

Boy Scouting/Venturing Camp Chaplain Handbook

**Guidelines and Resources for Chaplains
Serving at Council Camps Operated by Local Councils
of the Boy Scouts of America**



Introduction

This handbook has been designed to assist chaplains serving at summer camps operated by local councils of the Boy Scouts of America to:

1. Prepare for and to organize their days at camp, and
2. Provide them with some resources that may be helpful in the performance of their duties.

We recognize that each summer camp has its own traditions and method of operation within national standards. Furthermore, each chaplain has unique gifts as well as his or her own unique style. Consequently, this handbook is intended simply to assist the chaplain and the camp director as, together, they plan to meet the spiritual needs of those attending camp and those who serve as members of the camp staff.

—*The Rev. Leo Symmank, editor*

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The Chaplain Serving Summer Camp Attendees

Prior to arriving at camp, we recommend that every chaplain be National Camping School–certified. Read and study the “Chaplain’s Guide for Scout Camps” section of *Camp Program & Property Management*, No. 20-920. Read this handbook and review the “Resources” section. Ensure that posters for the religious emblems program, as well as Duty to God patches and posters are available, then begin making plans for your role at camp.

The chaplain’s duties will vary from one summer camp to the next. Work with your camp director to understand camp traditions, needs, and the role you can play. The following suggestions will help you develop your personal activities and style of ministry appropriate for a camp setting:

1. Offer an interfaith worship service the first day of summer camp, if the schedule permits. After the service, share information about the religious emblems program with attendees. As time and interest permit, also tell them about the Duty to God patch, a recognition that Scouts and Venturers receive when making a commitment to study for the religious emblem of his or her faith upon returning home.
2. Suggest to the camp director that, instead of a Scoutmaster’s minute, the camp adopt a Chaplain’s Minute (i.e., a brief spiritual thought and short prayer) each day at the flag-raising ceremony. Your intercession could include a before-breakfast prayer (if the flag ceremony occurs prior to breakfast).
3. Recruit Scouts and Venturers to lead prayers at other mealtimes.
4. Offer to tell a short story at the opening and closing campfires. You may choose to use one of the stories from the devotional thoughts in this handbook or one of your own.
5. Be available to counsel campers who are homesick or have other issues or members of the camp staff upon request.
6. Develop all-important positive relationships with other members of the camp staff.
7. Introduce campers, adult leaders, and camp staff to the religious emblems program. Ask youth members to make a personal commitment to study and complete the emblem program for their faith and age group once they return home, then ensure each youth receives a Duty to God patch to recognize that commitment.
8. Regularly visit the program activity areas. During program breaks, visit with the area director. You may ask questions such as: “How are things going? Any concerns? How are the Scouts responding to the activities?” Affirm the area director’s leadership.
9. Interact with campers on their way to activities. At times, be a participant in the activities with them.
10. Look for campers who may be walking alone or sitting by themselves. Visit with them (consistent with BSA Youth Protection standards).
11. Visit campsites while campers are at the activity areas. This is a good time to visit with adult leaders who may remain to oversee the campsite. To announce your presence, call out from the edge of the campsite, “Permission to enter?” When granted, enter and enjoy the hospitality.
12. Also visit campsites for unit evening campfires. You may offer to lead a very brief devotion or lead a Thorns, Roses, and Buds sharing activity from the “Equipping Chaplain Aides” section.
13. On occasion and as approved by the camp director, you may choose to assist as a leader at a program activity where you are qualified and can be useful. Although this is a way to support other staff members, there are other areas—like those mentioned in this list—that might have a higher priority for you as a chaplain.
14. Always be a supportive person to the camp director and serve him or her as a good listener.

15. Visit and support those serving in behind-the-scenes roles at camp, such as the kitchen staff, camp ranger, maintenance personnel, and office staff. Sometimes their tasks can become routine and thankless. They need your affirmation.
16. Be a roving public relations ambassador for the camp and local council.
17. Serve as God's servant of encouragement and a renewer of hope to as many campers and staff members as possible.
18. Be available for camp visitation teams.
19. Set up a chaplain's bulletin board that includes information on the religious emblems program, Duty to God patches, worship schedules, and other chaplain-related announcements.
20. Add your own ideas and amend the ones suggested above to fit your style of servant leadership.

A Campwide Interfaith Service

Strive to make the style and content of an interfaith service respectful of all faiths. In this regard, review *A Scout Is Reverent: A Resource for Interfaith, Christian, Jewish, and Muslim Worship at Scouting Events*, No. 34248. Then, try to determine which faith groups are usually represented at the camp you're serving.

Younger Scouts have a short attention span. Keep talk and prayers brief. Both instrumental and vocal music enhance the service. Recruit musicians, singers, and readers from the staff and instruct them on what is appropriate for an interfaith setting. Staff members and Venturers in leadership roles during an interfaith service may be wonderful role models for younger Scouts.

An Order of Worship

1. The Call to Worship: The whole earth is the temple of God. We are gathered in his temple to sing his praises. So let's begin by singing (*announce the opening song*).
2. The Opening Song
3. The Call to Praise God [As appropriate for your campers, use Psalm 148 (On God's creation); Psalm 103: 1–5, 8–9, 11–13, 21 (On God's love); "Canticle to the Sun" (see the next section); or choose another reading.]
4. Our Dreams and Our Commitment (see the next section)
5. Special Music (if available)
6. Chaplain's Message
7. Prayers
8. Song
9. The Blessing (see "Blessings for Our Journeys and Our Resting" in the next section)

Readings for Interfaith Service

Our Dreams and Our Commitment

LEADER: We have come together here at Camp (name)

GROUP ONE: Both the shy and the outgoing.

