

PACK 31
OLD ZIONSVILLE, PA
TREXLER DISTRICT
MINSI TRAILS COUNCIL

RELIGIOUS EMBLEMS
PROGRAM



SCOUTING AND RELIGION

From the very beginning, the Scouting movement has encouraged its members to be faithful in the practice of their religious beliefs. The Tiger Cub Promise asks young boys to love God. The Cub Scout Promise, the Scout Oath, and the Explorer Code each call upon Scouts to pledge themselves to do their duty to God. At the same time, Scouting espouses no creed and favors no single faith over another faith. Rather, Scouting provides programs and ideals that complement the aims of all religions.

The Charter and Bylaws of the Boy Scouts of America maintain that no boy can grow into the best kind of citizen without recognizing his obligation to God. Scouting is absolutely nonsectarian in its attitude toward that religious training. The Boy Scouts of America does not define what constitutes belief in God or the practice of religion. Membership in a religious organization is not required.

Scouting respects the convictions of those who exercise their constitutional freedom to practice religion as individuals without formal membership in organized religious groups. In all cases religious instruction is the responsibility of the parents or guardians of the Scout and the religious institution to which a Scout belongs. It is the policy of the Boy Scouts of America that the religious organization or institution with which a Scout is connected shall give definitive attention to his religious life.

REMEMBER:

Scouting encourages a Scout to recognize an obligation or duty to God, but does not define what a belief in God is or define what constitutes a religious organization. As Scout leaders we must be careful not to favor one faith over another. In conducting Scouting activities, we must be sensitive to the need to encourage all Scouts to grow in their own religious beliefs and faiths. Remember that Scouts have a "Duty to God."

ENCOURAGING RELIGIOUS INVOLVEMENT

Perhaps your first question is "Why should we encourage religious involvement?" The answer is simple. Encouraging religious involvement supports the goals of Scouting; e.g., character development, citizenship and fitness. If this weren't enough, you should also be aware that encouraging religious involvement has some very practical benefits. In a recent Gallup poll religious students with strong family support were found to have better grades. The most successful students were also those most likely to eat dinner regularly with the whole family.

The next question that comes to mind is "How can Scout leaders encourage religious involvement?" While there is no single simple answer, we can offer some ideas. Perhaps the best place to start is with the principles of Scouting.

The principles of Scouting are often summed up in the words "Scout Spirit." Like the wind, this spirit is invisible, but it has great power when harnessed. How to catch this spirit is described by the words of an old sailor who was asked by a young lad, "What is the wind?" The old salt replied, "I don't know what the wind is, but I know how to set the sail."

In Scouting, a leader tries to help a boy to set the sail of his life to capture the spirit of the Cub Scout Promise, the Boy Scout Oath or the Explorer's Code. Although Scout leaders do not give religious instruction, they do have an important responsibility as role models for their scouts. There is no room in Scouting for double standards. Unless ideals are adhered to by all, respect for leadership and teachings may be lost.

It must be impressed on Scouts that living the Scout Promise or Oath is as much a requirement as earning badges. For a boy to be a good Scout and to advance, he must recognize his duty to God and do something about it. How does a leader help?

Examples:

One easy way to acknowledge a Supreme Being is to take a hike with the Scouts. Talk about the trees, how they grow from a tiny seed, the grass and even the weeds - - how they flower and mature. If the group happens on a nest of young animals or bird eggs, explanations may be very simple: With God's help the adults care for the young just as in human families.

A way to teach love and compassion is to have an outing to a nursing home, a children's ward in a hospital or a retirement center to sing or take gifts. Similarly, service projects can help Scouts learn how to show love to family, church and/or community.

As he experiences the warm feeling of citizenship through service, as he does a good turn, a Scout can also be made aware that he is helping to fulfill his duty to God in the spirit of the Good Samaritan.

On picnics or hikes, call attention to how litter makes an area look soiled just as dirty clothes make a Scout look soiled. Show the Scouts how to clean up an area after a picnic and be sure adults do a fair share. Teach boys to put candy and gum wrappers into their pockets and do the same. Remind them that they would like to find the area clean and beautiful when they come back for a picnic. Teach scouts to leave the area better than they found it as a good turn. At the same time you will be teaching them to do unto others as they would have them do unto themselves.

When driving, always obey the signs and speed limits; then when driving young people, it will come naturally to you. When walking, obey walking regulations - - walk on the correct side of the street (toward oncoming traffic), cross at intersections, and stay close to the curb. By teaching respect for civil laws, you will also be reinforcing respect for religious law, rules or tenets among the Scouts.

Take your Scouts on a bicycle ride. Teach the boys the safety rules. Always ride with traffic. Ride single file. Don't jump curbs. Avoid sudden swerves. If boys learn the proper way to handle a bike, parents can feel safer when their Scouts are out alone. By teaching self-discipline in everyday activities, you are also teaching self-discipline that will help Scouts to remain strong in their beliefs.

