



**‘DUTY TO GOD’  
IN SCOUTING  
MEETINGS & SCOUTS’ OWN**

# Leader Support Guide

A cornerstone of Scouting is the need for us to promote “Duty to God”. While we do not require members to belong to any particular religion we insist that they have a faith, **a belief in God** (*One who is; a Supreme Being – a Creator – a Ruler of the Universe*). When asked where religion came into Scouting and Guiding, Baden-Powell replied *"It does not come in at all. It is already there. It is a fundamental factor underlying Scouting and Guiding"*.

When we volunteer our services as Leaders we are accepted on the understanding we will adhere to our agreement to abide by the policies and procedures of Scouts NSW. This includes Duty to God and the Code of Conduct, an important point is number 4 which states *‘Adults in Scouting do not use the Movement to promote their own beliefs, behaviours or practices where these are not compatible with Scouting principles.’*

Scouting’s Duty to God, in general, must be inter-faith and it is not hard to incorporate in meetings and activities, despite many having anxieties about their abilities in this regard. This Leaders Support Guide is provided to provide some guidance when considering this aspect of Scouting.

*(The exception to the inter-faith requirement is for Groups that are specifically formed, often referred to as Sponsored groups, for a particular religious Group such as Muslim, Jewish, etc. At large gatherings, such as Jamborrees a number of religions ask and are usually given permission to hold special services for their own members.)*

## **DIFFICULT WORDS**

A little confusion exists around certain words, usually created by people who have not even looked at the meaning in a standard dictionary. If you talk to lexicographers, the people who investigate the background and meaning to words and who write dictionaries, they indicate that there is common agreement that the following words are not tied to any specific religion and are in general use. Each of the words are able to be used in any inter-faith service .The meanings given are:

**GOD** (*One who is – a Supreme being – a Creator –a Ruler of the Universe*). The word *God* as it is used in the Scout Promise is generally accepted by all major faith groups dating back to before Ancient Egyptian times. It is not intended to be a limiting term – there are many names that individual religions use to represent God. If there is a reasonable likelihood that you will have Jews present, and you are using printed materials, it would be considerate to use the term *G-d* instead, as many Jews do not write the name of God in full.

**LORD** *a person who has general authority over others*. Again not religiously based.

**AMEN** *is an expression of concurrence or assent*. The literal meaning is *‘it is so; so be it’*. Not religiously based in fact the majority of dictionaries don’t even mention the word Christianity and for those few that do, it is more of a casual aside in their examples.

These words are found in many religious texts including the Quran (Koran). The people who do use most of these words include the Bedouins and other Arab tribes, Hindus, Jews, Tibetan Monks, Islamic believers, just to mention a few of the non-Christian faiths.

In prayers, talks and song, there are names and words that should be avoided : Jesus, Buddha, Holy Spirit, etc. these are they quite religion specific. Likewise, male or female pronouns (e.g. Father God, Heavenly Father, His, Her etc.) should be avoided as they are offensive to some religions.

## MEETINGS.

Prayers should be a regular part of every meeting. The Scout Prayer is safe as it conforms to the inter-faith requirements set out above but can be just a rote saying without meaning or real understanding. During prayers' an individual should be allowed to show respect as their faith demands. (*Leaving their hat on; Bless themselves; hold their hands in a particular way etc*)

A suggestion is the Scout Prayer is used alternatively with prayers prepared by each Patrol / Six in turn. Let them know about the inter-faith restrictions and 'suggest' a topic such as for those affected by a disaster- drought; or for health – friends - safety etc.

Patrol / Six Corners are also valuable, given time to prepare a prayer, or discuss a topic such as monsoon effected people, nature, loyalty, trust, honesty etc.

## SCOUTS' OWN.

A Scouts' Own is a simple inter-faith service which should be a part of every camp, and is often used at other times such as Founders Day.

A Scouts' Own means that everyone is welcome and everyone should feel comfortable with what is spoken, sung, read, or otherwise imparted during the service. However, it is important that members should know that it is not compulsory to attendance. People are to be invited. If they wish to take time of their own choosing to remember their spiritual obligations then this must be respected.

Truth in advertising is extremely important. If a service is advertised as a Scouts' Own which are inter-faith within itself, then it really needs to be so. To invite others to partake of the worship experience and then to ignore the fact that their religious expression is not the same as ours is to violate several parts of the Scout Law which we so dutifully insist we will obey. Just as you would (justifiably) be upset with a salesperson who sold you a machine that did not do what it advertised, so a non-Christian Scout who attends a Scouts' Own that turns out to really be a Christian service is rightfully upset. Be sensitive – do what you advertise you will do!

### **Here are some basic guidelines for carrying out a Scouts' Own service:**

The name of the service should be clear that it is a Scouts' Own Service (inter-faith). Be sure everyone understands that this means all are invited, not compelled to come. The terms *nondenominational* and *interdenominational* are not the same as a Scouts' Own Service (inter-faith) – they are terms that denote Christian worship only.

Remember that for many who attend, a Scouts' Own service may be very spiritually uplifting, but may not fulfil their individual religious obligations. It is often not possible to do that for everyone with a single service. Be sure people know that in advance.

