

## First Strides Guide™: Chaplain's Aide

Congratulations! Either you have accepted the leadership role of Chaplain's Aide (CA) or you are considering it for your leadership requirement. This is a unique role in that everyone is expected to follow your example, but you are not really "telling" anyone what to do. It is very much a "public figure" type position that encourages the concept of "a Scout is Reverent," rather than a "follow me" leadership position. As such, it is one of the very best places to start your leadership experience.

Here are some of the types of things you will be expected to do:

- The Chaplain's Aide main job is to help the troop chaplain or religious coordinator (usually an adult from the troop committee or the chartered organization) meet the religious needs of the troop members. So, what does this mean?

As the Chaplain's aide, don't assume that every Scout in your troop is the same religion as you are or even the same religion as each other. Diversity is what makes the world an exciting place to live. You may have Catholics, Lutherans, Presbyterians, Baptists, Methodists, Pentecostals, Unitarians, Jews, Muslims, Quakers, Agnostics and any number of other religions in your troop. You may even have Scouts who have doubts about the existence of God and that's OK.

There is no "one best" religion, they all have their good points and they all have their bad points. You are not in this role to convert anyone.

Your job is help your fellow Scouts observe their duty to God without regard to the religion that brings them closer to God. And for those Scouts who have doubts, you can serve as an example of a young man who can do all the fun things Scouts do and still have respect for a higher power and respect for other Scouts' beliefs.

| Religion  | Adherents                  | percents    |
|---|----------------------------|-------------|
| Christianity  | 2.2 billion <sup>[3]</sup> | 31.50%      |
| Islam   | 1.6 billion <sup>[4]</sup> | 22.32%      |
| Secular <sup>[a]</sup> /Nonreligious <sup>[b]</sup> /Agnostic/Atheist | ≤1.1 billion               | 15.35%      |
| Hinduism  | 1 billion                  | 13.95%      |
| Chinese traditional religion <sup>[c]</sup>                           | 394 million                | 5.50%       |
| Buddhism  | 376 million                | 5.25%       |
| Ethnic religions excluding some in separate categories                | 300 million                | 4.19%       |
| African traditional religions   | 100 million                | 1.40%       |
| Sikhism   | 23 million                 | 0.32%       |
| Spiritism   | 15 million                 | 0.21%       |
| Judaism   | 14 million                 | 0.20%       |
| Bahá'í  | 7.0 million                | 0.10%       |
| Cao Dai   | 4.0 million                | 0.06%       |
| Jainism   | 4.2 million                | 0.06%       |
| Shinto  | 4.0 million                | 0.06%       |
| Zoroastrianism  | 2.6 million                | 0.04%       |
| Tenrikyo  | 2.0 million                | 0.03%       |
| Neo-Paganism  | 1.0 million                | 0.01%       |
| Rastafarianism  | 0.6 million                | 0.01%       |
| Unitarian Universalism  | 0.8 million                | 0.01%       |
| <b>total</b>  | <b>7167 million</b>        | <b>100%</b> |

This table comes from Wikipedia.org. These 2012 Numbers are approximate.

Also, if certain Scouts actively observe specific religious beliefs, your role is to help the troop understand that Scout's reverence without it causing conflict. You will need to talk with an adult if anyone teases, makes fun, or makes any other Scout feel uneasy about showing their reverence to God. That can be a tough job to do, if it happens, but a Scout is brave.

- The Chaplain's Aide helps promote troop reverence on campouts and other activities when requested by an adult leader.

On a day-to-day basis, this means that the Chaplain's Aide requests a moment of silence or says grace at meals. If you choose to say grace, make sure it is a non-denominational grace. Non-denominational is explained, below.

If you are on a campout where each patrol cooks and eats as a patrol, it may be difficult to perform a grace for each patrol. And, leading grace for only your patrol can sometimes make a Chaplain's Aide feel a little uncomfortable because it "makes" your patrol honor the 12<sup>th</sup> point of the Scout Law while the other patrols do not. Talk with your Scoutmaster about what he prefers. One widely accepted convention is to say grace or ask for a moment of silence when all the patrols are gathered together. Sample graces and prayers can be found near the end of this document.

- The Chaplain's Aide reminds participants at the Senior Patrol Leader meetings and/or planning meetings of the religious holidays on the calendar when planning activities.

If the troop has a Librarian or Scribe, ask them if the troop has a list of the different religious holidays. If not, see what you can research online, consult printed calendars and, if you need, ask an adult for assistance. Then, consult this list when you attend the Senior Patrol Leader meetings and campout dates are being decided. After you create the list, provide a copy to the Troop Librarian to put in the troop's file cabinet and give a copy to the troop Webmaster to post in the online calendar, if you have one. If your troop is small and these other positions don't exist, give the list to your Scoutmaster.

- The CA works with the chartered organization representative (Priest, Pastor, Rabi, etc.) to coordinate the troop's participation in Scout Sunday or Scout Sabbath services.

