

LONGHORN COUNCIL
COLLEGE OF COMMISSIONER SCIENCE

**HOW A BSA CHAPLAIN
STRENGTHENS A SCOUTING UNIT**

THESIS OF DOCTORAL CANDIDATE
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August 2019
Fort Worth, Texas

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Thesis Statement

As I was completing my training to become a Charter Organization Rep (COR) for the BSA, I encountered a statement that was very unexpected. It stated that one of the requirements of the COR was to serve your Scouting Unit as a Chaplain if there was not a specific BSA Chaplain on record.

I did not disagree with this but felt strongly inadequate to fulfill my COR duties without additional training and preparation. As I searched for this training, it became obvious that most councils, including our own, had very few courses to support this need. I also noted that professional clergy was seldom knowledgeable about the details of Scouting. This did not stop them from their work but was a definite hindrance at times.

Approximately 10 years later, I am still a COR. I am now a Unit Chaplain that is both trained and registered with the BSA. I began teaching an introductory training course for BSA Chaplain in the Longhorn Council that is optional but helps group discussion. There is also a BSA Chaplain Course in the BSA Learn Center that permits Scouters the ability to become trained. If completed this course qualifies the Scouter to register as a Unit Chaplain. My sincerest interest is now to try to encourage other Scouters so that we can have at least one BSA Chaplain in every Scouting Unit.

But it is prudent to discuss what is a BSA Chaplain. The words of Rear Admiral Thornton Miller helped my thoughts (full story later) and I too believe that Chaplains in general are just helpers. Some may have more training and specialization perhaps, but it is not inappropriate to refer to them as helpers. You may be able to answer this later by yourself.

Introduction

Boy Scouts of America was started in 1910 because of a profound experience between James West and a young man in London. Mr. West and others combined to create an organization that had ideals that would help young boys in the United States become the type of adults that all Americans could be very proud. One basis of that program was a strong belief in God according to Lord Robert Baden-Powell. A BSA Chaplain is in a unique position to strengthen that portion of the BSA methods. This document will address the many ministries/opportunities that can help a Scouting Unit not only fulfill its mission but be a strong unit in all areas.

Background / History of Scouting & Religious Institutions

As most of us know "B-P" established Scouting in England in 1908 with a book entitled "Scouting for Boys". His firm belief in creating the Scouting method was that there was a place for God within it.

One of his quotes is "*No man is much good unless he believes in God and obeys His laws. So, every Scout should have a religion...Religion seems a very simple thing: First: Love and Serve God. Second: Love and serve your neighbor*". (Scouting for Boys, 1908)

When the Scouting Program was brought to the United States in 1910, this belief was continued. The Charter and Bylaws of the Boy Scouts of America support this. Indeed, while the Scout Law in 1908 contains only 9 points, the BSA added several more and the 12th point is that is "A Scout is Reverent". It is difficult to argue that the BSA does not support this.

Current BSA Scouting Resources

BSA Chaplains currently have multiple resources to clarify the position of the BSA. On current BSA Applications (both adult and youth), there is a statement called the Declaration of Religious Principle and all must agree with this to be a member. Other major Scouting resources are the 2012 Handbook for Chaplains and Chaplain Aides and the website Manual for Chaplains and Chaplain Aides when it began in about 2017. There is now an Advanced Unit Chaplain/Chaplain Aide Training as well as requirements by the NCSBSA (National Camping School for the BSA). In addition to the BSA Chaplain training within the BSA Learning Center Online, there are training courses in councils such as the Capitol Area Council (Austin, TX) and the Longhorn Council (Fort Worth, TX). Therefore, for the purposes of this document I will frequently use the terms BSA Chaplain and Chaplain interchangeably.

A Religious Emblems Program was created by multiple Religious Faiths and the BSA is strongly supportive of this program. In fact, the only awards a Scout may place on his Scout Uniform that did not come directly from the BSA are from the Religious Emblems Program.

A Scout's Duty to God was reaffirmed at the National BSA Annual Meeting in 2018. The BSA also has a Religious Relations Support Committee and a Duty to God Sub-committee. BSA announced in November of 2015 that beginning in 2016, each Cub Scout and Boy Scout Rank Requirements will have specific requirements for every rank the following year. The Guide to Advancement in 2013 even stated a requirement for the Declaration of Religious Principle. Since that time, more information has been documented that while an adult or youth must have a belief, they are not told what to believe and judgment of their answers if affirmative shall not be judged wrong.

Details of a BSA Chaplain

Before one can address a discussion of how a BSA Chaplain helps units, it is prudent to confirm some of the details of what a Chaplain is. There may be those that have a casual knowledge and possibly even some significant misunderstandings, so a clarification or confirmation is prudent.

