
Chaplain's Aide

Time Available

10-30 minutes depending on the agenda format being used

Learning Objectives

At the conclusion of this session, participants will be able to:

1. Describe the requirements for the chaplain's aide position.
2. Describe the roles of the chaplain's aide in troop program operations.
3. Identify resources for holding interfaith worship services at Scouting events.

Suggested Presenter(s)

The ideal presenter is a troop chaplain or minister who knows the roles and purpose of the chaplain's aide and how the position can lead to better troop programming. Alternative presenters include a Scoutmaster with an effective chaplain's aide program in his unit or the district religious emblems coordinator.

Presentation Method

The presentation should include a review of the chaplain's aide roles from BSA literature. It should also include a group discussion about interfaith services, and when a single-religion service might be appropriate. Copies of related BSA literature should be available to show unit leaders.

BSA Reference Materials

- *Boy Scout Handbook* description of "reverent."
- The Roles of the Troop Chaplain and the Chaplain Aide, www.scouting.org/Media/Relationships/ChaplainRole.aspx
- Manual for Chaplain Aides and Chaplains, www.scouting.org/Media/Relationships/ManualforChaplainsandAides.aspx
- Duty to God religious emblems brochure, www.scouting.org/filestore/pdf/512-879_WB.pdf
- *A Scout Is Reverent*, No. 34248
- *In Our Own Way*, No. 34612
- Gironda, David C. *Duty to God Handbook*. 1999, Grand Canyon Council.
- Nehrbass, Dan. *Beyond Kum Ba Ya: A Resource Guide for the Chaplain Aide*, Boy Scouts of America. 2008, CreateSpace.

Presentation Content

- In its Charter and Bylaws, the BSA maintains that no member can grow into the best kind of citizen without recognizing an obligation to God.
- The *Boy Scout Handbook* has this to say about reverence:
 - "A Scout is reverent toward God. He is faithful in his religious duties. He respects the beliefs of others."
 - "Your family and religious leaders teach you about God and the ways you can serve. You can do your duty to God by following the wisdom of those teachings and by defending the rights of others to practice their own beliefs."
- From the BSA 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. . . . [The BSA], therefore, recognizes the religious element in the training of the member; but is absolutely nonsectarian in its attitude toward that religious training. Its policy is that the home and the organization or group with which the 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."
- Baden-Powell said: "No man is much good unless he believes in God and obeys His laws. So every Scout should have a religion. . . . Religion seems a very simple thing: First, love and serve God; second, love and serve your neighbor."
- The 12th point of the Scout Law is Reverent. Every Scout has a responsibility to be reverent. The BSA has created two leadership positions to help Scouts meet their obligation to be reverent: the chaplain and the chaplain's aide.
- A chaplain's aide who does well in the role will also complete requirement 8 of the Communication merit badge and requirement 2 of the Public Speaking merit badge.
- A youth's service as a chaplain's aide can apply toward the "positions of responsibility" requirements for Star, Life, and Eagle ranks. The responsibilities of this youth position include encouraging the spiritual growth and awareness of each member of the troop and assisting the troop chaplain (and adult committee members).
- Ideally, the chaplain's aide should work with an adult member of the clergy or lay minister who agrees to mentor the aide and who understands and agrees with the BSA's nonsectarian religious principles, so that all Scouts are included in religious observances conducted by the chaplain and the chaplain's aide.