GROUP TWO: Both the outspoken and the quiet.

GROUP ONE: Sometimes as followers and sometimes as leaders.

GROUP TWO: Sometimes feeling guilty and then again knowing that we are forgiven.

LEADER: We have come here

GROUP ONE: To learn new skills and gather around campfires;

GROUP TWO: To walk the trails over the hills;

GROUP ONE: To swim and sail in the lakes;

GROUP TWO: To meet campers in other units and to become friends for life.

LEADER: We plan to leave Camp (name)

GROUP ONE: With a new appreciation of God's creation;

GROUP TWO: With a new commitment to care for the earth God has entrusted to our care;

GROUP ONE: With a better understanding that people need our care and friendship;

GROUP TWO: With a greater willingness to respect in others those beliefs and values that differ from ours.

LEADER: We will, with God helping us, commit ourselves

ALL TOGETHER: To care with greater love for the people around us and, through Scouting, to reach out in friendship to other nations.

—by C.L. Symmank

Canticle of the Sun

The following canticle may be used as one of the readings. It may be read by the entire group, or the leader may preselect six patrols each to read one verse. The refrain may be read by the entire group or by a small vocal choir. Consider whether all verses are appropriate based on the religious composition of attendees at the service.

Refrain

The heavens are telling the glory of God,
And all creation is shouting for joy.
Come dance in the forest, come play in the field,
And sing, sing to the glory of God.

1. Praise for the sun, the bringer of the day,
He carries the light of the Lord in his rays;
The moon and the stars that light up the way
Unto your throne.
2. Praise for the wind that blows through the trees,
The seas' mighty storms, the gentlest breeze;
They blow where they will, they blow where they please
To please the Lord.
3. Praise for the rain that waters our field,
And blesses our crops so all the earth yields;
From death unto life her myst'ry revealed
Springs forth in joy.
4. Praise for the fire who gives us his light,
The warmth of the sun to brighten our night;
He dances with joy, his spirit so bright,
He sings to you.
5. Praise for the earth that makes life to grow,
The creatures you made to let your life show;
The flowers and trees that help us to know
The heart of love.

Author unknown

Blessings for Our Journeys and Our Resting

A Sixfold Blessing

God, make your home within us to strengthen us; be outside us to keep us as your own; be beneath us to uphold us, before us to guide us on our way, behind us to keep us from straying, around us to protect us and over us to bless us.

The Four Winds Blessing

O Great Spirit, bless us from the north with the cool winds that calm our passions. Bless us from the east with winds that bring and renew life. Bless us from the south with the warm, wet winds that invite growth. Bless us from the west with the winds that lead us through this life to the next life. Fill the sky that we might sense your presence. Bless us on our journeys here and lead us into your eternal presence.

The Aaronic Blessing

May God bless us and keep us. May God make his face shine on us and be gracious to us. May God look upon us with favor and grant us peace.

Irish Blessing

May the road rise up to meet you. May the wind always be at your back. May the sun shine warm upon your face, and rains fall soft on your fields. And until we meet again, may God hold you in the palm of his hand.

Prayers

Prayer of Thanksgiving

We thank you, Lord, for this day, for the morning sun and the evening star, for flowering trees and flowing streams, for life-giving rains and cooling breeze for the earth's patient turning, the changing of the seasons, the cycle of growth and decay, of life and death. When our eyes behold the beauty and grandeur of our world, we see the wisdom, power and goodness of you, our creator. We awake at dawn, and behold! It's a great day! Amen!

Author unknown

Prayer for Our Nation

God of our forefathers, bless our country, the leaders of our nation, and all who exercise authority in our communities. Unite the residents of our land, whatever their creed or origin, into a bond of genuine friendship. Banish all bigotry and hatred among us. Safeguard our ideals and the institutions of freedom. Grant that our nation, under your blessing, may serve as an instrument of justice, freedom, and peace in the world. Amen.

Songs

The following are representative songs from which you may choose based on the religious composition of attendees at the service.

America the Beautiful

O beautiful for spacious skies,
For amber waves of grain
For purple mountain majesties,
Above the fruited plain!
America! America!
God shed His grace on thee,

And crown thy good with brotherhood
From sea to shining sea.

O beautiful for pilgrim feet,
Whose stern impassioned stress,
A thoroughfare of freedom beat,
Across the wilderness.

America! America!

God mend thine every flaw,
Confirm thy soul in self-control,
Thy liberty in law.

Words: Katharine Lee Bates (1895)

Music: Samuel A. Ward (1910)

God Bless America

(Note: a soloist or duo may sing Stanza 1.)

God bless America, land that I love.
Stand beside her and guide her
Through the night with a light from above.

From the mountains, to the prairies,
To the oceans, white with foam,
God bless America, my home sweet home.
God bless America, my home sweet home.

Words and music: Irving Berlin (1938)

This Is My Father's World

This is my Father's world, and to my listening ears,
All nature sings and 'round me rings the music of the spheres.
This is my Father's world; I rest me in the thought
Of rocks and trees, of skies and seas, His hand the wonders wrought.

This is my Father's world, the birds their carols raise,
The morning light, the lily white, declare their Maker's praise.
This is my Father's world; he shines in all that's fair;
In the rustling grass I hear him pass, he speaks to me ev'rywhere.

Words: Maltbie Davenport Babcock (published 1901)

Music: adapted from a traditional English hymn by Franklin L. Sheppard

Amazing Grace (Christian Hymn)

(Note: one may choose to have a soloist or duo sing stanzas 1 and 4.)

