

## The Roles of the Troop Chaplain and the Chaplain Aide

### Why Were You Recruited As a Chaplain?

Scouting is a resource for religious organizations, schools, and community and civic groups to use in their program for young people. Scouting is an educational program based on "duty to God" and designed to enhance

- A personal value system
- Leadership skills
- Citizenship responsibilities
- Career awareness
- Personal fitness

If the troop is operated by a religious organization, it is customary for the religious leader to serve as the chaplain. The religious leader may ask a member of the staff who is qualified to serve in that position. A unit not operated by a religious organization may select a chaplain for the troop from the local clergy.



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### The Basic Opportunity

In this capacity, you as the chaplain have an opportunity to be a friend to the Scouts and leaders and to contribute to their spiritual welfare and growth. You as the chaplain, by virtue of your position and personality, can encourage the boys in their Scouting work and other aspects of their total lives.

### The Job Description

1. Provide a spiritual tone for all troop meetings and camping experiences.
2. Assure members and leaders of your interest in them and their activities.
3. Provide spiritual counseling service when needed or requested.
4. Provide opportunities for all boys to grow in their relationship with God and their fellow Scouts.
5. Encourage Scouts to participate in the religious emblems program of their respective faith.

### Outreach Opportunities

Many times one of the first contacts a new family has in the community is with the Scouting unit. As new members are registered, you will learn of their religious affiliations or interest and can extend to them an invitation to join you in worship. Or you may share with them other opportunities for worship within the community. At no time should the chaplain proselytize.

### Accidents, Illnesses, and Other Problems

Ask the leaders to report accidents, illnesses, and other problems of members to you. You should become aware of situations where a pastoral call would be appropriate and beneficial. Leaders who are in regular contact with their members often are the first to know of situations that may need pastoral attention.

If a member misses several meetings, it may be an indication that something is wrong. Ask that the names of absentees be shared with you. As chaplain you have the opportunity to visit and discover the source of the problem. If the problem is with some aspect of the Scouting program or leadership, you should discuss this problem with the appropriate individual or committee.

## Chartered Organization Representative

This person is the representative of the chartered organization to the district and local council of the Boy Scouts of America. This person must be able to represent the organization's concern in both policy-making and program. The chaplain should work closely with the chartered organization representative for the interest of the chartered organization and its ministry, as well as for children, youth, and families.

## Support of Unit Leadership

Remember, volunteers sharing their time and effort are what makes Scouting work. Support them. Recognize them for a job well done. Commend them personally for their ministry. Thank their family members, too, for their sacrifice makes Scouting possible.

## Observe Unit Leadership

Unit leaders are charged with fulfilling the purpose of both the chartered organization and Scouting. The leadership should demonstrate awareness of and understanding of both. It should be evident that Scouting activities are fulfilling spiritual needs, in addition to developing Scouting skills.

## Religious Emblems Study Programs

Encourage Scouts to earn their appropriate religious emblems. The troop possibly includes Scouts of various faiths; therefore, a knowledge of all emblems would be helpful. The chart *A Scout Is Reverent*, No. 5-206A, will be most helpful. Procedures within various faiths differ. A call to your local council service center will help to identify the requirement book, method of ordering, and presentation information.

## Planning Worship Experiences

Every troop going away for a weekend needs to plan to conduct or attend a service in keeping with the 12th point of the Scout Law. You may be invited to conduct the services or work out a program with the chaplain aide and other adult leaders. An overnight event should include worship experiences, either for the individual or for the troop. You may want to recommend scripture readings or devotional readings to be used at the close of the evening or as a morning meditation.

## Identifying Service Opportunities

Service projects for advancement are required of all Scouts. Helping others is a Scouting tradition.

You have the advantage of being able to identify many possible service projects for individuals and families, for the chartered organization, for the community, and beyond the community. You will need to be on the lookout for service projects that are helpful and significant.

A particular emphasis in service projects is to focus on concerns and cares of the faith community, such as persons living in impacted areas (neighborhoods isolated by highways, interstates, commercial developments, etc.); aged, homebound, hungry, and illiterate people; ethnic minority groups needing help; and persons with handicapping conditions.

# Sensitivity to Needs

Working with leaders and youth will offer you an opportunity to relate to them at a level where you will become sensitive to needs not yet expressed. Be alert for personal, family, or social situations that may require special care.

## Chaplain Aide

The purpose of this program is to

- Make the 12th point of the Scout Law more meaningful in life
- Promote a greater understanding of and appreciation for all religions
- Provide Boy Scouts with the opportunity to work with an ordained member of the clergy, thereby gaining insight into the religious professional life

Chaplain aide is an approved youth leadership position for Boy Scouts. The responsibilities are to encourage spiritual awareness and growth in the lives of troop members and to assist the chaplain.

The Boy Scout seeking the position of chaplain aide should have earned or be in the process of completing his religious emblems study program. It is recommended that the Boy Scout selected be at least a First Class Scout. The chaplain aide should be mature and sensitive, a Boy Scout who has earned the trust of his fellow Scouts.

## Duties of the Chaplain Aide

- Maintain the troop's religious emblems award progress chart.
- Present an overview of the various religious emblems programs to the troop at least annually, instructing members to contact their own clergyperson or religious counselor to guide them in the appropriate study programs.
- Compile and keep an up-to-date list of local clergy who have agreed to be counselors for the religious emblems programs.
- Present an overview of the religious emblems programs to Cub Scout dens and packs on request.
- Serve as the youth coordinator for the observance of the annual Scout Sabbath or Sunday in February.
- Working with the troop chaplain, usually a member of the clergy, compose a Sabbath service appropriate for all troop members during weekend campouts. Invite the troop chaplain to visit a campout, eat with the troop, and conduct a worship service.
- Prepare a troop prayer.
- Assist the troop chaplain, or other appropriate adult, to plan and conduct a religious emblem recognition ceremony. Presentation of a religious emblem is the responsibility of the local religious institution in which it is earned, though it is appropriate for the troop to recognize boys who have received religious emblems at courts of honor.
- Encourage troop members to strengthen their own relationship with God through personal prayer and devotions and participation in religious activities.
- Participate in patrol leader's council planning sessions, ensuring that a spiritual emphasis is included, e.g., vespers, prayer before meals, religious observances, etc.
- Working with the troop chaplain, compose an appropriate prayer for before and after meals. When composing these prayers, the chaplain and chaplain aide should be sensitive to the various theological and religious positions embraced by the faiths represented in the group.
- Work with the troop chaplain to plan appropriate religious services for all members during weekend troop campouts. Troops may conduct their own religious services, invite the troop chaplain or an exemplary layperson to participate in the service, or they may visit a nearby church, synagogue, temple, mosque, or other religious institution.

The chaplain patch, No. 00440, and the chaplain aide patch, No. 00443, may be ordered from the BSA National Distribution Center, 1-800-323-0732, or from any Scout shop, local council service center, or official Scouting distributor.