

Exploring the Foundations of Scouting

The BSA's Declaration of Religious Principle says, "The Boy Scouts of America maintains that no member can grow into the best kind of citizen without recognizing an obligation to God. ... The Boy Scouts of America, 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 the member is connected shall give definite attention to religious life."

Objectives

This month's activities should:

- Teach Scouts what it means to do their duty to God.
- Help Scouts understand the role of the chaplain aide.
- Explore the intersection between religion and spirituality.
- Show Scouts how being of service to others relates to doing one's duty to God.
- Help Scouts gain a better understanding of and respect for others' beliefs.

RELATED ADVANCEMENT AND AWARDS

- Requirements related to Scout spirit and duty to God
- Messengers of Peace emblem
- Religious emblems
- TRUST Award



Leadership Planning

As a leadership team, you may want to discuss the following items during your planning meetings when choosing duty to God as your program feature.

1. How can our chaplain aide support this program feature?
2. What is our unit's spiritual profile? Do we have a single faith tradition or many faith traditions represented?
3. Which adults in the unit have expertise that could help us explore duty to God in a meaningful manner?
4. Are there local ministerial or interfaith groups that could provide support?
5. How can we be sensitive to the beliefs of unit families who may come from different religious backgrounds?
6. Who in our unit has earned religious emblems?
7. What do we want to do for our main event?
8. Is there a particular time of year that this program feature might work best (such as around the winter holidays)?
9. To meet our needs, what should we change in the sample meeting plans?

PARENTS CAN HELP WITH THE DUTY TO GOD PROGRAM FEATURE BY:

1. Sharing about their own religious traditions and beliefs
2. Identifying members of the community who could serve as resources at meetings
3. Assisting with transportation for the main event
4. Participating as a family in attending a religious service, holiday event, or celebration
5. Securing support from their place of worship for hosting part of the main event

6. Maintaining current Youth Protection certification, which is required of all adults providing transportation for or participating in outings

DUTY TO GOD INFORMATION

The Golden Rule

Variations on the familiar Golden Rule are found in most world religions. Here are examples.

- Buddhist: "Hurt not others with that which pains yourself." (*Udana-Varga*, v. 18)
- Christian: "Treat others as you would like them to treat you." (Luke 6:31, *New English Bible*)
- Hindu: "Let not any man do unto another any act that he wishes not done to himself by others, knowing it to be painful to himself." (*Mahabharata*, Shanti Parva, cclx.21)
- Islam: "No man is a true believer unless he desires for his brother that which he desires for himself." (*Hadith of Islam*, imam 71-72)
- Jewish: "What is hateful to yourself do not do to your fellow man. That is the whole of the Torah." (*Babylonian Talmud*, Shabbath 31a)
- Sikh: "If thou desirest thy Beloved, then hurt thou not anyone's heart." (*Guru Arjan Dev Ji* 259, *Guru Granth Sahib*)
- Zoroastrian: "That nature alone is good which refrains from doing to another whatsoever is not good for itself." (*Dadistan-I-dinik*, 94,5)



SCOUTING FOUNDER ROBERT BADEN-POWELL ON RELIGION

"There is no religious side to the movement. The whole of it is based on religion, that is, on the realization and service of God."

"Religion is essential to happiness. ... Religion very briefly stated means: Firstly—recognizing who and what is God. Secondly—making the best of the life that He has given one and doing what He wants of us. This is mainly doing something for other people."

Respect for the Beliefs of Others

More than half of all Scouting units are chartered to religious organizations. Clearly Scouting has a real contribution to make to these institutions. Here are a few ways.