Amazing grace, how sweet the sound that saved a wretch like me
I once was lost, but now am found, was blind but now I see.

'Twas grace that taught my heart to fear, and grace my fears relieved.
How precious did that grace appear the hour I first believed.

Through many dangers, toils and snares I have already come,
'Tis grace that brought me safe thus far and grace will see me home.

The Lord has promised good to me, His Word my hope secures.
He will my shield and portion be as long as life endures.

When we've been there ten thousand years, bright shining as the sun,
We've no less days to sing God's praise, than when we first begun.

Words: John Henry Newton (1773)

Music: "New Britian"

He's Got the Whole World in His Hands

He's got the whole world in His hands,
He's got the big round world in His hands,
He's got the whole world in His hands,
He's got the whole world in His hands.

He's got the wind and the rain in His hands,
He's got the sun and the moon in His hands.
He's got the wind and the rain in His hands,
He's got the whole world in His hands.

He's got you and me, brother, in His hands,
He's got you and me, sister, in His hands,
He's got you and me, brother, in His hands.
He's got the whole world in His hands.

He's got everybody here in His hands,
He's got everybody here in His hands,
He's got everybody here in His hands,
He's got the whole world in His hands.

Traditional American spiritual

Kum Ba Yah

Kum ba yah, my Lord, kum ba yah!
Kum ba yah, my Lord, kum ba yah!
Kum ba yah, my Lord, kum ba yah!
O Lord, kum ba yah.

Come by here, my Lord, come by here!
Come by here, my Lord, come by here!
Come by here, my Lord, come by here!
O Lord, come by here.

[Additional stanzas: Someone's crying, praying, singing.]

African American spiritual (circa 1930)

Morning Has Broken

Morning has broken like the first morning,
Blackbird has spoken like the first bird.
Praise for the singing, praise for the morning,
Praise for them, springing fresh from the Word!

Sweet the rain's new fall, sunlit from heaven,
Like the first dew fall on the first grass.
Praise for the sweetness of the wet garden,
Sprung in completeness, where his feet pass.

Mine is the sunlight, mine is the morning,
Born of the one light Eden saw play.
Praise with elation, praise ev'ry morning,
God's recreation of the new day.

Words: Eleanor Farjeon (1931)

Music: "Bunessan" traditional Gaelic tune

Taps (Day Is Done verse)

Note: This song could be sung before the blessing in worship or at the end of a campfire.

Day is done, gone the sun
From the lakes, from the hills, from the sky;
All is well, safely rest;
God is nigh.

Thanks and praise, for our days
'Neath the sun, 'neath the stars, 'neath the sky;
As we go, this we know;
God is nigh.

Author unknown

Chaplain Minutes

Choose from the following meditations to reflect the religious composition of the service's attendees.

When Trials Come, Welcome Them

The following exercise can be used on the first day at camp.

As we begin this week, we will be learning new skills. We will be facing new challenges. It is not always easy to be kind, courteous, or helpful to someone who has not been helpful or courteous to us. It is a challenge. For example, sometimes we are tempted to be irreverent toward each other and also to God in the language we use. Life is a challenge and filled with temptations. So, listen to these words from sacred writings:

When all kinds of trials and temptations crowd into your lives, my brothers, don't resent them as intruders, but welcome them as friends! Realize that they come to test your faith and to produce in you the quality of endurance. But let the process go on until that endurance is fully developed, and you will find you have become men of mature character with the right sort of independence. And, if in the process, anyone does not know how to meet any particular problem, he has only to ask God who gives generously to all men without making them look foolish or guilty, and he may be quite sure that the necessary wisdom will be given him. But he must ask in sincere faith without secret doubts as to whether he really wants God's help or not....

J.B. Phillips' paraphrase of the Epistle of James

Let us pray:

Good morning, God. We look forward to a great week at camp. As we begin this week, help us to grow not only in our skills and knowledge through the advancement program, but help us to grow in how we get along with each other. Help us to be kind and courteous. In our language, help us to show respect and reverence toward you and toward each other. Remind us that to show disrespect to a fellow camper is to show disrespect to you, God, since you are that

person's Creator. Give us a helpful and friendly spirit and make this a wonderful week of fun, friendship, and learning for us all. Amen.

The Echo Prayer

Do you know that sometimes there is an echo here in our camp? Be very quiet. Do not talk. Listen. Let's see if we can get an echo. "Hellooo!" The echo responds, "Hellooo!" (Have someone posted behind the trees at some distance away to act as the echo.) We do have an echo today.

Our Creator God, as you would know, is creative beyond our imagination. So when we are creative we reflect the image of God who created us. So let's invite the echo to join us in our prayer. I will divide us into group one and group two. I will speak a few words of the prayer. We will quietly listen for the echo to respond. After you hear the echo, group one repeats the words. Then group two speaks the words. Before we pray, let's try it with hello.

CHAPLAIN: Hello.

ECHO: Hello.

GROUP ONE: Hello.

GROUP TWO: Hello.

CHAPLAIN: Now let's pray. Remember, we are talking to God.

CHAPLAIN: For health and strength

ECHO: For health and strength

GROUP ONE: For health and strength

GROUP TWO: For health and strength

CHAPLAIN: And daily food

ECHO: And daily food

GROUP ONE: And daily food

GROUP TWO: And daily food

CHAPLAIN: We thank you, God.

ECHO: We thank you, God.

GROUP ONE: We thank you, God.

GROUP TWO: We thank you, God.

ECHO: Amen.

