

Guidebook for Chaplains’ Aides

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Thank you for Serving as a Chaplains’ Aide

In much the same way that a Grubmaster ensures that the Scouts receive physical nutrition, Chaplains Aides (CA) are tasked with ensuring that the Troop (and the individual scouts) have the opportunity for spiritual sustenance. This does not mean that you must serve as a “pastor” or other member of clergy, but that you must facilitate opportunities for the Scouts to practice the Reverence aspects of the Boy Scout program.

The intent of this manual is to offer information, expectations and insights about facilitating the reverence aspects of Scouting through service as a Chaplains’ Aide. I hope that you find it helpful.

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Chaplains & Chaplains Aides – according to the BSA

Abridged from the *BSA Website > Information Center > Community Alliances > Manual for Chaplains*

<http://www.scouting.org/scoutsource/Media/Relationships/ManualforChaplainsandAides.aspx>

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.)

Chaplains' Aide 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.

Chaplain (adult)

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

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.

Other Notable BSA Guidance on Religious Matters

As published on the BSA Scouting.org website:

BSA on '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 or the unit is chartered to a religious organization, then it is entirely appropriate to offer belief-specific prayer.

BSA's 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.* (formatting added for emphasis only)

Whereas the initial pages of this guide were copied from BSA's website (<http://Scouting.org>), the remainder of this manual is subjective guidance by multiple Scouts and Scouters, as consolidated on <http://ScoutingForGod.org> – and is intended for adaptation by units according to their own policies.

Expectations of Your Service

Your Troop may have different expectations, but most Troops have a minimum participation requirement for those serving in any leadership role. But as a suggestion:

- Directly lead or co-lead at least 4 of the 6 Scouts' Own Services on monthly campouts. And for any SOS that you are not able to attend, ensure that other Scouts are pre-designated and prepared to deliver those services. Successful SOS delivery includes preparation before the Troop departs for their monthly events, and debriefs after each SOS on how to improve.
- Offer the Opening Prayer or Benediction for special Troop functions, such as Courts of Honor.
- Ensure that prayer activities at weekly meetings are delivered, in conjunction with the PLC's plan for the meeting schedule.
- In addition, as with any Scout Leadership position, it is expected that you will maintain sufficient participation at troop meetings, campouts and other activities – and conduct yourself with Scout Spirit and in alignment with the Scout Oath and Law.

Note, failure to meet these requirements may result in *less than full-credit being awarded* for service.

It is strongly suggested that a Troop have at least two Chaplains' Aides.

This enables the CA(s) to provide a more engaging service for the Troop participants and likely a more enjoyable experience for the CA(s) themselves by sharing the prayers, singing, teaching, and leading aspects of the CA role. Even in single-faith troops, there is benefit to enabling multiple CA's influence the unit's reverence program – as each will bring their own favorite prayers, customs and insights to the collective experience. This is especially true for units with multiple faiths being represented.

Diversity among Chaplains' Aides: If there are two (or more) faiths that are recognized as comprising a significant majority of the Troop, consider intentionally diversifying the Chaplains' Aides, so as to represent each major faith. This is NOT in an effort to deliver parallel/separate services, but to promote understanding and inclusiveness of the single Troop reverence program. Having two CA's with different backgrounds will help ensure a more inclusive 'interfaith' delivery of the Reverence program within Scouting.

Scouts' Own Service

Often as part of a monthly campout or other Summer/Winter camp, a Scouts' Own Service (SOS) is intended to provide an inclusive experience that enables every Scout to worship their understanding of our Creator. In recognition that the service may be inclusive of a wide variety of faiths, BSA often refers to this as an "*Interfaith Worship Service*." In any case, it should be a Scouts' Own (boy-led) program.

Inter-Faith Considerations

- For multi-faith (traditional) Troops, consider using worship elements that are expressly designed to be "Interfaith". There are several websites and books that offer a range of programs, including those where the Scout Law is explained through multiple theological scripts, songs such as "God Bless America", etc.
- For Troops that share a common faith, choose worship elements that are believed to be common-usage across those churches. For example, "Christian non-denomenational", choose songs "Our God is an Awesome God" and a consistent use of the Holy Bible (which also has Scout Law and Oath versions that have Christian supporting scripture). When in doubt, ask a few other Scouts "*are you familiar with this song?*"

Order of Service

Your goal is to provide a relatively short (10-15 minute) service that enables each Scout to have a period of Reverence – within the established functions and culture of your Troop.