Especially on weekend Scout activities, be sensitive to religious observances and services that the Scouts normally attend. Do your best to plan around religious observances and activities. A calendar of religious observances is included in Appendix B to help you avoid planning an activity on the same date as a religious observance. You may also want to consider varying weekend activities between Saturday and Sunday to avoid always having events on the same day as Saturday Sabbath or Sunday worship.

When conducting an overnight activity or attending summer camp programs, allow time in camp for religious observances or services. Remember that you should allow time, but should not require attendance. This is a good time to remind Scouts to respect different religious practices of other Scouts.

Finally you can encourage your Scouts to participate in religious growth programs. In Scouting we refer to these programs as Religious Emblem Programs, because a Scout who has completed a recognized program of religious growth can wear a religious emblem and/or religious emblem square knot on his uniform. These recognition devices serve as a lure and may help encourage other Scouts to participate in religious growth programs. The square knot also serves another very important function: it identifies the wearer as having completed a very important step towards becoming an adult. Most Scouts have seen adults wearing various knots on their uniforms and for most Scouts this will be the first time they also can wear one of the square knots on their uniform, signaling a link to adulthood. And you can believe that in the Scout's eyes that knot is about two feet long and one foot high when he looks down at his uniform with pride.

PACK 31
DUTY TO GOD
PARENT HANDOUT

Dear Parent,

Today we talked about **Duty to God** and encouraged our Scouts to earn their religious emblems. You, as the parent or guardian, will decide whether or not your child will participate in these programs. Here is the information we covered together:

- Each Scout is eligible to earn the religious emblem for his specific faith.
- Parents and religious leaders are the teachers, not the unit leader.
- Most religious emblems programs have more than one level. A Scout who has earned a religious emblem as a younger Scout, may progress to the next level and earn another emblem.

There are four steps to get started on these programs:

1. Scouts must obtain the specific booklet for their religion. This booklet will contain information on all the lessons and service projects that they will need to complete. Each member needs to have his or her own booklet to document progress. Some religions also provide adult manuals for counselors and mentors. Check with the Scout Shop to see if it stocks these booklets in its store, or contact the religious organization directly. Addresses and phone numbers are listed in the **Duty to God Brochure** you received.
2. Parents must review the specific guidelines for their particular program: age/grade requirements vary from program to program; some programs require that the scout be an official “member” of the local religious institution, others may not; and each program determines who may serve as counselor (some require clergy, others allow parents or other family members). Be sure to look at specific eligibility guidelines!
3. Families should talk to their religious leaders and show them the booklet before beginning any program. Most of the religious emblems programs require that they be completed under the auspices of that religious organization, and many require the signature of the local religious leader. Again, check the specific eligibility requirements for your religious program.
4. The scout needs to complete the requirements, obtain the proper signatures, and follow the instructions to order the emblem/award. (These emblems are not available in your local council.) The emblem can be presented at anytime of the year and should be presented in a meaningful ceremony in the member’s religious institution. Talk to your religious leader about presenting the award.

We would be very proud if our Scouts earned their religious emblems, but be aware that this is an entirely optional program, and we are not pressuring anyone to participate. Please talk with your child about these programs. If you are both interested, please contact me and I will help you get what you need to get started. Even though this is a project that will be done outside of Scouts with your family and your clergy, we are interested in your child’s progress and want to encourage him as much as possible. Feel free to e-mail if you have any questions.

Thank you!
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PACK 31 POLICY ON RELIGIOUS EMBLEMS AND AWARDS

RELIGIOUS EMBLEMS AND AWARDS

Religious medals and award ribbons are worn only on formal occasions. The award is ordered and paid for by the parent at the time when their son completes his requirements for the award. The medal or emblem will be presented at the boy's religious institution. Special arrangements may be made with the pack to present the award at a pack meeting instead, if desired, but it is recommended that the award be presented in the scout's home religious institution.

Parents will notify their den leaders at the time their son has completed his requirements for the award. Den leader will accordingly report this on their monthly advancement report to the Advancement Chair so that the square knot patch may be purchased and presented in the upcoming pack meeting.

UNIVERSAL YOUTH RELIGIOUS AWARD SQUARE KNOT

All Cub Scouts who earn their religious emblem will receive the purple universal youth religious award square knot (No. 5014) (Silver knot on purple background). This knot may be worn at all times centered on the upper seam above left uniform pocket flap. This knot will be purchased by the pack and presented to the Scout in a solemn ceremony to recognize his achievement. The religious emblem should be worn pinned to the uniform for this pack meeting.

Cub Scouts who receive an award as a Tiger Cub, or Wolf or Bear will receive the gold Cub Scout device (No. 5103C). This is centered on the knot to indicate the award was received as a Cub Scout.

