults look directly at what it means to serve as a Christian mentor and suggests how to have a positive, Christian influence on a child. The mentor curriculum is designed for an adult working with a young person who is enrolled in the God and Country program series.

The mentor program is not to be confused with the God and Service Award . An adult who completes the mentor studies will receive a certificate and lapel pin for non-uniform wear.

God and Service: A recognition presented to deserving adults who have given distinguished service to youth through Scouting in a local church or at the council, regional, or national level.

How to get started on Recognitions/Emblems:



1. Obtain the specific booklet for your religion. This booklet contains the lessons and service projects that the child needs to complete. Children need their own booklets to document progress. Some religions also offer adult manuals for counselors and mentors. Our Boy Scout Store stocks many of these booklets.

2. Parents must review the specific guidelines for their particular program. Some programs require that the youth be an official "member" of the local religious institution, other programs may not. Age/grade requirements also vary from program to program. In addition, each faith group sets its own guidelines as to who may serve as counselor. Some programs require clergy to serve as counselors, other programs allow parents or other family members to serve as counselors. It is the responsibility of the parents/guardians to check the specific guidelines for their particular program.

3. Families should talk to their religious leaders and show them the booklet before beginning a program. Many of the religious recognitions programs require that they be completed under the auspices of that religious organization, and many require the signature from the local religious leader.

4. The young person needs to complete the requirements, obtain the proper signatures, and follow the instructions to order the recognition/emblem (recognitions are not available in local council stores). The recognition should be presented in a meaningful ceremony, preferably in the youth's religious institution, and can be presented at any time of the year. Remember: Boy Scout Sunday is in February. These are perfect times to recognize recipients of the religious recognitions.

For more information on supporting the Scouting oath of reverence to God in a Protestant setting, or to schedule a presentation of the Protestant religious awards to your Pack, Troop, Crew, or committee, contact:

***Rev. Marcy Heil
Protestant Committee on Scouting
Fox District
217-936-2662***

For other denominations' religious awards, please contact the Scout Office.