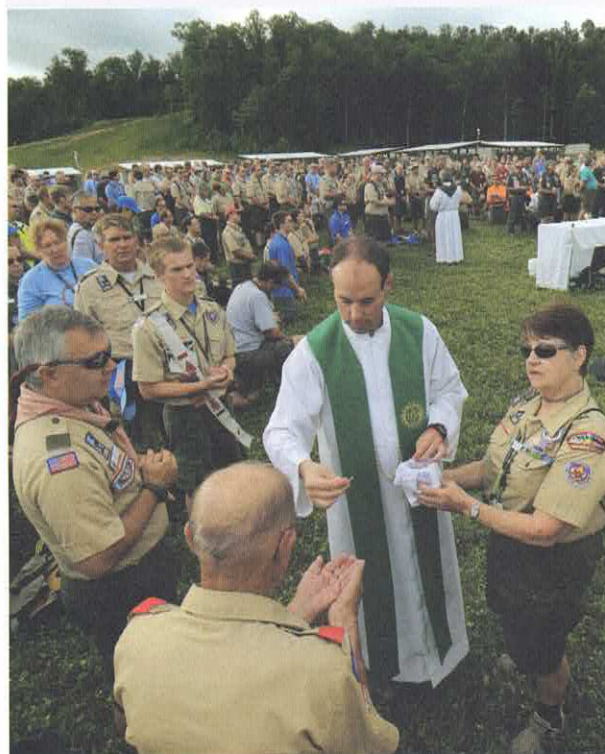
- Scouting supports the spiritual view of life that underlies the teaching of all denominations and faiths. Any youth or leader who would be a member of the Boy Scouts of America must profess a belief in God and promise to do his or her best to fulfill the spiritual ideals of Scouting.
- Scouting encourages all members, according to their own convictions, to participate in the program of their religion at their church, temple, synagogue, mosque, or other place of worship. Scouts are expected to fulfill their personal religious obligations and respect the beliefs of others.
- Scouting helps all individuals put into practice some of the basic truths they are taught by their parents and religious leaders. They learn by experience to give of themselves, to share, to help others, to assume responsibility, and to understand the value of personal integrity.
- Scouting gives all youth an opportunity (within the confines of a safe venue) to explore their interests and God-given talents.
- Scouting helps all youth find their place in life and become happy, well-adjusted, useful members of the community.

Sample Unit Diversity Policy

Scouting is truly a melting pot. Scouts come from all walks of life and all types of family structures, faiths, and racial and ethnic groups. The BSA respects the rights of all people and groups, and allows youth to live and learn and enjoy Scouting without immersing them in the politics of the day.

Our unit seeks to include a diverse community of Scouts and Scout families. Of course, we remain governed by the guidelines set by our chartered organization, council, and the Boy Scouts of America. We seek to provide an open, clearly structured environment where a diverse group of Scouts can grow collectively and individually toward self-reliance without harming one another.

Conduct, not status, governs our unit. Our unit is committed to this goal, and our leaders all subscribe to making it happen on a constant basis. Our unit remains firmly rooted in the core values of Scouting. We understand that diversity does not threaten these values, but only strengthens our character and common worth.

