



Duty to God and You

Interfaith Service

Takeaways

- Learning about what duty to God means to you and your family.
- A Scout is Reverent.

Complete Requirement 1 and at least two others of your choice.

1. Discuss with your parent, guardian, den leader, or other caring adult what it means to do your duty to God. Tell how you do your duty to God in your daily life.
2. Earn the religious emblem of your faith that is appropriate for your age, if you have not done so already.
3. Discuss with your family, family's faith leader, or other trusted adult how planning and participating in a service of worship or reflection helps you live your duty to God.
4. List one thing that will bring you closer to doing your duty to God, and practice it for one month. Write down what you will do each day to remind you.

A Scout is Reverent. He is reverent toward God. He is faithful in his religious duties and respects the convictions of others in matters of custom and religion.

The BSA Statement of Religious Principle "maintains that no member can grow into the best kind of citizen without recognizing an obligation to God." This adventure provides each Webelos Scout an opportunity to learn about and practice his religious faith.

Webelos Scouts will fulfill the requirements for this adventure primarily at home. If a den or pack chooses to hold a Scout interfaith service, all members of the den or pack will need to assist or participate if the service will fulfill requirement 2a.

Requirement 2: Earn the religious emblem of your faith that is appropriate for your age, if you have not done so already

Your local council service center can help you and the families in your den learn more about the religious emblems program. Families can also visit www.praypub.org or www.scouting.org/filestore/pdf/512-879_WB.pdf



Most faiths have a second religious emblem specifically for Webelos, so if they earned their first emblem as a Tiger, Wolf or Bear, they can earn a new emblem, now. A small Webelos pin is available at the Scout shop to place on their religious knot, to show they also earned it as a Webelos (not necessary for faiths that do not have a Webelos-specific award).

DECLARATION OF RELIGIOUS PRINCIPLE

Article IX. Policies and Definitions—From the Charter and Bylaws of the Boy Scouts of America

Section 1. Declaration of Religious Principle, clause 1. The Boy Scouts of America maintains that no member can grow into the best kind of citizen without recognizing an obligation to God. In the first part of the Scout Oath or Promise the member declares, “On my honor I will do my best to do my duty to God and my country and to obey the Scout Law.” The recognition of God as the ruling and leading power in the universe and the grateful acknowledgment of His favors and blessings are necessary to the best type of citizenship and are wholesome precepts in the education of the growing members. No matter what the religious faith of the members may be, this fundamental need of good citizenship should be kept before them. 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 the organization or group with which the member is connected shall give definite attention to religious life.

Section 1. Activities, clause 2. The activities of the members of the Boy Scouts of America shall be carried on under conditions which show respect to the convictions of others in matters of custom and religion, as required by the twelfth point of the Scout Law, reading, “Reverent. A Scout is reverent toward God. He is faithful in his religious duties. He respects the beliefs of others.”

Section 1. Freedom, clause 3. In no case where a unit is connected with a church or other distinctively religious organization shall members of other denominations or faith be required, because of their membership in the unit, to take part in or observe a religious ceremony distinctly unique to that organization or church.

Section 1. Leaders, clause 4. Only persons willing to subscribe to these declarations of principles shall be entitled to certificates of leadership in carrying out the Scouting program.



Scout Interfaith Service

A Scout Interfaith service should be coordinated with your whole unit, ideally as part of a “Scout Sunday” worship service, however, this could also be done on an overnighter that carries in to Sunday morning.

The following is adapted from “Conducting an Interfaith Service,”
www.scouting.org/Training/Adult/Supplemental/InterfaithService.aspx.

A Scout 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 intention of an interfaith service (formerly known as a Scouts’ Own) is to provide a spiritual focus during a camping experience that does not reflect the views of a particular denomination or faith, but rather includes elements appropriate for all who might be present, and beyond. An interfaith service can be defined as a gathering of Scouts held to contribute to the development of their spirituality and to promote a fuller understanding of the Scout Oath and Law, with emphasis on one’s duty to God. Let’s take a look at what this definition means.

An interfaith service is a gathering of Scouts consistent with the 12th point of the Scout Law. This can be in groups as small as two or as large as a world Scout jamboree, though groups of a few patrols work best. In smaller groups, Scouts are able to get involved, share their experiences, and learn that spirituality is something that affects everyone.

An interfaith service is held for the development of the Scouts’ spirituality. Spirituality is that which is beyond the material, that which gives meaning and direction to one’s life. Scouting is primarily concerned with how people live out their beliefs in everyday life.