CHAPLAIN: Hey, that's my line.

Chaplain: Amen.

ECHO: Amen.

GROUP ONE: Amen.

GROUP TWO: Amen.

CAMP STAFF, *speaking loudly*: Amen. Amen. Amen.

Sir Francis Drake—Introduction and Prayer

Scouts, if you are watching TV and your sister or brother interrupts you, you might say, "Don't bother me now." If you, as a parent, are reading the paper or preparing dinner, and your son or daughter wants you to do something else, you might ask not to be disturbed. We want our peace and quiet. We even pray for it. We are not likely to ask God to disturb our peace. Yet that is what Sir Francis Drake,

the 16th-century English sea captain, asked in his prayer to God. We all have our plans, but who knows, maybe God has something greater in mind for us. So, to the extent that you feel comfortable in doing so, join me in the prayer of Sir Francis Drake.

Let us pray:

Disturb us, Lord, when we are too well pleased with ourselves,
When our dreams have become true because we have dreamed too little,
When we arrived safely because we sailed too close to the shore.

Disturb us, Lord, when with the abundance of things we possess
We have lost our thirst for the waters of life.

Having fallen in love with life, we have ceased to dream of eternity.
And in our efforts to build a new earth
We have allowed our vision of the new heaven to dim.

Disturb us, Lord, to dare more boldly, to venture on wider seas
Where storms will show your mastery;
Where losing sight of land, we shall find the stars.
We ask you to push back the horizon of our hopes,
And to push into the future in strength, courage, hope, and love. Amen.

God Is Good . . . All the Time

They say, “Bad things happen to good people.” Good things also happen to bad people. God is good all the time. He can take the bad and turn it into good. Some sacred writings relate the story of a boy named Joseph. He was a favorite of his parents. They gave him a coat of many colors. His brothers naturally were jealous. When he visited them in the field where they were watching the sheep, they planned to kill him. The older brother intervened. Instead they threw him into a pit and then sold him as a slave to a traveling caravan on its way to Egypt. The brothers soaked Joseph’s coat in lamb’s blood and told the parents that a lion had killed him.

God was with Joseph in Egypt, and Pharaoh put him in charge to store grain so they would have food when crops failed. When a famine came to the land of Joseph’s family, the brothers traveled to Egypt for food. Joseph recognized them. They thought he would punish them, but Joseph forgave them because he believed in a forgiving God. He said, “You thought evil against me but God meant it unto good. Now you and our parents will not starve. Take some grain now and go bring our parents and your families to live with me. We will have plenty. God is good all the time.”

Goodbye is considered to be a contraction for “God be with you.” Today, we want to remind each other of God’s goodness by greeting each other with another saying heard down south, in Alabama. One person may say, “God is good.” The other answers, “All the time.” Let’s try that now.

(Divide participants into two groups.) When I hold up one finger and point to your group you say, “God is good.” If I hold up two fingers and point to you say, “All the time.”

(Alternate pointing to each group with one or two fingers up. Do this a few times. Then point one finger to both groups simultaneously. Next, point two fingers to both groups. Do it a second time and encourage them to say it louder. Finally point to the staff assembled as group for a threefold “Amen.”)

Now let us pray:

Gracious God, when bad things happen in our life, like they did to Joseph, then in your mercy turn them around and bring good into our lives. We ask this, not because we deserve better, but because we trust in your mercy. Amen.

Thank You, God

God causes the rain to fall on the good and the evil and causes the sun to shine on the just and the

unjust. If both groups receive the same rain and sunshine, what is the difference between the two groups? Someone has said of this difference that those who believe in God thank him for all the good gifts that they receive. We have enjoyed many gifts here at camp. We have learned new skills, gained new knowledge and made new friends. We pause now to give God thanks or do one of the following:

1. Think of two things that are important to you.
2. Tell yourself why they are important.
3. Now silently thank God for them.

If the Scouts are familiar with the song, “Thank You for Giving Me the Morning,” then sing it, or lead another song that seems appropriate and is familiar.

Farewell Prayer

The following prayer is for use at the final flag ceremony prior to the departure of the campers.

Let us pray:

Good morning, God. The skies are blue. The sun is shining (*if it is*). It is going to be a great day. It has been a great week at camp. It’s been a great week because you have watched over us, blessed us and sent your angels to watch over us. Now guard and keep us as we travel home to family and friends. Help us share our experiences and apply our new skills and learning with the people in our community. Thank you, God, for a great week. God, you are good all the time. Amen.

To remind ourselves again of how great God is, let’s do an echo (antiphonal) chant.

[Divide participants into two groups.]

GROUP ONE: God is good.

GROUP TWO: All the time.

GROUP TWO: God is good.

GROUP ONE: All the time.

[Alternate by holding up one finger for “God is good” and two fingers for “all the time.” Then, point to either of the two groups or both.]

GROUP ONE AND TWO, *together*: God is good

GROUP ONE AND TWO, *together*: All the time.

[Repeat, only louder]

STAFF, *chanting*: Amen. Amen. Amen. (Or Yes! Yes! Yes!)

CHAPLAIN: God bless and keep you. God make His face to shine upon you and be gracious unto you. God look upon you with favor and give you peace. Amen.

Now, vaya con Dios. Go with God.

(Note: The Echo Prayer was used on day two and is repeated here to reinforce the thought of God’s continuing goodness as participants travel home.)

Short Devotions

The following are representative devotions from which you may choose based on the religious composition of attendees at the service.