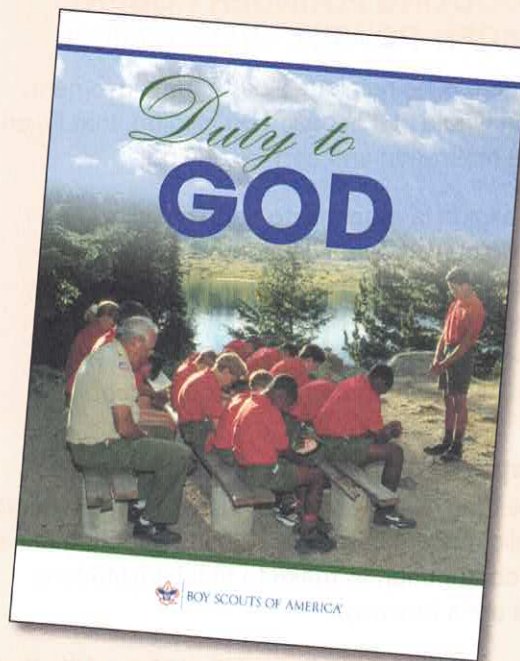




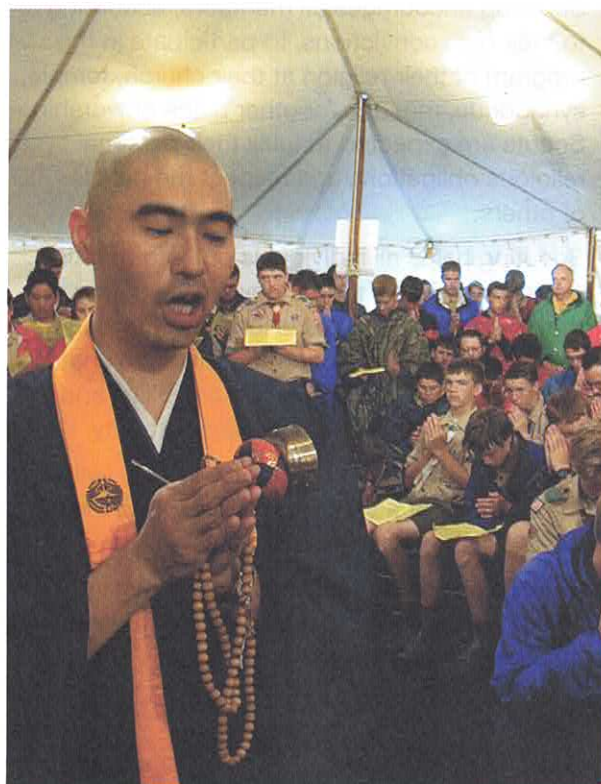
Active Participation

The Boy Scouts of America is an integral part of nearly every place of worship. This is because every Scout has a duty to God. A unit that is chartered to a religious group provides Scouts the opportunity to recognize and fulfill their duty. Active involvement in your religious group is essential to your being a good Scout. You are expected to recognize your duty to God, and the religious principles you learn will enable you to live by the Scout Law.

Religions around the world use Scouting as a way to provide meaningful activities for young men and women. Most of them have special recognitions for the young people who recognize and fulfill their duty to God. For more information, please go to www.scouting.org/awards/religious-awards. Check with your religious leaders to find out the requirements for receiving the emblem affiliated with your religion. Religious emblems are not required for advancement but are honorable to wear on your uniform and demonstrate your dedication to your religion and to Scouting.



The *Duty to God* brochure has more information about the religious emblems programs.





DUTY TO GOD GAMES

Touch Football

Equipment: Football

How to play: Play a game of touch or flag football between teams of equal sizes. For simplicity's sake, do not include field goals and extra points.

Scoring: Award 7 points for touchdowns. The team with the most points at the end of the game wins.



Note: Conclude the game with a reflection on the relationship between religion and spirituality.

Respect Song, Rap, or Chant

Equipment: Easels, marking pens, poster paper

How to play: Have each group create a song, rap, or chant that deals with the concept of respect. (Don't cheat and use Aretha Franklin's "R-E-S-P-E-C-T"!) As time allows, each group will share its end product with the whole unit.

Scoring: No scoring is used except applause or acceptance of the end product from the other participants.

Note: The words of the song, rap, or chant should tell why respect is important and how it could help make the world a better place.

Trust Walk by Faith

Equipment: One blindfold for each team, obstacles such as tables and chairs

How to play: Arrange tables and chairs to create an obstacle course within the room. Form two or more equally sized teams and blindfold one player on each team. The object of the game is to lead the blindfolded team members

to the far end of the room using only voice commands. Members of each team walk alongside the blindfolded player and provide directions. However, the opposing team can also try to trick the player by giving false directions. The player who reaches the end of the room first wins a point for his or her team; however, a player who touches or runs into an obstacle takes off the blindfold and is out for the round. Once the round is over, someone else is blindfolded as the race continues.

Scoring: The first team to earn 5 points wins.

Note: Conclude with a reflection that explores the similarities between this game and the faith journeys we are all on.

Yurt Circle

Equipment: None

How to play: Participants stand in a circle facing the middle, join hands, and expand the circle outward until all feel some gentle pull on their arms from each side. (There must be an even number of players, so you may need to add someone from outside the group.) Participants spread their feet to shoulder width and in line with the circumference of the circle, and then count off by twos. All the "ones" slowly lean in toward the center of the circle, while all the "twos" slowly lean out (without bending at the waist or moving their feet). Once they have done so, they reverse positions. With practice and cooperation, the reversal should be quite smooth.

Scoring: None

Note: Try the game several times to see how fast the group can switch positions.





E.D.G.E. Ideas

Explain how it is done—Tell them.

