

# Manual for Chaplain Aides and Chaplains

To serve as a chaplain or chaplain aide is a unique opportunity for ministry. While serving in these offices, you will have the opportunity to help Scouts as they grow, both physically and spiritually. Some techniques to be used are modeling, mentoring, and offering faith-based experiences.

Use this manual to help you become better oriented to the duties, responsibilities, and opportunities of chaplaincy service in Boy Scout troops. In it, you will find helpful information and resources to help you better perform your duties.

## Declaration of Religious Principle

The Boy Scouts of America maintains that no member can grow into the best kind of citizen without recognizing an obligation to God and, therefore, recognizes the religious element in the training of the member, but it is absolutely nonsectarian in its attitude toward that religious training. Its policy is that the home and organization or group with which a member is connected shall give definite attention to religious life. Only persons willing to subscribe to this Declaration of Religious Principle and to the Bylaws of the Boy Scouts of America shall be entitled to certificates of membership.

## Troop Chaplain

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

1. Provide a spiritual element for campouts and troop meetings
2. Provide spiritual counseling when needed or requested
3. Provide opportunities for all boys to grow in their relationship with God and their fellow Scouts
4. Encourage Scouts to participate in the religious emblems program of their respective faith
5. Be familiar with the chaplain aide section of this manual
6. Work with the troop chaplain aide to plan and conduct an annual Scout-oriented religious observance, preferably during Scout Week in February

## Outreach Opportunities

After housing and schooling needs are met, one of the first contacts a new family has in the community is with a Scouting unit. As new troop members are registered, you will learn of their religious preferences or interests and can extend an invitation to join your congregation in worship, or you may direct them to other opportunities for worship in the community. At no time should the chaplain proselytize.

## Praying in a Group

When present, members of the clergy or chaplain aide may be asked to lead the troop or other Scouting units in prayer. 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, then it is entirely appropriate to offer belief-specific prayer.

## Religious Emblems

The chaplain is in an ideal position to promote the religious emblems program and encourage Scouts to complete the requirements for the emblem of their faith. Many troops include Scouts of various faiths; therefore, a knowledge of all emblems is helpful. Since procedures vary among different faiths, the Duty to God brochure, No. 05-897A, is a helpful reference. In addition, call your local Boy Scout service center or the council religious relationships committee for help in identifying ways to promote the religious emblems program and emblem recipient recognition ceremonies.

## The Chaplain Aide

The chaplain aide is an approved youth leadership position in Boy Scout troops. The responsibilities of this position include encouraging the spiritual growth and awareness of each member of the troop and assisting the troop chaplain (and adult committee members).

The chaplain aide should

1. Work with the troop chaplain (usually an adult member of the clergy) to plan appropriate interfaith religious services during troop outings
2. Encourage troop members to strengthen their own relationships with God through personal prayer and devotion and participation in religious activities appropriate to their faith
3. Participate in patrol leaders council planning sessions to ensure that spiritual emphasis is included in troop activities
4. Help the troop chaplain (or other designated adult) plan and conduct an annual Scout-oriented religious observance, preferably during Scout Week in February
5. Present an overview of the religious emblems program at troop meetings at least once per year
6. 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

1. The chaplain aide must be mature and sensitive and have earned the respect and trust of his fellow Scouts.
2. The chaplain aide must be at least a First Class Scout.
3. The chaplain aide must have received or be working on the requirements leading to the

age-appropriate religious emblem for his faith.

# Troop Worship Opportunities

## Praying as a Group

When present, members of the clergy or chaplain aides may be asked to lead the troop or other Scouting groups in a prayer. If the group consists of members of mixed beliefs, or if the beliefs of the group are unknown, prayers should be of an interfaith nature. However, if the group is of like belief, it is entirely appropriate to offer belief-specific prayer.

## Sample Interfaith Prayers and Benedictions

1. For health, strength, and daily food, we give you thanks, o Lord.
2. For this and all your mercies, Lord, make us truly grateful.
3. For food, health, and friendship, we give you thanks, o Lord.
4. For food, for raiment, for life, for opportunity, for friendship and fellowship, we thank you, o Lord. (Philmont grace)
5. Come, o Lord, be our guest and bless what you have bestowed on us.
6. Gracious giver of all good, we thank you for food and rest. Grant all we say or do pleases you.
7. Lord, bless our Scouting leaders who spend so much of their time and energy to help us grow up well. Guide them in their work, give them patience and wisdom, and reward them in this life and the next. Amen.
8. As our campfire fades, we thank you for the joys and blessings of this day. We lift our minds and hearts to you in gratitude for life, happiness, and the Scouting movement. Lord, protect our camp this night. May we rise refreshed and ready to serve you. Amen.
9. May the great Scoutmaster of all Scouts be with us until we meet again.

## At Camp

Since troops often camp on weekends, Scouts and leaders may not be able to attend their regular worship services. A troop worship service should be conducted and all encouraged to attend. The troop chaplain aide and the troop chaplain (or other designated adult) should conduct these services.

## Scout Funeral Services

On occasion, a troop may experience the loss of a Scout or leader. It is a difficult time for everyone. At the request of the family or with the permission of the family and religious leader, Scouts may participate in the funeral and memorial service to celebrate the life of the Scout or leader. Some things that may be appropriate include:

- Attending in uniform
- Sitting together as a unit

- Serving as honorary pallbearers or ushers.
- Serving during the service by doing such things as reciting the Scout Oath or Law.

The primary concern is for the family and its preferences. The involvement of the troop or Scouts in the troop is at the discretion of the family and its religious leaders.

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The Boy Scouts of America  <http://www.scouting.org>