Hence, an interfaith service should connect in some way to the Scout Law, the ethical code of Scouting. Usually, mentioning the Scout Law, making allusions to it, and/or including a recitation of the Law as part of an interfaith service provides this connection. An interfaith service may simply include ethical content that the Scouts themselves can connect to the Scout Law.

Lord Baden-Powell, the founder of the Scouting movement, believed that a person’s religion is not in how he behaves; rather it is in what he believes. This is where the Scout Law intersects with spirituality. In developing character, Scouts may connect their spirituality to the Scout Law so that the living out of their religious faith is also an active expression of the Scout Law.

As explained herein, the goal is to provide an uplifting and positive experience for all attendees. It is not necessary to attempt to account for the sensitivities of every conceivable religion on Earth; rather, seek to account for those religions whose members reasonably might be expected to be present. As promoters of the religious emblems program, unit leaders should have a good sense of the religions of those unit members present on a campout. For larger camping activities, such as camporees, all unit leaders could be asked about members’ religious preferences to ensure that reasonable care is given to inclusiveness.

In the event that an individual attendee becomes offended as an outcome of an interfaith service, an apology is in order in the spirit of “a Scout is friendly.” Similarly, though, in the spirit of “a Scout is friendly,” the individual offended should accept the apology graciously and explain how the service might have been conducted so as not to be offensive to him or her. The acts of seeking to make subtle theological distinctions or looking to be offended are grossly out of place at an interfaith service, particularly when the service is planned by youth members with adult mentoring and conducted by youth members.

Location of the Service

Any location separate from the noise and activity area is fine—a clearing in the woods, an empty campsite, the chapel area at a camp, a scenic overlook, an unused room in a building, the far corner of a gym.

Content of the Service

An interfaith service is an inspirational experience, usually built around a central theme, such as friendship, world peace, save the Earth, or appreciation of the world around us. Just about any topic is appropriate if it is consistent with the Statement of Religious Principle and program goals of the Boy Scouts of America. Scouts should be part of the planning process so that they learn and grow spiritually. Active adult coaching, consistent with the training provided herein, is critical for success.

The form of an interfaith service can range from lively to somber. While the content may take different forms, an interfaith service always should be conducted with reverence. Advance planning (and scripting) is critical because extemporaneous comments, while well-intentioned, may lead to discomfort on the part of members of some faith groups.

Songs (hymns) are best when accompanied by an instrument, like a guitar or harmonica, to help the singers with the melody. The simpler the song, the easier it will be for Scouts to sing along. Songs like “America the Beautiful,” “God Bless America,” or other well-known melodies are the easiest to sing if no accompaniment is available. The leader (or song leader) may choose to hum the opening note to help get everyone started, or have the accompanist give the first chord or note.

Planning an Interfaith Service

While the leader can be either a Scout or an adult, the content of an interfaith service needs to promote a meaningful and inclusive experience. To help ensure that nothing in an interfaith service would offend any participant, invite representatives of all faith groups with members present to participate in developing the service. Care must be used so that one person’s religious traditions are not imposed to offend another person. For example, one should not direct all attendees to remove their hats before prayer, as those of the Jewish and Muslim faiths pray with heads covered. A more acceptable call to prayer would be: “Let us each prepare to pray according to his or her tradition.” Similarly, stating, “This we ask in Jesus’ name,” while making the prayer personal to the person leading it, could be troubling to people of other religions.

As a leader you should ensure that youth members are included in the planning and conducting of the interfaith service. It is important that those chosen to conduct the service gather ahead of time to plan the service, and bring along all the needed papers and material. Decide who will read what and who will provide accompaniment (ensuring that the songs are known or that musical scores are available), and determine where the service will be held. If time permits, those conducting the interfaith service should rehearse their parts as a group.

Interfaith Worship Service Planning Worksheet

Date: _____
 Location: _____
 Event: _____
 Leader: _____

Helper 1: _____
 Helper 2: _____
 Helper 3: _____
 Helper 4: _____

Include ✓ Y/N	Possible Elements in Order of Service	Sequence Number in Order of Service	Assigned to
	Processional with flags		
	Call to worship		
	Opening song (No. 1)		
	Prayer		
	Responsive reading		
	Offering, if appropriate		
	Song (No. 2)		
	Meditation		
	Suitable prayer		
	Song (No. 3)		
	Benediction or closing prayer		

Other notes: _____

Possible Elements in Order of Service

- Processional with flags
- Call to worship
- Song No. 1: "God Bless America" (Cub Scout Songbook)
- Prayer (excerpted from "We Thank Thee" by Ralph Waldo Emerson):

*For each new morning with its light,
Father, we thank-you.
For rest and shelter of the night,
Father, we thank-you.
For health and food, for love and friends,
For everything your goodness sends,
Father, in heaven, we thank-you.*

- Responsive reading
- Offering, if appropriate (such as for the World Friendship Fund)
- Song No. 2: "Kum Ba-Yah" (Cub Scout Songbook)
- Meditation
- Suitable prayer
- Song No. 3 (additional reverent songs are included in the Cub Scout Songbook)
- Benediction or closing prayer: May the Lord bless thee and keep thee; may He show His face to thee and have mercy upon thee; may He turn His countenance to thee, and give thee peace. May the Lord bless thee. Amen.