A BSA Chaplain can only be an adult position but can be Professional Clergy or Lay Amateur. Regardless of those credentials, a BSA Chaplain can also be trained or untrained as well. The BSA accepts each specific faith's guidance on training and rules but does not enforce these rules. The BSA rules are primarily guidelines and with the exception of the guidance of each specific faith, an individual that puts on the BSA Chaplain patch has to accept the position and its overall responsibilities. The position is frequently appointed or voluntary and endorsement by the Scout Unit Leader are highly recommended.

A Chaplain's primary purpose is to help both the youth and adult members of a Scouting Unit and therefore must go to any and all places that the members go. Members of the unit include both the youth Scouts as well as the adults or Scouters. Those BSA Chaplains that are professional clergy sometimes do not serve multiple positions in Scouting but almost all of the amateurs/volunteers usually "wear multiple hats." However, after you become known as a Chaplain, some may forget that you are "just another Scouter."

There can be multiple BSA Chaplains in a single unit since it is well known that adults can occasionally get sick, have other commitments or any of several reasons for not being present. It is a significant advantage for the unit if there are multiple BSA Chaplains. YPT (Youth Protection Training) is required by the BSA for all adult positions. However, there are situations where some privacy is appropriate and then counseling in plain sight (but out of hearing range) is obviously prudent. There are **STRONG CHILD ABUSE REPORTING** requirements in some states and all BSA Chaplains should become very familiar with those laws and situations that might occur.

BSA Chaplains can serve single faith Scouting Units but they may encounter multi-faith as well as no faith scenarios and situations. This position is a BSA position and therefore **DOES NOT** have the authority to perform Weddings, Baptisms, and other activities that professional clergy

may be involved in. Training is now included in the BSA Learn Center and some councils offer training to help local BSA Chaplains problem solve and share methods with others in group sessions. There are 4 distinct position codes that a Scouter may register their position with the BSA and sometimes the Charter Organization Representative (COR or CR) of a faith-based unit may serve unofficially as the Unit Chaplain as explained in the BSA Training. There may be other personnel that serve as a BSA Chaplain that has not been discussed. However, the position of the Chaplain Aide is a youth position and is sometimes confused with the adult BSA Chaplain.

Responsibilities/Possibilities of a BSA Chaplain

The Chaplain should assure all personnel in the Scouting Unit of his interest in them and should provide Spiritual Growth for the unit. This is sometimes referred to as a "Ministry of Presence" by some faiths. To be certain this is totally understood, it includes the Scouts, the Scouters, their spouses, siblings and friends that participate in the Scouting Unit activities. The Chaplain should be participating in the meetings, the campouts, and all available activities. "Congratulations" and encouragement should be common from the Chaplain. Even when things don't go exactly as planned, comments from the Chaplain such as "I'm sure you'll do better next time" will give the unit strength and help it through tough situations. Chaplain's should be involved and asking about absences. Like the Scoutmaster's Minute, the Chaplain should be prepared to offer a Chaplain's Minute as a short opportunity to teach an ethical or spiritual story or lesson. It should never compete with the Scoutmaster's Minute, but the Scouts need regular opportunities to hear how each Scout can share his character with themselves and others in a spiritual or life lesson. If nothing else, the Chaplain's Minute can start them thinking. Then it is possible for them to share similar lessons with the younger Scouts. However, both the younger Scouts and senior Scouts will have multiple opportunities to watch the examples of other Scouters and BSA Chaplains just by being present.

The Chaplain should be available for counseling both in informal as well as formal situations. Frequently the individual that needs counseling may not realize it but may display homesickness, sickness or adolescent symptoms that might even escape the Scout Leader. The Chaplain can provide answers or sometimes just a "sit-down" with someone about religious questions but should let them know the Chaplain is available for any type of

issue. Without cataloging a long list, the Chaplain should make it a priority to offer help with Scouting, Schooling, Parenting (and issues with parents), Worship, and the availability of help if someone is not sure of the category. It can be even a teasing point of asking outrageous questions such as "How is your understanding of Einstein's Relativity coming along? If you need help in that category, I can really give great answers. Not always correct, but always great answers."

In addition to the unit as a whole, the Chaplain should be available to guide the Chaplain Aide (CA) and lead them in their duties. The Chaplain should be strongly knowledgeable about the general details of the Chaplain Aide Duties and any specific information for that unit's expectations. Like many of the Scouters, the Chaplain Aide may have little or mistaken thoughts about their own faiths as well as other faiths. They can stimulate discussion by explaining basic concepts of one faith (such as perhaps the most common of the unit) and then informally quizzes the CA to see if that is common in his faith. Questions like "Is that how you do it in your faith?" may start the CA discussing what they are or are not sure of. The Chaplain should be regularly pointing out the commonalities of all faiths and strengthening the Non-sectarian attitudes of all members of the unit.