Typical elements and an Order of Service include:

1. Welcome – and opening prayer
2. First Song – goal being something well-known for bringing hearts into a state of reverence
3. Responsive Reading, often using Scripture or pre-prepared literature
4. Short message, devotional or lesson. *As an option, this is the one portion of the service where the youth Chaplains Aides may opt to invite an adult to deliver the 'message.'*
5. Additional song or reading
6. Benediction prayer

Helps and Suggestions for Chaplains & Chaplains' Aides

You do not have to do this alone

In fact, it is strongly suggested that (a) your Troop have more than one active Chaplains' Aide and (b) you and the Troop should be comfortable with additional Scouts helping deliver the Reverence Program. For example:

- It may be unlikely that you attend every campout during your term as CA, so having two CA's increases the likelihood that one will be present for every campout.
- It is unlikely that you'll want to deliver every aspect of a Scouts' Own Service (SOS), such as singing the songs, and delivering the message, and leading the prayers and other service elements. So, asking additional Scouts to lead the song or a repetitive reading helps.

In fact, switching between CA's and other Scouts serves other purposes, as well:

- It keeps the Scouts' Own Service interesting, by varying the presenters
- It enables Scouts who may not be ready to volunteer as a Chaplains' Aide to get some minor experiences, so that they may eventually grow into that role.

Worship Aids

The Chaplains Aides will create and maintain a Chaplains' bag, containing materials to deliver a more thorough series of worship experiences. The materials may include:

- Lyric sheets for songs that can be distributed by the beginning of service
- Responsive reading materials, which can be handed to non-CA Scouts who are helping deliver the worship service
- Copies of other materials collected by previous Chaplains' Aides

Suggestions:

- If you want the Scouts to use their phones to download the lyrics to a song:
 - An ideal method is to email them a single web link (or the lyrics themselves); since some song versions may have slightly different variations.
 - Please provide the song names to the Scouts before service begins, so that they can spend time beforehand to search and locate the song. Otherwise, the flow of service will stop while the Scouts are locating their phones and then the songs or other material.

Covenant of Chaplains

In accepting the role of Chaplain's Aide, I recognize that I will play a crucial role in the reverence aspects of my Troop and the lives of my fellow Scouts. I also recognize that my role is considered a Leadership Role, as defined by BSA, for the purposes of rank advancement; and therefore agree to seek out feedback so that I can develop as a leader while serving.

With that recognition and the intent to be recognized as having served my Troop:

- I will personally deliver at least 4 of 6 monthly Scouts' Own Services during Troop camping activities. Satisfactory SOS delivery includes doing the following:

- Prepare prior to departure for the campout weekend
- Facilitate the SOS itself
- Debrief meeting on how to improve with the Troop Chaplain or Scoutmaster

During my term of service, I personally led Scouts' Own Services on the following dates:

- | | | | |
|----------|---|----------|---|
| 1. _____ | <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> | 4. _____ | <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 2. _____ | <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> | 5. _____ | <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 3. _____ | <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> | 6. _____ | <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> |

- For those SOS events that I do not directly lead, I will ensure that another Scout(s) is pre-prepared to deliver a reverence event for the Troop, including notifying the SPL and an Adult Leader who will be the acting Chaplains' Aide prior to departure for the event. In addition, both the Chaplains Aide and the acting CA will participate in a joint debrief with the Troop Chaplain or Scoutmaster

- a. Date _____ Acting CA Scout _____
- b. Date _____ Acting CA Scout _____

- In support of the Chaplains' function, I will conduct an inventory assessment of the Chaplains' backpack and then ensure that an adequate variety of hand-outs and worship-aides are in good condition and usable, when required.

This Covenant is agreed to between Chaplain and Chaplains' Aide, starting on _____ (date).

Chaplains Aide: _____

Chaplain: _____

This Covenant has been satisfied, as noted by at the completion of the service period, as of _____.

Chaplains Aide: _____

Chaplain: _____