Demonstrate the steps—Show them.

Guide learners as they practice—Watch them do it.

Enable them to succeed on their own—Have them practice/teach it.

EXPLAIN

- Explain why you feel duty to God is important.
- Describe the role of the chaplain aide.
- Explain how demonstrating Scout spirit is closely aligned to doing your duty to God.
- Introduce the BSA's Declaration of Religious Principle and its embrace of all faith traditions.

DEMONSTRATE

- Share the procedure for earning religious emblems.
- Show a video introducing one or more of the world's major religions.
- Lead a sample interfaith service to demonstrate what such services look like.
- Lead a "roses, thorns, and buds" reflection at the end of a campout.

GUIDE

- Guide Scouts in planning an interfaith service.
- Visit a worship service or a holy day observance in a faith tradition other than your own.
- Invite a religious leader to introduce Scouts to his or her faith tradition.
- Lead reflections after games at a unit meeting to draw out faith lessons.

ENABLE

- Empower Scouts to share their own faith backgrounds with their fellow Scouts.
- Enable the unit to lead a duty to God event for other units.
- Make available counselors and printed resources for the religious emblems program.
- Participate in a Messengers of Peace project and an award or recognition ceremony.

MAIN EVENT SUMMARIES

● ESSENTIAL	■ CHALLENGING	◆ ADVANCED
Day Activity	Day Activity	Weekend Activity
Day of service—Using the concept of "paying it forward," plan and execute a day of service involving a variety of service experiences and benefits.	Worship service, festival, or celebration—As a unit, attend a worship service, gathering, festival, or celebration of a religion other than those of unit members. Explore similarities and differences, and discuss how what you experienced can strengthen your own faith.	Community tour of faiths—Organize a tour of local places of worship for units in your district. Create hiking routes of 5 to 20 miles that stop at a variety of locations where participants can learn about different faith traditions.



DUTY TO GOD

Meeting Plan: Spirituality and Religious Involvement



Week 1 Date _____

ACTIVITY	DESCRIPTION	RUN BY	TIME*
Preopening 15 minutes before meeting	As Scouts arrive, ask them to write their own personal definition of spirituality on a sticky note or index card. (A good general definition is "that which is beyond the material and which gives meaning and direction to one's life.")		6:45 p.m.
Opening Ceremony 10 minutes	Flag presentation Oath and Law Uniform inspection		7 p.m.
Group Instruction 5 minutes	Have a trusted religious leader discuss the questions of "What is spirituality?" and "What is Scout spirit?" He or she might use the analogy of the wind: something that is invisible but that has great power when harnessed. Incorporate the definitions Scouts wrote down as they arrived.		7:10 p.m.
Skills Instruction 45 minutes	Discuss how different faith groups pray and how care must be used so that one person's religious prayer traditions are not imposed upon other people. For example, one should not direct everyone to remove their hats before a prayer, as those who are Jewish or Muslim pray with heads covered. A more acceptable call to prayer would be: "Please prepare yourself to pray according to your specific faith tradition."		7:15 p.m.
	As a group, write a hymn or religious poem. Choose a familiar tune and write words that express concepts of praise or supplication.		
	Develop an outline for an interfaith worship service. An interfaith service is a brief worship or meditation, specifically designed for Scouting events where there may be members of more than one faith group. The spiritual focus should not exclusively reflect the views of one particular denomination or faith.		
Breakout Groups 15 minutes	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Begin planning for group participation in the main event.• Work on advancement requirements as needed.		8 p.m.
Game 10 minutes	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Play Touch Football (described earlier).• After playing, use this analogy to explain the relationship between spirituality and religion: The rules, referees, other players, and field markings help guide you as you play the game. In a similar way, religion may be a guide for you to find your spirituality.		8:15 p.m.
Closing 5 minutes	Announcements Leader's minute Closing		8:25 p.m.
Total 90 minutes of meeting			
After the Meeting 15 minutes	Leadership team reviews plans for the next meeting and for the main event.		

*All times are suggested.