- For units chartered by a religious organization, the adult should be the head of the chartered organization or someone designated by the head of the organization.
- Part B of David Gironda's *Duty to God Handbook* (1999, Grand Canyon Council) gives excellent tips for training a chaplain's aide and includes a handy checklist for the roles of the chaplain's aide.
- Qualifications for the position of chaplain's aide are:
 - The chaplain's aide must be mature and sensitive and have earned the respect and trust of his fellow Scouts.
 - The chaplain's aide must be at least a First Class Scout.
 - The chaplain's aide must have received or be working on the requirements leading to the age-appropriate religious emblem for his faith.
 - **Note:** The two www.scouting.org pages in the reference section differ in the use of "must" versus "should" for the last two qualifications. Either way, it is intended that the chaplain's aide be a person of faith who is old enough to be mature and able to communicate well to other Scouts.
- The chaplain's aide is intended to play an active role in the troop operations, as follows:
 - Participate in patrol leaders' council planning sessions to ensure that spiritual emphasis is included in troop activities.
 - Working with the troop chaplain, plan and then lead an appropriate prayer before or after meals.
 - Lead vespers at the end of troop meetings and on campouts before the Scouts go to bed. It can be as simple as leading the Scout Vespers song and saying the accompanying benediction.
 - Work with the troop chaplain to plan, and assist in conducting, appropriate religious observances for all members during weekend troop campouts.
 - Help the troop chaplain (or other adult) plan, and assist in conducting, an annual Scout-oriented religious observance, preferably during Scouting Anniversary 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 adult) recognize troop members who receive their religious emblems, perhaps during a troop court of honor, even if the church or other religious body also holds an award ceremony.
- A chaplain's aide should encourage every Scout to earn the religious emblems for his faith.
 - This exhortation will be more meaningful if the chaplain's aide has earned his own religious emblem or is at least working toward earning it.
 - The chaplain's aide is NOT intended to lead other Scouts in earning religious emblems. That is the role of an adult counselor selected by the church or other religious body.
 - The Duty to God brochure shows the religious emblems for all faiths that have adopted them, and gives information on where to order workbooks. This brochure enables each Scout to obtain useful information about his own faith's religious emblems without requiring the chaplain's aide to know all of the available awards.
 - The chaplain's aide should advise other Scouts when local churches or other religious bodies offer religious emblems classes or offer to counsel Scouts of their faith.
- A chaplain's aide is intended to lead his unit in religious observances when on campouts.
 - The BSA intends that these religious services be welcoming to every Scout. "Know your audience" applies here.
 - When a troop has Scouts from a variety of faiths or denominations, care must be taken not to offend any Scout during prayers or religious services.
 - If the group consists of members with mixed beliefs, or if the beliefs of the group are unknown, then prayers must be of an interfaith content.
 - When all Scouts are of the same faith (are members of the same church, for instance), then it is OK to conduct a religious service that follows the teachings of that specific faith.
 - It is acceptable to have a nonsectarian religious observance that speaks to every Scout's faith, followed by a second observance that is for a specific faith or denomination. Care must be taken to alert Scouts when shifting from one to the other.
- The resource section of this topic lists several guides that contain prayers, songs, and other elements of an interfaith service.
 - The troop should invest in at least one of these resources for use by a chaplain's aide who has not yet become proficient at leading religious observances without a prayer book at hand.

- These resources also provide guidance for services that are nonsectarian, so a chaplain's aide doesn't feel the need to fall back on his own religion for the content of the service.
- Unit leaders should be encouraged to discuss how they use chaplain's aides and share successful religious observances with other unit leaders.
- Close by sharing known upcoming classes for religious emblems offered by churches and other religious bodies in the district or in neighboring districts, so the unit leaders can give this information to their chaplain's aides for sharing with the other Scouts in the troop.
 - It can be helpful to have a religious emblems tab on the district website under which fliers promoting upcoming religious emblems classes can be posted.
 - Churches or other religious bodies in the district known to offer religious emblems can also be listed.

High Adventure

Time Available

10-30 minutes depending on the agenda format being used

Learning Objectives

At the conclusion of this session, participants will be able to:

1. Understand BSA high-adventure opportunities.
2. Share ideas about local high-adventure options, including troop-planned outings.
3. Develop sample itineraries as local examples.

Suggested Presenter(s)

A local unit leader or experienced high-adventure Scouter is ideal. The local camping committee may also be an excellent resource.

Presentation Method

This content works best as an interactive discussion with initial content to start the conversation. Then leaders can add ideas and information relevant to the local area.

BSA Reference Materials

- Scouting High Adventure Bases, www.scouting.org/HighAdventure.aspx

Community Resources and Materials

- Information or links to local high-adventure options or places that can facilitate a high-adventure activity
- Local parks and adventure guides
- Local outfitters and other resources as available

Presentation Content

- The Boy Scouts of America offers four high-adventure bases with superb programming options for Scouts age 14 and above:
 - Florida Sea Base offers sailing, fishing, snorkeling, kayaking, and scuba diving.
 - Northern Tier provides canoeing, fishing, and winter expeditions.
- Each base has its own selection system for assigning available trek slots. The local council and each base can provide details about the selection process.
 - Upon selection, important details such as deposits, participant fees, health forms, and logistics will be sent to the tour leader contact.
 - Some bases will require extensive travel needs, which should be planned into the trip itinerary. Pay special attention to any items that may have travel restrictions, including most outdoor cooking systems, etc.
 - Each base requires specialized gear unique to the adventures offered. Some gear is also available for lending or rental. Inquire in advance about these options.
 - Note that additional physical requirements and training certifications may be required, such as weight limits and advanced first-aid certifications. Additional portions of the BSA Health and Medical Record may also be required, including a physician evaluation.
- Discuss local trips and opportunities for council contingents to attend these bases, as available.
- High adventure is also readily accessible through unit-planned events—sometimes called “roll your own” high adventure.
 - Trips may take advantage of local resources and options, often at very reasonable costs for a week or more of events and activities that the Scouts will remember for a lifetime.
 - The *Guide to Safe Scouting* and any BSA safety policies applicable to a planned activity still apply.