



FACT SHEET

Scouting in Protestant Churches

Background

Many local Protestant churches organized Scout troops in the early days of the Scouting movement. Of the 7,375 registered troops at the close of 1915, more than 4,000 were chartered to Protestant churches, and 1,645 Scoutmasters were ministers. When church troops became numerous, some of the denominational bodies decided to give recognition to the values of Scouting as a resource for the churches in their youth ministries. Among the earliest endorsements were from the Northern Baptist Convention, 1918; Presbyterian Church in the U.S.A., 1918; United Lutheran Church in America, 1918; Congregational Churches, 1919; Methodist Church, 1919; and Southern Baptist Convention, 1923. Today, Protestant churches have organized more than 26 percent of all packs, troops, and crews, making them the largest user of the Scouting program.

Currently, the following organizations have endorsed the program of the Boy Scouts of America: African Methodist Episcopal Zion Church; American Baptist; Church of God (Indiana); Church of God International Offices; Church of God of Prophecy; Churches of God; Church of the Nazarene; Episcopal Church; General Conference, General Association of General Baptists; General Council of the Assemblies of God; Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod; Members of Churches of Christ for Scouting; Moravian Church, Northern Province; Moravian Church, Southern Province; Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.); Southern Baptist; The Salvation Army; The United Methodist Church; United Pentecostal Church; and West Virginia Baptist Convention.

Support Functions

These five functions are in direct support of Scouting in Protestant churches.

Chaplaincy. Chaplains are provided for Cub Scout resident camps and Boy Scout summer camps, national and world jamborees, and national high-adventure bases. In addition, materials are provided to local councils for selecting and training unit chaplains (adults) and chaplain aides (Boy Scouts).

Religious Emblems. The God and Country program series was developed and distributed by Programs of Religious Activities With Youth (P.R.A.Y.) and provides spiritual growth experiences for members of the BSA who are Protestant, as well as members of Girl Scouts of the U.S.A., Camp Fire Inc., and other youth.

- *God and Me:* For Tiger Cubs and Cub Scouts, grades one through three
- *God and Family:* For fourth- and fifth-grade Cub Scouts and Webelos Scouts
- *God and Church:* For sixth- to eighth-grade Boy Scouts and Varsity Scouts
- *God and Life:* For older Boy Scouts, Varsity Scouts, and female and male Venturers
- *God and Country mentor program (adult curriculum):* A mentor is someone who serves as a living example for another person. The God and Country mentor program is designed to help adults look directly at what it means to serve as a Christian mentor and suggests how to have a positive, Christian influence on a child. The mentor curriculum is designed for an adult working with a young person who is enrolled in the God and Country program series.

The mentor program is not to be confused with the God and Service Award (see below). An adult who completes the mentor studies will receive a certificate and lapel pin for nonuniform wear.

- *God and Service:* A recognition presented to deserving adults who have given distinguished service to youth through Scouting in a local church or at the council, regional, or national level.

Venturing. In addition to Cub Scout packs and Boy Scout troops, many churches have established dynamic and comprehensive Venturing youth group programs. They view these programs as an excellent way to reach out to the youth in the community. Venturing can strengthen an existing youth group program by adding outdoor and recreational activities.

Religious Activities. Local council support materials are provided for a variety of religious activities, including annual Scout Sunday observances, retreats, "Duty to God" encampments, religious emblem recognition dinners, and Scouting show displays. An annual "Scouting in the Church's Ministry" conference at Philmont Scout Ranch, Cimarron, New Mexico, attracts participants from across the nation who come together for a week to learn about the role of Scouting in local churches. Those faith groups with 15 or more participants in attendance have afternoon breakout sessions. If you are interested in attending Philmont, contact your local council service center.

Relationships. National liaison is maintained with more than 25 denominations that use the Scouting program as part of their ministry to children, youth, and families.

Local Committees

BSA local councils are encouraged to form religious relationships and/or Protestant committees on Scouting. Some areas they might want to address are:

1. Interpretation of Scouting as a resource for ministry to children, youth, and families
2. Promotion of the God and Country religious emblems program and other denominational emblems programs
3. Promotion of Scout Sunday
4. Provision of summer camp and Cub resident camp chaplains
5. Guidance for districts and councils in religious matters
6. Organization of new Scouting units in Protestant churches
7. Ensuring that existing units do not become dropped units
8. Sending qualified individuals to the "Scouting in the Church's Ministry" conference

Communication *BSA Today*, published six times a year, features news and information regarding various Scouting activities throughout the nation, including feature articles on Protestant churches. Suggested articles, including photos, are always welcome.

For further information, write Boy Scouts of America, Relationships Division, S326, 1325 West Walnut Hill Lane, P.O. Box 152079, Irving, TX 75015-2079; or call your local council service center listed in the white pages.