The obvious point for the Chaplain Aide is to strengthen their knowledge and comfort level so that they can increase the number of issues they can help other Scouts in a solo mode. After all, the Chaplain Aide and their duties should be completed by the Scout just like all other positions in the Troop.

The Chaplain's guidance should be most helpful to the CA as the Scout describes and promotes the Religious Emblems Programs for the Unit. His encouragement to participate in that program and teaching the CA about the program is the beginning. The Chaplain (and the CA) can assist other Scouts in joining Religious Emblems Courses will be an important task in making the CA a complete success. The Chaplain can help as a teacher of some of the courses as well as showing the CA how to find other appropriate teachers. The Religious Emblems Courses are a strong opportunity to teach other Scouts of the strength of diversity while strengthening their faith. The Chaplain should obviously encourage the CA to recognize other Scouts for completing courses. Asking questions about the presentation of the award at the Troop's Court of Honor as well as other presentations in a service of Faith will help teach the members of the Troop and provide solidarity for the members with each other.

The Chaplain could suggest to the CA that courses might be started in order to finish before summer, finish by the end of summer, or finish by the end of the year. The last version would possibly lead to recognition on Scout Sunday (or Scout Sabbath or Scout Jumah) depending on the individual's specific faith. The Chaplain and CA could visit with the troop and find out how many different locations where the Troop's members will be attending their version of Scout Sunday. They might visit with the Chartered Organization's clergy and investigate if additional members of the Troop could participate in activities such as handing out bulletins, ushers or possibly even being part of the service. This will usually be addressed differently by each member of the clergy but the willingness to help and participate can be a strong enticement for the CA. If members specifically want to do this at this house of faith, they might go with the Chaplain and CA to speak with the clergy and additional opportunities of both diversity and inclusion of all members could result.

One of the most obvious duties of the BSA Chaplain should be to be ready to offer prayers both in a group and individual settings. If the Chaplain is not aware of the Unit's Spiritual Faith inventory, he may choose to offer a prayer that is sometimes called an Interfaith Prayer. It should be as inclusive as possible and it does not have to be limiting. It can focus on the activity (in the case of a prayer before meals) and offer thanks for the hands that have prepared this food. It can focus on the time such as a prayer at the end of a campfire/end of the day. In each of these cases, a specific religious faith is not a requirement of this prayer and yet all could receive a blessing and thoughts to help lead them in their individual prayers. At the same time, he should help the CA and other Scouts with basic preparation for each of them to offer prayers in the future. By showing them short basic concepts, such as why is this prayer being offered such as the examples above and encouraging their beginning efforts at prayer, he continually supports everyone's spiritual growth. If the Troop is definitely a one faith scenario, then a more faith specific prayer is both reasonable and appropriate. However, even in this case, there will be some that are very strong in their faith and others may have a more beginning faith and need slow support and this should be constantly on the Chaplain's mind. While the youth may accept training for leading prayers, some adults may be more resistive in this. It may require that the Chaplain use some diplomacy in asking why they tend to refuse and make other suggestions. One way of encouraging other adults in leading prayers is the method of asking if the adults want what is best for the Scouts. Then one

approach is to say subtly that the more the Adults do ANYTHING that we ask the Scouts to do, the more difficult it is for the Scouts to resist. Most adults do have a strong desire to encourage their Scouts to better themselves and this can be a strong motivator. However, as with all issues, the individual diplomacy of the Chaplain (or the adult) is also on display. In any case, it is the Chaplain's role to further the Spiritual Growth of the Scouting Unit and NOT JUST THE SCOUTS.

Another activity that most members of the Scouting Unit will probably acquiesce to is that of leading Worship (or Spiritual) Services during camping. However, as with prayer, it is much more desirable for multiple reasons to involve as many members as possible in all activities. Keep involvement small at first (reading a small selected passage) and keep encouraging. The strongest strength of the Chaplain is that they want the entire Scouting Unit to be the strongest possible and that means each member (youth or adult) should receive exercise or anyone can be the weakest link of the unit. Other Scouts (or Scouters) can be used to persuade weak links to step up and do "just a little bit" for the good of the unit. We all wear the same "B Class" T-Shirt and we all want what's best for our Unit should be a strong motivator in a caring way.

Interfaith Worship Service

As with prayer, if the Chaplain is not aware of the actual mix of spiritual faiths in the Unit, they will probably be encouraged to hold a worship service that is frequently referred to as an Interfaith Service. This type of service intends to provide a spiritual focus or experience. Sometimes it is stated to help fulfill the Unit's "Duty to God" but is concerned with the meaning or direction of one's life. It can even be a more patriotic event or strong acknowledgment of how magnificent our Earth and its creation is. Most of the time the service is connected in some way to the Scout Oath, Law or the ethical code of Scouting. The specific requirements of what is or what is not an Interfaith Service are probably not the most important detail.