DUTY TO GOD

Meeting Plan: Respect for the Beliefs of Others



Week 2 Date _____

ACTIVITY	DESCRIPTION	RUN BY	TIME*
Preopening 15 minutes before meeting	Have individuals or small groups list the names of as many different religions as they know about. For each religion, include information about some of the following: sacred texts and scriptures, festivities and ceremonies, customs and traditions, food, clothing.		6:45 p.m.
Opening Ceremony 10 minutes	Flag presentation Oath and Law Uniform inspection		7 p.m.
Group Instruction 5 minutes	Have a trusted religious leader discuss how Scouting recognizes and celebrates a range of religious traditions. Explain that recognizing and respecting the religious beliefs of others is essential for peacefully coexisting with people of other faiths and cultures and that it requires developing religious tolerance or a nonjudgmental attitude toward other beliefs.		7:10 p.m.
Skills Instruction 45 minutes	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Teach Scouts how to participate in a “roses, thorns, and buds” reflection (where <i>roses</i> reflect the best part of the day, <i>thorns</i> reflect the worst part, and <i>buds</i> are the things participants are looking forward to). Every Scout activity should conclude with a time for reflection as participants ask, “What have I learned from this experience to help me in serving and building up my own faith and the faith of others?” 		7:15 p.m.
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> With the help of a knowledgeable leader or guest, explore a religion that is different from your own. Read a sacred text or watch a documentary about the religion’s beliefs and practices. If possible, plan to visit a worship service of a religious faith other than your own. 		
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Plan a Messengers of Peace service project. Such projects are designed to contribute to world peace across three dimensions: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Personal (harmony, justice, and equality) Community (peace as opposed to hostility or violent conflict) Relationships between humankind and the environment (security and environmental and social welfare) 		
Breakout Groups 15 minutes	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Continue planning for participation in the main event. Discuss what faith traditions are represented in the group and plan a field trip to a member’s place of worship. 		8 p.m.
Game 10 minutes	Play Respect Song, Rap, or Chant (described earlier).		8:15 p.m.
Closing 5 minutes	Announcements Leader’s minute Closing		8:25 p.m.
Total 90 minutes of meeting			
After the Meeting 15 minutes	Leadership team reviews plans for the next meeting and for the main event.		

*All times are suggested.



DUTY TO GOD

Meeting Plan: Religious Emblems



Week 3 Date _____

ACTIVITY	DESCRIPTION	RUN BY	TIME*
Preopening 15 minutes before meeting	Create a matching game where Scouts try to match each religious emblem with its faith tradition. To do so, cut up a copy of the BSA's <i>Duty to God</i> brochure (found at https://filestore.scouting.org/filestore/pdf/512-879_WB.pdf) and write the names of 20 to 25 religions on a whiteboard, preferably ones less familiar to the group. Scouts should tape the various emblems to the correct religions.		6:45 p.m.
Opening Ceremony 10 minutes	Flag presentation Oath and Law Uniform inspection		7 p.m.
Group Instruction 5 minutes	Have a youth leader, preferably the chaplain aide, discuss what he or she has learned from earning one or more religious emblems.		7:10 p.m.
Skills Instruction 45 minutes	Discuss the religious emblems program and the requirements involved. Help Scouts learn what emblems are available to them depending on their faith tradition. If possible, have materials on hand for faith traditions represented in your unit. (Note that some faith traditions don't have religious emblems Scouts can earn.)		7:15 p.m.
	Discuss the role of the chaplain aide. (See www.scouting.org/training/adult for information about chaplain and chaplain aide training.)		
	Discuss the Venturing TRUST Award and how this program can help you become a resource and example to other youth and young adults. (See <i>Venturing Awards and Requirements</i> , No. 34784.)		
Breakout Groups 15 minutes	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Continue planning for participation in the main event. Discuss the religious emblems program and set a goal for attainment of religious emblems by group members. 		8 p.m.
Game 10 minutes	Play Trust Walk by Faith (described earlier).		8:15 p.m.
Closing 5 minutes	Announcements Leader's minute Closing		8:25 p.m.
Total 90 minutes of meeting			
After the Meeting 15 minutes	Leadership team reviews plans for the next meeting and for the main event.		

*All times are suggested.