Pick a theme for the service that fits with the specific weekend or time of year. This helps focus the prayers, songs, and messages in a meaningful way and ties the service into the weekend rather than having it stand alone and appear to be a separate from the rest of the weekend. Possible themes include God's Creation, The Great Outdoors, Ocean, Doing One's Best, Friendships, Trust, Honesty etc.

Prayers and songs should be generic in nature, addressing God alone, not Jesus, Buddha, etc. (This is one of the toughest issues, as the list of usable songs is quite short).

An inter-faith service, such as a Scouts' Own, is NOT about picking one element from each religion and putting them all together (make everyone feel good because one of their elements was used). It IS about incorporating the common elements in such a fashion that the entire service flows together to support the spiritual needs of all those in attendance.

The length of time required for a good Scouts' Own is quite variable. It depends on the time of day, the age of the participants, and other factors. However, don't devalue this experience by wedging it into a 15-minute spot between a major activity and dinner, for instance. Make the Scouts' Own an important part of each Scouting weekend.

When a message is delivered (avoid use of the words Sermon and Homily, as these are religion specific terms), be sure that the person presenting the message understands that this is an inter-faith experience. Choose a topic that relates to all in attendance, not a Biblical theme other than God, specific names should be avoided (e.g.: Jesus, Buddha, Holy Spirit, etc.) since they are religion specific. Likewise, male pronouns (e.g.: Father God, Heavenly Father, His, etc) should be avoided as they may be offensive to some. Readings used can be from any well known texts, such as BP's writings. One should avoid using the New Testament readings, unless you are sure the attendees are all Christians, on the other hand Old Testament readings from sections such as Proverbs, which is accepted by most faiths as a source of wise sayings

Pick a location for the Scouts' Own that fits with the theme that is comfortable for the participants and that will enhance the spiritual experience.

Keep a working file of Scouts' Owns that you have attended. Make notes about what worked well and what didn't. Use the good parts and avoid making the same errors over and over again.

*A sample Scouts' Own is attached and has focussed on acceptance of each other and the common bond the various faiths have with each other, simply using 'Living in Harmony' as a theme A source of suggested prayers and other inter-faith guidance can be found at :*  
[http://www.scoutinterfaithworship.org/prayers\\_for\\_interfaith\\_worship.htm](http://www.scoutinterfaithworship.org/prayers_for_interfaith_worship.htm).

## **Sample SCOUTS' OWN**

### **PRAYER (all)**

O God, who called us to serve in this great brother & sister-hood of Scouts we thank you. Keep us true to our promise and our law. Make us a blessing to our friends, and may we share with others at all times. Help us in thought, word and action to follow your example **Amen.**

### **THANK YOU GOD (Tune: "Edelweiss")**

Thank you God on this day,  
For our many good blessings:  
For our many close friendships  
Glory to God, may You hear our prayer  
Guide us on forever  
Thank you god on this day  
For our blessings and friendships.

### **A TRUE FRIEND**

A true friend shares whatever comes our way  
Who helps by thought words and deeds  
To brighten our day  
Who knows the little heartaches  
That Lie heavy on our mind  
That tries to ease the hurt of each  
By being extra kind.

**OLD TESTAMENT READING:** Proverbs 1  
(Chapter 3, verses 1-6) *(You could use some other well known book with a similar message)*

### **YARN: 'LIVING IN HARMONY'**

#### **Then leader says:**

As our God has made us one humankind,  
so too, did we receive one message.  
Listen to the VOICES of our God.

**Speaker 1:** Listen to his words from Buddhism.  
*"Do not offend others, as you would not want to be offended."*

Udanavarga 5:18

**Speaker 2:** Listen to his words from Christianity.  
*"In everything, do to others what You would have them do to you. For this sums up the law and the prophets."*

Matthew 7:12

**Speaker 3:** Listen to his words from Hinduism.  
*"Everything you should do will find in this: Do nothing to others that would hurt you if it were done to you."*  
Marashharta 5-1517

**Speaker 4:** Listen to his words from Islam.  
*"None of you shall be true believers Unless you wish for your brother the same that you wish for yourself."*  
Sunnat

**Speaker 5:** Listen to his words from Judaism.  
*"That which you do not wish for yourself you shall not wish for your neighbour. This is the whole law: The rest is commentary."*  
Talmud Shabbat 31

#### **Leader:**

To each of us God has given a common thread, that which we call the Golden Rule: Do unto others that which you would have others do unto you.+

### **SONG: Kum Ba Yah**

Kum Ba Yah O Lord Kum Ba Yah  
Kum Ba Yah O Lord Kum Ba Yah  
Kum Ba Yah O Lord Kum Ba Yah  
Oh Lord, Kum Ba Yah

Someone's crying Lord, Kum Ba Yah  
Someone's praying Lord, Kum Ba Yah  
Someone's singing Lord, Kum Ba Yah  
Kum Ba Yah O Lord Kum Ba Yah

### **PRAYER: (All)**

Lord unite us together in this land of opportunity.  
Whatever our origin or race, give us a true bond of friendship so that we may live together in harmony..  
Let Scouting spread the spirit of goodwill through many lands.  
Inspire us to find a way of life in which the young people of all nations may find unity and true brother & sister-hood  
**Amen.**

### **CLOSING PRAYER (All)**

For life, for fun and opportunity  
For friendship and fellowship  
We thank you O Lord.  
**Amen**