Cub Scouts who receive an award as a Webelos Scout should wear the gold Webelos device (No. 5103K). This is also centered on the knot to indicate the award was received as a Webelos Scout.

If more than one emblem is earned by a single Scout, only one purple knot is presented, and only one knot is worn on the uniform. In this case, any combination of the appropriate devices may be worn centered on the knot.

PRESENTATION OF EMBLEMS AND AWARDS

Presentation of religious emblems or awards should be made by the church, temple, synagogue, mosque, or other religious body at a religious service or observance. The only exception is for The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints (LDS) emblems, which are presented at LDS Sponsored Unit's Meetings. It is especially appropriate to have presentations made during Scouting Week; e.g. Scout Sunday, Scout Sabbath, a day of particular religious significance, or on a day of religious observance when a senior church official officiates. Imagine the thrill a young boy would experience at being presented his emblem by a bishop or similar religious figure of regional, state or even national prominence!

Scouts who have received a religious emblem will also be recognized at a Pack meeting, a Blue and Gold Banquet, a Court of Honor, or recognition banquet, depending on when the paperwork is submitted. Parents have the discretion of choosing when they want the award presented and will be contacted prior to any arrangements being made for a Pack meeting. The Pack will not present the religious emblem or medal. The proper setting for the religious emblem presentation is in the religious community that supported the Scout throughout the program.

When presenting the square knot it is important to avoid any hint to any Scout that would cause him to question his own faith or make him feel that he has to be in another faith to get recognition. Often this result is not intended at all. In the excitement of the situation, there is a temptation to create props for the ceremony such as a giant sized replica of the religious emblem to highlight the award or to use language that focuses on the specific emblem presented. Such a situation might discourage a boy from participating in Scouting altogether, if he feels that he has to choose between his beliefs and being in the unit. It is always much better to use a neutral presentation that encourages all of the Scouts in the unit to participate in a religious growth program, regardless of their faith(s).

RELIGIOUS AWARD PRESENTATION CEREMONY FOR PACK 31

To be conducted after the standard awards ceremony for the evening. Spoken parts are in blue.

Ladies, Gentlemen, Scout Leaders and Scouts, we have just concluded our Pack's awards ceremony where we have honored those Scouts who have demonstrated achievement by earning Scouting awards. Tonight, we also want to recognize a Scout who has demonstrated his commitment to the Cub Scout Promise and have a very special presentation to make.

Dim lights and light a candle in front of a large replica of the religious emblem square knot (can be made with purple felt and rope painted silver).

Cub Scout _____ please escort your parents to the front of the room and then turn to face the pack.

We are very proud of _____. For the past ___ months he has worked with both his family and his religious advisor to learn more about his religious faith and his duty to God. After much hard work and personal growth, he has received the right to wear the religious emblem of his faith on his Scout uniform and was presented with a medal by his religious advisor ___ weeks ago. _____, like all Scouts who have received a religious award, he may now wear Scouting's universal religious award square knot on his Scout uniform and may continue to wear it as a Boy Scout, Explorer or Adult later in his life.

We now take great pleasure in presenting the religious emblem square knot to his parents, Mr. and Mrs. _____ in recognition of the role they have and will continue to play in his religious growth. Mr. and Mrs. _____, will you present your son with the religious emblem square knot?

_____, we know you will wear this square knot centered over your left pocket with pride. Congratulations on your accomplishment. You have lived the Cub Scout promise well. Please escort your parents back to their seats.

Almost every religious body in the United States has a religious emblems program open to Cub Scouts, Boy Scouts, Girl Scouts, 4-H and Campfire Incorporated. We encourage all Scouts to consider participating in this program. If any other Scouts in this Pack are interested in working toward the religious award of their own faith, please see _____ (Awards Chairman) at the end of this meeting. He/she has information on the emblems and will make it available to you.

SCOUTERS PLEASE NOTE:

You will notice that this ceremony did not mention what the Cub Scout's religion was or the name of the church, temple, synagogue, mosque or other religious organization where the medal was presented and only referred to the universal religious emblem square knot. There are three very good reasons for using a non-denominational ceremony:

- 1) This method avoids creating a situation where another Scout may believe he has to belong to a particular religion (and may even think he should join another faith) just to participate in Scouting;
- 2) This method encourages other Scouts to consider earning the religious emblem of their own faith, so they can get the same award (the knot) as Jimmy; and
- 3) This method allows a Scout leader to give the same level of praise to each Scout earning an emblem using the same ceremonial props. The leader doesn't have to know a lot about each religion, doesn't have to create new props, and doesn't have to worry that any Scout might think a certain religion is favored.

ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

<http://usscouts.org/scoutduty/index.html>

Excellent site with additional information, FAQ, etc.

<http://www.scouting.org/awards/religious/awards/index.html>

Overall list of all the awards and emblems available to members of the Boy Scouts of America.

http://www.praypub.org/main_frameset.htm

Source for workbooks and information for most common major religions.