



Guidelines for Religious Services

Minsi Trails Council Chaplain Corps

Purpose:

The purpose of this document is to supply guidance to individuals who are responsible for the planning and provision of religious services for activities of Minsi Trails Council or its Districts.

Scope:

The scope of these guidelines is intended to include services provided for both Council and District level activities. The scope of this document specifically does not apply to activities, which are sponsored or conducted by religious denominations such as The Church of the Latter Day Saints, the Catholic Church, or others. In these specific cases it is assumed that the supplying religious organization will control the content and conduct of the religious services offered during the activity.

Individual units are encouraged to use this document as a reference, especially when there are more than one faith represented in the unit.



Background:

The bedrock of Scouting's values is literally and figuratively

... duty to God .. "On my honor, I will do my duty to God and my country ..."

To Scouting, the question is not: Can a person be honorable without a belief in God? Rather, our commitment is that no child can develop to his/her fullest potential without a spiritual element.

The Boy Scouts of America is not a Religion or a Church.

It is an organization with strong religious tenets. It is a movement that is committed to developing the entire child/Youth ... spirituality is very important in that total development. That is why the BSA holds to duty to God.

Whether it is the Judeo-Christian ethic: or a Buddhist, Protestant, Mormon, Catholic, or Native American ethic; or that of any of the other great religions of our world, **the Boy Scouts of America is committed to the proposition that no child can develop to his/her fullest potential without a spiritual element in his/her life.**

Because of the importance that the Boy Scouts of America attaches to reverence to God, it is customary for a religious service, which is appropriate for the participants, to be supplied when activities occur during the times of normal religious service for represented religions. Because it is not generally possible for each religion to have a separate service, it has become customary to offer an **interfaith service** in addition to specific **denominational services.**



Definitions:

Interfaith Service - A religious service, which is appropriate for all faiths. This service can contain elements from many of the individual faiths, but should not be specifically Christian or Jewish, etc.

Non-Denominational Service - Within the scope of the BSA (Boy Scouts of America), this is meant to be equivalent to an Interfaith Service.

Denominational Services and Events - Within the scope of the BSA., this is meant to encompass single faith services such as Catholic Mass, Jewish Services, etc. This also includes single faith activities such as retreats and other single faith camping events. The content of these services and events expected to be controlled by the supplying denomination, and are specifically outside of this present guideline.

Scouts Own Service—A religious service which is conducted by Scouts or Scout Leaders and does not necessarily involve a Chaplain or other Clergy. In the context of District and Council level events, this is usually an Interfaith service; however, the service can be Denominational in nature on a unit level if only one faith is present.



Guidelines – Choosing a Type of Service:

The Overriding guideline is that religious services for Council and/or District level events should be appropriate for the Scouts and Scouters who are in attendance.

Onsite services are generally preferred because of the enhanced worship experience of the participants.

Normally, Council and District events will have a mix of religions represented in their participants. Because of this, the following are offered as general guidelines:

The minimum requirement is the provision of an Interfaith or Scouts Own service.

It has become customary to supply a Catholic Mass in addition to the interfaith service when it is possible for a Priest attend and to provide this service. When it is not possible for a Priest to provide this service at the site, it may be possible for Catholic participants can be transported to a local church for a Mass. When this is not done, all boys can attend the interfaith service.

Other denominational services can be provided when there are a number of persons present of a particular faith. Arrangements may be made to have these persons transported to a local place of worship if it is not possible to offer services at the event site. When this is not possible, all boys can attend the interfaith service.



Guidelines – Service Planning:

When planning for religious services there are several areas, which should be evaluated.

1. **Day and Time of the Service** – Some religions have strict guidelines for the day of worship. Some religions have restrictions on activities and/or travel on specific days. **Care should be taken to account for these religious requirements if members of these religions are in attendance.** This applies to the general schedule of the event as well as the schedule of religious services.

Services have been traditionally offered on Sunday morning for Interfaith and Catholic Mass. Although Sunday morning is often preferred, consider the inclusion of a Saturday evening service if it is not possible to schedule the Sunday morning service. It is often not possible to have Clergy attend a Sunday morning service because they are already scheduled for services in their respective places of worship



2. Place of Worship—The place of worship will depend on the type of service and the prevailing conditions. Many wonderfully enriching services have been held in open and wooded areas, or in outdoor Chapels. Some services are better when offered in an indoor setting.

The following guidelines are offered for reference:

- The place of worship should be large enough to accommodate the expected participants comfortably.
- The setting should allow all the participants to be able to see and hear the service. This may mean that larger services should be provided with sound reinforcement systems.
- The setting should allow for a proper lighting-effect. This may require the supply of lanterns and/or electric lighting. This is especially important during night outdoor services where the participants are required to read and/or sing.
- The place of worship should provide a table or lectern when these are used in the service.
- Because of requirements of the Mass, a Catholic Priest may prefer to hold this service as an indoor service when indoor facilities are available.

Please check with the Priest who will be supplying this service before scheduling an outdoor Mass.



3. When to plan the service— Using the guidelines above, determine what services are to be supplied, and make arrangements for these services as soon as possible in the planning cycle for the event.

The supply of services will usually require the presence of a Chaplain or Priest and unless the arrangements are made well in advance, the chances of not having a person available increase. The Minsi Trails Chaplain Corps is available to help arrange for Chaplains for these services.

Please also see the “Religious Relations” Tab at minsichaplain.org for more contact information for specific Faiths and Denominations.