Additional resources for interfaith services, including religion history, videos, and faith-based activities, can be found at www.praypub.org



Duty to God In Action

Takeaways

- An opportunity to learn about and practice his religious faith.
- A Scout is Kind.

Complete Requirements 1 and 2 plus at least two others of your choice.

1. Discuss with your parent, guardian, den leader, or other caring adult what it means to do your duty to God. Tell how you do your duty to God in your daily life.
2. Under the direction of your parent, guardian, or religious or spiritual leader, do an act of service for someone in your family, neighborhood, or community. Talk about your service with your family. Tell your family how it related to doing your duty to God.
3. Earn the religious emblem of your faith that is appropriate for your age, if you have not done so already.
4. With your parent, guardian, or religious or spiritual leader, discuss and make a plan to do two things you think will help you better do your duty to God. Do these things for a month.
5. Discuss with your family how the Scout Oath and Scout Law relate to your beliefs about duty to God.
6. For at least a month, pray or reverently meditate each day as taught by your family or faith community.

There can be some difficulty in interfaith packs in how you observe your duty to God when conducting a Den or Pack meeting. However, these difficulties can be overcome by understanding how each boy practices their own duty to God, according to their own faith, and permitting flexibility in how your Den or Pack observes its duty to God.

As Cub Leaders we most often practice our duty to God by asking a boy or parent to give a prayer at Den or Pack meetings. However, Buddhists normally don't pray, and when they do, it's a ritual; Jewish, Muslim, and Hindu boys may not have learned any of their traditional prayers; and some Christian boys may only pray aloud for saying grace while the rest of their prayers are silent ones. And regardless of their faith, a boy's parents may not encourage prayer at home and therefore the boy is frightened to say a prayer aloud as they're worried they don't know how to pray, or they fear they'll get it wrong and be embarrassed or criticized for it.

When a boy refuses to say a prayer, he often won't tell you why he's refusing. When this happens, have him help you understand his faith practice by speaking to him and his parents and talking to them about the duty to God programs.

Still, even knowing what faith the boy practices doesn't keep your meeting from grinding to a halt when they refuse to say the prayer. So feel free to use more generic prayers, and to mix up the observances with hymns or scriptural readings. Make it a plan in an interfaith den to give each boy a chance to give their observance their way, according to their faith and feelings.

Prayer

The BSA guidelines for interfaith services are:

“...if the group consists of 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.”

When a Den or Pack is diverse, prayers can be made much simpler in order to be open to all beliefs and practices. You can teach the boys to say a simple prayer such as:

“Gracious Giver of all good, we thank You for food and rest. Grant all we say or do pleases You.”

Hymns

Having fun and singing songs is an important part of Scouting and should never be discouraged, even when the boys sing out of key. Hymns can be a great way to show our Duty to God and can be used in place of the prayer.

However, in an interfaith Den or Pack, it's better to select hymns that are not specific to a single faith, such as “America the Beautiful”. It's also appropriate to have the boys teach each other songs of their faith (if they know any) and listen for things that are similar to their own beliefs.

Scriptural Readings

Another great way to show our Duty to God is through reading scripture aloud. In an interfaith Den or Pack it's best to not limit these readings to one particular book of scripture, such as the bible, but permit all faiths to be represented. Meaningful passages from the Koran, the Dhammapada (teachings of the Buddha), the Book of Mormon, the Bhagavad Gita and other religious texts can be found easily on the internet, but the boys should also be encouraged to find passages on their own that exemplify the tenets of the Scout oath and law.

“The true servants of the gracious God are the following:

Those who walk upon earth with humility and when they are tempted by the evil ones, they respond: peace;

Those who pass the hours of the night in prayers and standing before the Lord;

Those who pray: Lord turn away from us the punishment of hell, for it is a heavy torment, it is indeed an evil dwelling place;

Those who are neither extravagant nor stingy in spending, but keeping a balance between the two;

Those who repent and believe and do good deeds.”

(From the Koran, Al-Furqan, part 19, chapter 25)

Each of these are great ways to show our duty to God, as required in the Scout Oath, and permit the boys to do what is comfortable to them, rather than trying to live up to other's expectations.