A Father’s Presence—A Cherokee Legend

Let me tell you a story. There is a Cherokee legend about the ritual a boy had to go through to be considered a man. The father took the boy into the woods at night and sat him on a stump. Then he blindfolded him. He told him not to move or cry out for help or remove his blindfold until he could

see and feel the sun shining on his face. Would you not be scared, especially if you heard something rustling in the grass at your feet, or heard a coyote howl in the distance and a half hour later heard him howl a few feet from you? In the morning when the boy feels the light of the sun on his face, he removes his blindfold. It is only then that he sees his father sitting on the stump behind him.

We, too, are never alone. We have a father above in God who is always beside us to protect us and to love us. He loves us so much that no matter how bad we are, He does not love us any less and, no matter how good we are, He could not love us any more. His love is never 50 percent when we are bad and 75 percent when we are good. Whether we are good or bad, God's love is always 100 percent. When we fail or mess up, he is always there on the stump beside us to forgive us. Why? Because He loves us so very much. Always remember the Cherokee father and his son and then think of God's love for you and also the love of your earthly father and mother for you, thank God. You can thank God this week by serving your fellow Scouts. That, too, can be the most fun of all.

Let us pray:

We thank you, God, that even when I fail in my concern for others and disappoint both them and myself, you never forsake me. When things come into my life causing me to be afraid, I know you are beside me. You will watch over me in my darkest times, and be there to rejoice with me when morning breaks and gives me a new day. Thank you, God. Amen.

The Butterfly's Struggle

Remember a day when you wanted something to happen so badly, and it did not happen? Maybe you wanted a higher score in archery or a higher rank in swimming. It didn't happen. You wanted to be on the starting team back home. It didn't happen. Why didn't God make it happen for you? We do not always know the why. Sometimes God permits a dark cloud to overshadow our lives. If we are patient and trust God to shape our future, often what looks bad to us turns out to be good.

There was a young gardener with a kind heart who watched a butterfly trying to break out of its cocoon. He wanted to do his good deed for the day. So he took a pair of scissors and clipped off the tip of the cocoon. The butterfly fell out without a struggle. Good? No, bad. The butterfly's body became swollen and its wings shriveled. It could not fly. It died. The gardener did not understand God's plan. Creating a struggle for the butterfly was God's way of forcing the fluid from the body into the wings so that they would be strong enough to fly.

There is a passage in some sacred writings that reads, "When all sorts of trials and temptations crowd into your life, do not resent them as intruders but welcome them as friends." Does that not sound crazy? It goes on, "Realize that they come to produce in you the quality of endurance. Rather, let the process go on until you become a mature person with the right sort of independence, and if in the process anyone lacks wisdom, he has only to ask God who gives freely without making a person look foolish." Wow! It's like in the story of the butterfly's struggle.

When there is a struggle in your life, talk to God. Also talk to a good friend or a caring adult. Even if there is not an answer immediately, it may become known later. Talking to someone can help lift your burden. Be patient. Trust God to guide you. He cares for the butterfly. He cares even more for you. You are His special creation.

Let us pray:

God, you know my struggle. Even as in the struggle of the butterfly's life, make me stronger through the struggle. Teach me patience and endurance and so make me a better human being. Lift me up on eagle wings to see the greater vision. Amen.

Forgiveness Rules

This week you will be working on merit badges, learning new skills and celebrating life in God's nature. Do you know what the most important living thing is in nature? It is you and all human beings. Yet we fail each other. We are not always trustworthy, helpful, courteous, and kind. So we stand in need of forgiveness from God and also from those to whom we are unkind and unhelpful.

Once a short episode aired on TV in which a man had stolen a calf to feed his starving family. The cowhands hauled him in front of their boss, a domineering man with a cigar in his mouth. The hired hands asked what they should do with him. He scowled, "String him up. It will teach him a lesson." That night the rancher had a dream. In that dream he was hauled before God and recalled all the wrongs he had done. The angels asked God, "What shall we do with him?" God answered, "Forgive him. It will teach him a lesson."

In our living together, few things are more important than learning to forgive each other, even as God forgives us. No matter how bad you are, God will always love you. Practicing to forgive others this week—whether they are your fellow Scouts, your adult leaders, or your camp staff—will help make this a great week for you. God bless you in your forgiving and in all your living.

Let us pray:

God, I know there is only one thing harder to do than to forgive someone and that is not to forgive. Not to forgive is like a poison that festers in my heart and upsets my true happiness. Create in me a clean heart, O God, and renew a right spirit within me. Give me a heart that will forgive others even as you daily forgive me. Amen.

The Touch of the Master's Hand

At a public sale an auctioneer picked up an old violin and called for a bid. He was offered a dollar, then two and finally after a long wait, a man said, "Three dollars." Then a gray-haired old man stepped up from the rear of the crowd, picked up the old violin, dusted it off, tightened the strings, picked up the bow and began to play a melody, pure and sweet. The bidding began anew. Finally, that old violin sold for \$3,000. The people cheered. Some cried. What was it that had changed the price of this old violin? It was the touch of the master's hand.

And many a person with life out of tune is auctioned cheap to a thoughtless crowd, much like that old violin. A fight on the ball field, words of hate, another friend lost, and he shuffles on. He is going once. He is going twice. He is going and he is almost gone, when God the Master comes and the foolish crowd never quite understands the worth of a human being and the change that is wrought by the touch of a forgiving and merciful God.

What can you give to a Creator God who holds the whole world in His hands? May I suggest: give God thanks and then look around. See the youth who has been put down by others. See the old man or old woman whose life now seems useless. See the person who needs a friend. Each is loved by God. Reach out and touch that person with your kindness and your love. God will lift up that life through you. The foolish crowd may never quite understand what happened. But the person who was cared for will know. So will you. So will God, and that is more than enough.