DUTY TO GOD

Meeting Plan: Doing Unto Others



Week 4 Date _____

ACTIVITY	DESCRIPTION	RUN BY	TIME*
Preopening 15 minutes before meeting	Show a video from WingClips.com about servanthood or selflessness; a good example is www.wingclips.com/movie-clips/patch-adams/best-doctor . (Note: The website has a Christian perspective, but most of the clips express universal values.)		6:45 p.m.
Opening Ceremony 10 minutes	Flag presentation Oath and Law Uniform inspection		7 p.m.
Group Instruction 5 minutes	Have a leader discuss the universality of the Golden Rule (which is found in some form in the teachings of all major faith groups).		7:10 p.m.
Skills Instruction 45 minutes	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Discuss good deeds. Have participants develop a list of realistically achievable good deeds that youth can do in the following areas: family, faith group, community, school, and nation. Plan a future activity where Scouts can truly do a multitude of good deeds. 		7:15 p.m.
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Discuss the concept of cheerful service, including how cheerful service creates positive ripples. Discuss how the Order of the Arrow emphasizes cheerful service. Plan an activity where Scouts can provide service and "pay it forward." 		
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Have a Scout who has attended NYLT or NAYLE (or an adult who has attended Wood Badge) discuss servant leadership. The <i>Senior Patrol Leader Handbook</i> also discusses servant leadership. Form two groups; have one group create a skit that demonstrates servant leadership and the other create a skit that depicts "leader first" leadership. Discuss which approach is more effective and inspiring, and why. 		
Breakout Groups 20 minutes	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Finalize plans for participation in the main event. Work on advancement requirements as needed. 		8 p.m.
Game 5 minutes	Play Yurt Circle (described earlier).		8:20 p.m.
Closing 5 minutes	Announcements Leader's minute Closing		8:25 p.m.
Total 90 minutes of meeting			
After the Meeting 15 minutes	Leadership team reviews plans for the next meeting and for the main event.		

*All times are suggested.



DUTY TO GOD

Main Event: Day of Service



Date _____

Logistics

Location: _____

Departure time: _____

Return time: _____

Duration of activity: 4 to 6 hours

Budget: Completed _____ Approved _____

Camping: Duty roster _____ Menu _____

Transportation: Group _____ Self _____

Essential (Tier I)

Using the concept of “paying it forward,” plan and execute a day of service involving a variety of service experiences and benefits.

Equipment List

- List of needed services in the community, obtained from religious leaders
- Snacks and lunch (individual or group)
- Water
- Project-specific tools and safety equipment
- Scout Basic Essentials (Review the list and take what you need.)
- Camera(s)

Activity

- Watch the movie *Pay It Forward* or discuss the concept of “doing unto others,” and share ideas on how to provide service.
- Discuss the concept of “positive ripples.”
- Create a schedule of projects to be completed throughout the activity.
- Have the troop historian keep a record of the projects, or select another Scout if your troop does not have a historian.
- Working in small groups or as a whole, perform cheerful service.
- Reflect on and assess what you accomplished.

Safety

- Have cellphones on hand, as appropriate.
- Have easy access to first-aid kits.
- Adhere to the buddy system and follow all BSA Youth Protection guidelines related to interactions between adults and youths.
- Two-deep adult leadership is required for all activities.

Notes

This activity could be part of a larger program (e.g., Martin Luther King Jr. Day of Service in January, Youth Service America’s Global Youth Service Day in April, or the September 11 National Day of Service and Remembrance). If possible, combine your day of service with an overnight campout.



DUTY TO GOD

Main Event: Worship Service,
Festival, or Celebration



Date _____

Logistics

Location: _____

Departure time: _____

Return time: _____

Duration of activity: Varies

Budget: Completed _____ Approved _____

Camping: Duty roster _____ Menu _____

Transportation: Group _____ Self _____

Challenging (Tier II)

As a unit, attend a worship service, gathering, festival, or celebration of a religion other than those of unit members. Explore similarities and differences, and discuss how what you experienced can strengthen your own faith.

Equipment List

None

Activity

- Obtain written permission or acknowledgment from the religious leader that your group will be attending their worship service or event.
- If possible, arrange for an orientation from the religious leader before the day of the event.
- Attend the worship service or event; wear Scout uniforms if appropriate.
- Be respectful of other worshippers.
- After the event, send a thank-you note or card to the religious leader acknowledging their support.
- Hold a time of reflection.