Work with your Scoutmaster to achieve good participation. It is important to let all the Scouts know that it is respectful to attend your charter organization's services, even if the organization follows a different religion from their own. After all, your charter organization (church, synagogue, mosque, etc.) makes it possible for all the Scouts in your troop to meet together, even though they know you may not all be the same faith. Mutual respect is important. They don't "have to" let you use their facilities, but they do, anyway. So, make sure they know you appreciate them. A sample announcement for you to read at a troop meeting's closing ceremony is located near the end of this document.

- The chaplain's aide should provide a positive and/or inspirational message at the beginning or end of troop meetings and Courts of Honor.

This is an important part of your role, because leadership isn't leadership unless it happens on a regular basis. Sometimes campouts are few and far between, so having an important job at every meeting is part of your duties. Your troop should have opening and closing ceremonies at each meeting. Talk with your Scoutmaster to make sure you are a regular part of this.

My recommendation is that your inspirational message happens during the opening ceremonies, just like grace happens before meals. Why? Because many times meetings can run a little late and people are then rushing to go home and you don't want anyone resenting the extra two minutes you make everyone wait as they are trying to leave. I know, it shouldn't be this way, but that's human nature. So, try to avoid that trap by talking with your Scoutmaster in advance and organizing the opportunity for reverence at the beginning of the meeting. Sample inspirational messages can be found near the end of this document.

- Another aspect of your job is to promote the religious emblems program.

Nearly every faith offers a medal or patch appropriate for Scouts to wear on their uniform. The CA should be familiar with these awards and where to find the steps required to earn them. You, as the CA, should also seriously consider working towards earning your own religious emblem, as it sets the example for everyone else. And, frankly, having a medal on your uniform is pretty cool. For more information, see your Scoutmaster or Merit Badge Counselor.

As with all leadership roles, you need to

- Set a good example
- Wear the Scout uniform correctly
- Live by the Scout Oath, Scout Law and OA Obligation
- Show and help develop Scout spirit

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### **Non-denominational explained.**

Non-denominational means not focused on one specific religion. On a practical basis, it means respect everyone's religious beliefs by not calling God by a specific name. Speaking consistently in non-denominational terms takes real skill. And whether they realize it or not, your listeners will appreciate it.

Every religion believes in God, yet each calls God by different names. One religion calls God "haShem" which means 'the Name.' Another refers to God as "The Light." Yet others use the terms "King of Kings," or "Father", "Allah", "Elohim", "Yahweh", "Jehovah" or "Adonai." Many religions believe that Jesus was a great man, but not necessarily the son of God. That last point of view may a little tough for a young man who was brought up as a Christian to comprehend. Nevertheless, respect for others is important in all religions.

So, what does all this mean for you? It means that when you deliver a grace or a prayer feel free to use the words "God" and "Lord," but avoid saying things like "...in the name of the Father, Son, and Holy Ghost..." or "Jesus is Lord," or "in Christ's name we pray..." or phrases

that are generally dedicated to one specific religion. I know, that may be very tough to do, because phrases that you hear every Sunday and on every holiday will roll off your tongue without you being very aware of it. Yet, you must try. "Amen" is OK to say as it is pretty generic and most everyone accepts it as a religious way to say "The End," even if it is not part of their religion.

So, why should you go to all the effort of using non-denominational language? Well, for Boy Scouts in America, imagine, for a moment, that another Scout who was a different religion from you ended every mealtime grace and every Court of Honor prayer with the phrase "Allah be praised." Uh-oh! Would your parents appreciate that? Would they be insulted? Can you just imagine the uproar? Yet, what if that same Scout ended every grace and prayer with the phrase "Praise be to God." Now, you get the idea. One word describes the entire concept; "respect."

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There are many good resources that will help you in your new Chaplain's Aide leadership role. You may or may not already have some of them in your Troop's library. If you don't, then ask a representative from your charter organization to help you find some. Between now and the time you acquire them, here are three "proper" Graces, three "light-hearted" graces, three opening ceremony inspirational messages and one Court of Honor Prayer you can use. My recommendation is that you print these pages and keep them in one of those canvas covers for your Scout Handbook. That way you will almost always have them nearby when you are asked to speak (and you will be asked to speak). Also, as you first start in this role, no one will object if you read these prayers and inspirational messages, rather than memorizing them.

Grace #1 (it is perfectly acceptable to read this, rather than memorizing it)

O Lord, thank you for the adventures we experienced today as Scouts and as friends. Keep us ever mindful of the needs of others and help us follow the 12 points of the Scout law in your name. For this and all we are about to receive, we are truly grateful. Bless this food to our use and us to thy service. Amen.

Grace #2 (it is perfectly acceptable to read this, rather than memorizing it)

For food and health and happy days, O Lord our gratitude and praise.  
In serving others may we extend, the faith of Scouts for Thee my friend.  
God is great and God is good. With honor let us share this food.  
By your hands, we all are fed. We thank you now for drink and bread.  
Amen.