Let us pray:

Thank you, God, for having touched my life with your love. Daily you make a difference in my life. Bless me and help me make a difference in the lives of others. I may not be a master violinist, but my acts of kindness can cause the heart of another to sing with joy. Make it so for the other person and let it happen through me. Amen.

Eagles Overhead or On Eagles' Wings

I once watched an eagle soaring over a lake looking for fish in the waters below. It reminded me of the story a fisherman told. From his boat, he watched an eagle up above. Suddenly the eagle turned sideways and dropped a young eaglet off its back. The young eagle fluttered as it fell. Certainly it would be crushed on the rocks below. Just as quickly another adult eagle swooped below it and caught the little eagle on its broad back. Then this eagle carried the little eagle high into the sky, tipped its wings and again let the eaglet flutter downward. This time the first eagle flew below the young one to catch it on its back. This maneuver was repeated again and again. The parent eagles were teaching their young offspring to fly.

This week will be a time for you to try your wings in facing new challenges, gaining experience, and learning new things. You will be working on merit badges, going swimming, boating, learning new things about nature, doing camp craft, and much more. You will have opportunities to practice getting along with other Scouts and practicing being courteous, kind, helpful, cheerful, and reverent.

You and I will not always succeed in being kind, courteous, or reverent, but we have a merciful and forgiving God. Daily we can go to him, telling him where we have failed, and daily he forgives us. He is more ready to forgive than we are to share our weaknesses. He will always love us. No matter how bad we are, he cannot love us any less. No matter how good we are he cannot love us any more. His love and forgiveness is always 100 percent.

He is pleased when we do the right thing. One of the right things to do is to forgive others as God forgives us. Another is to thank him for all He does for us.

In one of the sacred writings, we read, "I bore you on eagles' wings and brought you to myself." God, like the eagle, watches over us and spreads His wings beneath us. So this week, fly with wings like an eagle and let God lift you up into experiencing new adventures.

Let us pray:

When I grow tired, lift me up on your wings, God. Give me the courage, the patience, and the strength that I need for today. Amen.

A Shepherd and His Violin

There is a story—they say it is true—about an old shepherd in the hills of Idaho. He was a faithful listener to one of the finer musical programs on the radio. One night after listening to a concert, he wrote to the station with a most unusual request. He said, "I thoroughly enjoy your program from New York every week. I am writing to ask you a favor. I am a shepherd, and I get lonely up here in the hills. No one lives near me. I have little to entertain me except the radio. I have an old violin that I could play, but it is badly out of tune. I wonder if you could just take a moment on your program next week and strike 'A' on your piano so that I could tune my violin."

When the people at the radio station read his letter, they smiled. One asked, "Why interrupt our program, which has thousands of listeners, for one little old shepherd?" Another said, "Why not? It will bring joy into his life, and I think our listeners would agree." And so they honored his request. They interrupted their next program long enough to strike an "A" on the piano. The old shepherd in the hills of Idaho got the right pitch on his violin.

Why do I tell you that story? Because sometimes as leaders, whether we are 10 or 50 years old, we may be tempted to think only of playing to the crowd and not of showing interest in the individual Scout who might be more isolated. We may be teaching a merit badge to a group and neglect to help a Scout who has trouble learning. As a patrol leader, we may elect to do a challenging athletic activity and forget about the needs of the Scout who has a sprained ankle, has his arm in a sling, or may have a permanent impairment.

The story of the good Samaritan appears in some sacred writings. In the story, a man walking along the road had been beaten by robbers and left to die. A priest passing by saw the man but was so caught up in getting to the temple that he didn't stop to help. Another person with religious training also saw the wounded man but was more concerned about getting things ready for crowds coming to the temple that he also passed him by. Finally, a foreigner from the country of Samaria passed by, took pity on the man, lifted the man on his donkey, and walked instead of riding. He brought the man to an inn where he cared for him.

This story helps to illustrate that God is our good Samaritan. When people rob others of their good name by saying bad things about them or refusing to help someone in trouble, it is God who cares. It is God who is looking around for someone to be the good Samaritan to that person. In the story of the shepherd, it was the people at the radio station who were good Samaritans. Maybe, in these next days, you will stop to help a person in need. Do it! God will surely bless you with joy to your heart and to the heart of the person you aid.

Let us pray:

Forgive me, God, for the people I have passed by who could have used my help. Open my eyes to see the person in need of help and open my heart to reach out and help him or her. Thank you for making me a good Samaritan who serves others even as you serve me. Amen.

A Boy and His Sailboat

Let me tell you a story. A young Scout built a model sailboat. He tied a string to it and took it down to the lake. He pulled it along the shore. His hands got wet and the string slipped out of his hand. The wind carried the little boat across the lake. The boy ran around the lake, but when he got to the other side the boat was gone. He was sad, very sad. It was his special boat. Monday came and he went to school. Tuesday came and Wednesday went. He was still sad.

Weeks went by. One day on his way home from school, as he passed a craft store, he saw his boat in the window. He could not believe it. His heart jumped with joy. He ran into the store and said to the owner, "That is my boat in the window. That is MY boat." "Sure it is," said the owner, "and for \$3 it can be your boat." They argued, but the boy did not have three dollars, and he did not get his boat. He left the store with tears running down his cheeks. He ran home, got \$3 out of his bank. Then he ran back to the store and bought the boat. As he left the store he cradled the boat in his arms and said, "Boat, you are twice mine; once, because I made you, and twice, because I bought you."