Safety

- Adhere to the buddy system and follow all BSA Youth Protection guidelines related to interactions between adults and youth.
- Two-deep adult leadership is required for all activities.

Notes

Follow all rules and guidelines relative to the worship service. You could repeat this activity several times, eventually visiting the places of worship of all members of your unit.



DUTY TO GOD

Main Event: Community Tour of Faiths



Date _____

Logistics

Location: _____

Departure time: _____

Return time: _____

Duration of activity: Weekend

Budget: Completed _____ Approved _____

Camping: Duty roster _____ Menu _____

Transportation: Group _____ Self _____

Advanced (Tier III)

Organize a tour of local places of worship for units in your district. Create hiking routes of 5 to 20 miles that stop at a variety of locations where participants can learn about different faith traditions.

Equipment List

- Scout Basic Essentials (Review the list and take what you need.)
- Water and snacks
- First-aid kit
- Tour maps
- Registration tent, table, and other supplies
- Brochures or posters about the religious emblems program

Activity

- Identify places of worship in your community that will welcome Scouts on the day of the event.
- Orient religious leaders and volunteers on how the event will work and what the Scout units hope to learn from the visits.
- Create maps showing routes of 5, 10, 15, and 20 miles that include some or all of the places of worship. (The longer routes would include all sites; the shorter ones would not.)
- Create "passports" that Scouts can get stamped at each place of worship.
- Work with your district executive and roundtable staff to promote the tour of faiths to packs, troops, teams, and crews in your district.
- Camp at or near the starting point of the event. The night before the event, set up a registration center and put up signs at the various places of worship, as well as any needed directional signs.
- On the day of the event, staff a registration center where participants can sign up and get maps and passports. Conduct an orientation on the rules of safe hiking. (Note that all participants will be under the leadership of their own Scout leaders.)
- Follow up with thank-you notes to the participating places of worship.

Safety

- Have cellphones on hand, as appropriate.
- Have easy access to first-aid kits.
- Adhere to the buddy system and follow all BSA Youth Protection guidelines related to interactions between adults and youths.
- Two-deep adult leadership is required for all activities.

Notes

Run an internet search on "Community Tour of Faiths" for additional ideas.



RESOURCES AND REFERENCES

Books

Scouts BSA Handbook for Boys

Scouts BSA Handbook for Girls

Senior Patrol Leader Handbook

Blanchard, Ken. *Servant Leader*.
Thomas Nelson, 2003.

Brodd, Jeffrey. *World Religions: A Voyage of Discovery*, 4th edition. Saint Mary's Press, 2015.

Edmonds, Robert Lee, and Linda Tucker Edmonds. *Scouting Our Way: A Guide to Faith, Duty, and Fellowship*. Eight Eleven Press, 2015

Greenleaf, Robert K. *The Servant as Leader*. The Greenleaf Center for Servant Leadership, 2008.

Hyde, Catherine Ryan. *Pay It Forward*.
Simon & Schuster, 2000.

Lazarus, William P., and Mark Sullivan. *Comparative Religion for Dummies*. For Dummies, 2008.

Smith, Huston. *The Illustrated World's Religions: A Guide to Our Wisdom Traditions*. HarperOne, 1995.

Websites

Beliefnet

Website: www.beliefnet.com

Faith in Scouting Videos

Website: <https://scouting.webdamdb.com/bp/#/folder/942180/>

Greenleaf Center for Servant Leadership

Website: www.greenleaf.org

Messengers of Peace

Website: www.scouting.org/international/messengers-of-peace/

P.R.A.Y. (Programs of Religious Activities with Youth)

Website: www.praypub.org

Religious Emblems Program

Website: www.scouting.org/awards/religiousawards.aspx

Scouting for God

Website: www.scoutingforgod.org

Webcast on Duty to God

https://filestore.scouting.org/filestore/scoutcast/resources/201405_1/SC_May_Duty_to_God.mp3

Related Program Features

Communication, Ethics, Mentoring,
Project Planning

Photo and Illustration Credits

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