Grace #3 (it is perfectly acceptable to read this, rather than memorizing it)

Let us pray. Dear Lord, may this food restore our strength, giving us the ability to do our best for our communities and our duty to think of others, before ourselves. May this drink restore our soul's ability to help others who are less fortunate than we. Be present at our table, Lord, so we may dine with your blessings. Amen.

I take no offense to light-hearted Graces. As God created the sense of humor in boys, I don't believe He takes any offense either. Nevertheless, not everyone feels the same. That said, ask your Scoutmaster to approve before reciting a light-hearted grace.

Light-hearted Grace #1 (ask your Scoutmaster to approve, first)

God in our hiking, God in our biking;  
God overlooking all of our cooking.  
God in our meeting, God in our eating;  
God in digesting, God while we're resting.  
Amen.

Light-hearted Grace #2 (ask your Scoutmaster to approve, first)

As we begin this meal, let us pray for delicious goodness.  
Let us recite together  
(everyone together with enthusiasm) Good bread. Good meat. Good God, let's eat!  
Yeahhhhhhhh God!

Light-hearted Grace #3 (ask your Scoutmaster to approve, first)

Recite after me.  
(Scouts repeat each line after the Chaplain's Aide recites it)  
For every cup and plateful.  
God make us truly grateful.  
May we eat well, sleep well and make amends.  
And God help our leader, he's at his wits-end.

Inspirational Message #1 (it is perfectly acceptable to read this, rather than memorizing it)

Saint Francis of Assisi is one of the most venerated religious figures in history. Very much like Scouts, Saint Francis was a supporter of animals and benefactor of the natural environment. He is quoted as saying, "start by doing what's necessary; then do what's possible; and suddenly you are doing the impossible."

Inspirational Message #2 (it is perfectly acceptable to read this, rather than memorizing it)

Jimmy Dean was a very famous country singer, TV personality, and creator of a delicious breakfast sausage. If you ever find yourself in a situation where you are having trouble making headway against a challenge, remember that Jimmy Dean once said, "I can't change the direction of the wind, but I can adjust my sails to always reach my destination."

Inspirational Message #3 (it is perfectly acceptable to read this, rather than memorizing it)

You may remember the Cub Scout motto is "do your best." The Boy Scout motto is "be prepared." H. Jackson Brown, Jr., who is an American author best known for his inspirational book, *Life's Little Instruction Book*, brought these two concepts together by saying, "The best preparation for tomorrow is doing your best today."

Here is a great web site to get more inspirational messages:

[http://mobile.brainyquote.com/quotes/topics/topic\\_inspirational.html](http://mobile.brainyquote.com/quotes/topics/topic_inspirational.html)

Court of Honor Prayer (to be read)

Divine revelation is not confined to the past.  
The same Holy Spirit which inspired our ancestors  
inspires those of us who make the effort to quiet our soles and listen.

Think not that there are many religions.  
Think not that there is only one religion.  
But listen and know  
that there is one God who speaks to us in many tongues.

Yet to hear the words we must calm the din of the modern world.  
We must keep at bay the raucous noise of our own wants  
and focus our minds to that part of God that speaks to us  
not from without, but from within.

A Scout is reverent  
and reverence requires the discipline of quiet.  
Let us bow our heads in a moment of silence  
and give thanks to the gifts that scouting provides to us  
and to the greatness of God for the act of giving.

<count to 10 silently and slowly>

May the Inner Light shine upon us all. Amen.

Announcement about Scout Sunday or Sabbath Services that you can read a week or two before Scout Sunday/Sabbath Services.

I'd like to remind everyone how important it is for us to have a charter organization. For those of you who don't know what that means, this church/synagogue/etc. is our charter organization. Without their support, we would not have a troop. Because, the church/synagogue/etc. is the link between the District Council and us. It is only because they respect us and what we do that are we allowed to use their building and facilities.

They watch over us, they keep the heat on for us, and they walk around a clean up all the little things that we missed while we were cleaning up after our meetings.

So, why am I telling you this? I am telling you this because this coming Saturday/Sunday is Scout Sunday/Sabbath Services. And, out of respect for them, every Scout should make an effort to attend. Services will be held at <time> and you should arrive at least 15 minutes before that. This is a Class A uniform event.

After all this church/synagogue has done for us, it is important for us to show thanks and respect to them by attending services. Yes, it might be a tiny bit inconvenient for you to get up early on Sunday/Saturday morning. Yes, your family may not follow the exact religion that this church/synagogue follows. Neither of those things should keep you away.

Out of respect for all that this charter organization does for us, we need to show our thanks and respect for them. A Scout is reverent!

Be sure to tell your parents that you are expected to attend and let them know the whole family is welcome, too. Please come see me for a flyer to hand to your mom and dad.

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This document will get you started. It is not intended as an "end-all, be-all" document.

These materials were originally written for Scouts in America, so they have a slight "tilt" in that direction. However, in total and in part, each is meant to be respectful of all beliefs, religions and geographical location.

Document, graces and prayers © 2015 by Scott Newman

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Special acknowledgements to Mark Ray, author of "The Scoutmaster's Other Handbook" for his writings, teachings and inspiration. If you haven't read the book, go find it, now.

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