This story points to what God has done for us. We are His twice over; once, when He created us and, again, as He claims us as his children today and always.

This week, you may not be making a sailboat, but you may be carving something special out of wood, making something out of leather or clay, making a candle, weaving a basket, or painting a picture. You may well treasure that piece of work just as the Scout did his sailboat. What God has made is still more precious. And what is that? It is you. It is also your fellow camper. So, treat each other with respect, because each of you is a treasure of God himself.

Let us pray:

I have some special things in my life, God, just like that boy's sailboat. Yet the most special thing in my life is you, Lord. You have also given me other special gifts like my parents, my friends and fellow Scouts, including new friends I meet here at camp. Thank you, God, for all you do for me. Amen.

A Drop of Water and a Rainbow

In the muddy rut of one of our camp's trails lay a drop of water from yesterday's rain, stagnant and dirty. The afternoon sun shone down on it, warmed it, filled it through and through with a strange new life, and lifted it high into the sky. The wind carried it eastward and above the Appalachian Mountains, allowing it to fall the next morning as a snowflake so pure and white and clean. That is what a merciful God does for you and me. He lifts us up like a raindrop that has become soiled by all the wrong things you and I do every day. He makes us pure and white as a snowflake. And he does it every day. We are His raindrops. And what do you see when the sun shines through the raindrops? A rainbow!

Those of Jewish, Muslim, and Christian faith know the story of Noah, whom God instructed to construct a huge boat to rescue both genders of every living creature from a flood that followed rains lasting 40 days and nights. After the flood that covered the earth had subsided, God put a rainbow in the sky as a promise that he would never again flood the entire earth. Today, you also are God's rainbow of promise. When you see Scouts who become frustrated while working on their merit badges, for example, and you help them, then you become God's rainbow. When people seem sad or lonely and you show them friendship, then God's light shines through you and brings joy to their lives.

You are more than a drop in a bucket. You are God's beautiful rainbow. When you are being courteous, kind, and helpful to others because God is kind and forgiving to you, then you are His rainbow. What an honor. Be a rainbow and have FUN serving others.

Let us pray:

God, thank you for showing me mercy and forgiving me. Make me a rainbow by being friendly, courteous, kind, and cheerful to all whose lives I touch today. Amen.

The Light of the Campfire

In many faith traditions, one of the first things that God created was light to drive away the darkness. You also are a light to others.

Watch the campfire tonight and see the light drive away the darkness. Notice the joy rise up in your heart and lift your spirit as the fire blazes. Then, remember that God wants you to be a light in others' lives. Gloom and darkness have a way of sneaking into our lives. When you show yourself as a friend to another Scout, you bring joy to his or her life. Your care warms his or her heart like fire warms us all.

We need each other's friendship and kindness. Remove a glowing coal from the fire and what happens to it? It goes black. Put it back among the glowing coals, and you see how the other coals bring back the fire into that once black coal.

It works the same way in your troop or crew. Push someone to the outer edge of your troop or remove yourself from the group, and the glow goes out and darkness settles in. Instead, reach out to each other. When you hear someone put down a Scout with a negative remark, say a kind word to him. He will know you care, and your care gives God a chance to lift his or her spirits as He works through you. Being a light is a good thing.

Sometimes, however, you may not feel like being a light. You may feel like that coal all alone and outside of the warmth of the group. What do you do then? You should remember that behind the sun that gives light and warmth and makes things grow is God who created it. He also created you. He loves you like nobody else loves you. He forgives you for all the wrongs you do and for all your bad attitudes. No matter how bad you are, He will not love you any less. No matter how good you are, He could not love you any more. His love is perfect and His love for you drives out the darkness in your life.

He surrounds you with people who love and care for you, like your parents, your Scout leaders, your fellow Scouts, and the camp staff. When these people show kindness and love to you, realize that God is reaching out to you through them. Open your heart to their love and allow it to warm you and drive out the darkness. When they fail you, forgive them just as God forgives you.

If we scattered all the burning embers from the campfire, each would turn black and cold. But, push them together and they become filled with light and energy that warms the world. This week, let God's love pull us all into a blazing campfire and make our time together a warm and wonderful time.

Let us pray:

God, you are the light of my life. Your light also shines through my friends when they are kind and helpful to me. Thank you for my friends. Help me not only to be friendly, but also to be a friend to others. Amen.

Equipping Chaplain Aides

As units arrive in camp, visit with unit leaders as they register. Seek out the chaplain aides. If a unit does not have a chaplain aide, see if you can recruit one to serve while the unit is at the camp. This may also be the time you will recruit a Scout, representing his or her unit, to offer a table prayer.

Schedule a meeting with the chaplain aides and those who may be considering service in that role. The meeting may be during a program break (perhaps after lunch). At the meeting, explain the role of a chaplain aide in general terms and how it would apply during the week at camp. Refer to *Handbook for Chaplains and Chaplain Aides in Boy Scout Troops and Venturing Crews*, No. 522-036 (see the "Resources" section), to develop a short list of what you want to share.

Suggest that, at one or more of the troop's evening campfires, chaplain aides could lead their units in Thorns, Roses, and Buds. Explain the sharing process. Seated in a circle, each camper reflects on that day's activities and shares a "thorn"—a bad experience that day. Then he or she shares a "rose"—a great experience that day. Finally, he or she names a "bud"—an experience or event to which he or she looks forward to tomorrow. If chaplain aides would prefer, tell them that you would be willing to visit their campsite and lead the sharing experience. You may also offer during a visit to their campsite to lead a very brief devotion.

Encourage chaplain aides to promote the religious emblems program among the Scouts in their units. Ask who among them holds their religious emblem, or has begun or entered the program. Encourage them to promote attendance at the religious emblem program information session you schedule.

Also, tell them about the Duty to God patch program, which recognizes a Scout's commitment to study for the religious emblem of his or her faith. Show them the poster of the Duty to God patch program and a sample patch that the Scout may receive if he or she commits to work for the emblem. (*Note: Speak with the camp director regarding whether the camp could absorb the minimal cost for these patches.*)

Tell the chaplain aides that you are available for counseling with any of the campers. Thank them for their service to their unit and to the camp. You may want to create a coupon similar to the following for the camper to take to the camp's trading post to obtain his or her patch.

Coupon for Duty to God Patch

This is to certify that _____ (camper's name)

Has attended a presentation on the religious emblem program.

Has made a sincere commitment to work for the religious emblem of his/her faith group or work with another Scout toward earning a religious emblem.

May purchase a Duty to God patch at the trading post and wear it with pride.

Participant's signature

Unit No.

Adult leader's signature

Prayers at Mealtimes

Prepare a daily schedule that lists names of individuals who will lead prayers before meals. As chaplain, you may want to take the breakfast prayer. This would be an opportunity to share a Chaplain's Minute to set the tone for the day and to lead into a prayer of thanks for the meal.

Assign chaplain aides and other Scouts to lead the prayers at noon and evening meals. If you have the opportunity to meet with the units as they register, you may inquire if there is a chaplain aide in the unit. If not, you may consult with unit leaders to identify a youth camper to serve as chaplain aide for the week, or at least identify one willing to represent his or her unit and lead a prayer before a meal.

Note: Meeting the units at registration also gives you a chance to introduce yourself in an informal way.

To help you remember and to provide accountability for offering meal prayers, you may want to develop a chart for the week like the following:

Scouts Leading Prayer Before Meals	
Day	Name and Unit No.
Sunday	
Breakfast:	Chaplain
Lunch:	Chaplain
Dinner:	Chaplain
Monday	
Breakfast:	Chaplain
Lunch:	
Dinner:	
Tuesday	
Breakfast:	Chaplain
Lunch:	
Dinner:	
Wednesday	
Breakfast:	Chaplain
Lunch:	
Dinner:	
Thursday	
Breakfast:	Chaplain
Lunch:	
Dinner:	
Friday	
Breakfast:	Chaplain
Lunch:	
Dinner:	
Saturday	
Breakfast:	Chaplain
Lunch:	
Dinner:	

Meet with those who will be leading prayer at the first opportunity. Maybe you could meet after lunch, in which case you might also take the Monday noon prayer or simply speak to that Scout after breakfast. Explain that there are Scouts, Scouters, and staff members from many different faith groups, so it is important to be inclusive on offering prayer.

Some Scouts may want to see two or three printed prayers they could choose from. Some would feel comfortable using their own words. In either case, offer as a reference the interfaith table prayers *Scout Is Reverent* pamphlet for their consideration.

As chaplain, you may want to introduce each Scout before the prayer. Simply say, “(Name), from Troop/Crew (number) will lead us in our table prayer” (or similar words). Thank the camper for serving.

Note: You may alter the above if serving a camp with unit cooking (i.e., no dining halls) or with split-shift dining hall schedules. Work with the camp director to determine an arrangement that works best in your camp setting.

Staff Commissioning Ceremony

On behalf of the camp director and the (name) Council, we will be commissioning you for your summer service at Camp (name).

So I now ask you:

Are you committed to make this the best summer ever at Camp (name) for all the Scouts and Scouters? If so, give me a resounding YES!

Are you committed to give your full continuing support to all your fellow staff members as together we serve these Scouts and Scouters? If so, give me another resounding YES!

With these responses, you are hereby commissioned to serve to the best of your ability with God helping you.

Before you go, receive God’s blessing as you serve:

The Lord bless and keep you; The Lord make his face to shine upon you and be gracious unto you; The Lord look upon you with favor and give you peace.
Amen.

Now go and serve the Lord and Scouting in His name.

Resources

National Camping School—Chaplain Lesson Plan
Boy Scouts of America
Community Alliances
P.O. Box 152079
Irving, Texas 75015

Handbook for Chaplains and Chaplain Aides in Boy Scout Troops and Venturing Crews, No. 522-036

Posters of Religious Emblems Program (available from local BSA Scout shops and see <http://www.scouting.org/sitecore/content/Home/Awards/ReligiousAwards.aspx>)

Duty to God Promotion Patch (available from P.R.A.Y. Publishing at 800-933-7729 or www.praypub.org)

A Scout Is Reverent: A Resource for Interfaith, Christian, Jewish, and Muslim Worship at Scouting Events, No. 34248 (available from www.Scoutstuff.org and many local BSA Scout shops)

If you have access to high-adventure worship books (*Eagles Soaring High*, No. 522-877; *Majestic Depths*, No. 05-850; or *Northern Passages*, No. 522-878), you may find them helpful as well.

Acknowledgments

The editor thanks Father Don Hummel, the Rev. Gordon Gross, and Elder David Wilson, who all have served many summers as chaplains at Philmont Scout Ranch. Thanks also to Rabbi Peter Hyman, who served as chaplain at the world Scout jamboree in Australia and at other Scouting functions. Their suggestions and support in this endeavor were invaluable.

A special thanks to Dr. Ron Adolphi, who serves as chairman of the Literature Development and Review Subcommittee, National Religious Relationships Task Force, for his counsel and guidance on this project.