Lord Baden-Powell had a belief that a person's religion was not how the person behaves as much as what they believe. In this way, the character of a Scout is strengthened by their faith and their connection to the Scout Oath and Law. So, in his opinion, an Interfaith Service in Scouting should be more about our commonality rather than the differences in each of the

different faiths. Frequently a statement is made at the start of the service to the effect that this service is to lift spirits or put one in the right spirit and no intention of offending anyone is intended. Again, if the service begins with words of desire to make the experience positive, most personnel understand.

However, if there are multiple different faiths present, there may be a situation where the differences between those faiths were highlighted or accidentally offends another Scout. If this happens and personnel can apologize and explain that it was accidental, then the spirit of "A Scout is Friendly" can sometimes help. I have actually seen situations where one faith said or did something that could have offended another and the comment was stated, "he was simply stating his faith and I understand that it is important to him just like my faith is to me."

This attempted effort at not offending others may sound to some like the requirement that "you can't say that." This is simply not the issue. There should be a strong effort to not intentionally offend anyone but there should be a strong effort for all to participate and enjoy the service. This friendly, welcoming experience includes no criticism or coercion for not attending or participating.

There are planning worksheets, do's and don'ts and many other pieces of how to do an Interfaith Service. These can be helpful for first-timers but the important parts are to involve the members of the unit and make multiple efforts to help them remember the purpose of the service.

Scouts' Own

Today the Boy Scouts of America in their Language of Scouting document no longer officially uses the term Scouts' Own, preferring "outdoor worship service" or "interfaith worship service." However, the term was strongly utilized in the past and is still being used. One of the reasons for this is that frequently groups use the term Scouts' Own when the service is mostly Youth-Led and use the phrase Interfaith Service with more Adult Led services. Neither is totally wrong nor totally correct.

Like an Interfaith Service, the primary concept of a Scouts' Own (or Scouts' Own Service) is a brief inspirational, informal ceremony or worship service. It was usually made up of a mixture of activities such as readings, reflections, prayers, and music lasting usually less than 15 minutes. Many

are based on a specific theme such as friendship or fairness. It was an attempt to interest and lift the hearts of the youth without giving them a kind of imposed, rigid Church presentation.

The idea of a Scouts' Own is credited to H. Geoffrey Elwes by one resource. "Uncle" Elwes was an early Scout Leader and strong supporter of Lord Baden Powell. However, he was Christian, and he strongly wanted a more Christian content for this service while BP favored a more interfaith approach.

One of the first of these services was held in 1909 at the Crystal Palace in London. Within a decade Baden-Powell's doctrine began to be more heavily supported. Writing in 1928, Baden-Powell described his views on the subject:

"For an open Troop, or for Troops in camp, I think the Scouts' Own should be open to all denominations and carried on in such a manner as to offend none. There should not be any special form, but it should abound in the right spirit and should be conducted not from any ecclesiastical point of view, but from that of the boy."

Sometimes, hopefully not often, a Scout (or Scouter) encounters a medical condition or accident and a funeral or memorial service is being planned. Obviously, one very important question is "What does the family want?" The Chaplain can strongly help with this part of his role. It can be especially difficult whether he is acquainted with the family or not. If he does not know them well, he might find out who the specific clergy is and contact them for assistance and information.

In any situation like this, the family might be interested (or at least willing) to have an individual member of the Scout Unit attend the service in Uniform. The Scout Unit might sit together as a group or individually. Dependent upon the length of service and how many members of the unit know the deceased, the family may be willing for select members of the Scouting Unit to participate in the service. This could be brief readings or might be a description of some of the positions that the deceased held for the unit. It might only be condolences or acknowledgment that the Scouting Unit appreciates the honor of their previous service. In any case, the Chaplain can be most helpful in finding out the answers to as many of these questions as possible. He should also relay as much information back to the unit to help keep them apprised.

The most evident part of this process is how the family is interested in this recognition and how strong the bond between the family, the Chaplain and/or the Unit Leader. In the case where an accident was the cause and this was unexpected, the family might be so much in grief that discussion is difficult or impossible. At the same time, if the deceased was a Scoutmaster for 30 years and Scouting was an extremely serious part of his life, the family, even in grief, may desire that the unit be present as much as possible.

From the other perspective, some parents of some of the Unit's members may prefer to not let their Scout participate. This may be an effort to protect the Scout from a pain that the parents feel will be too difficult or it could be for several other reasons. It is probably prudent to announce to the Scouting Unit what services are being held and what (if any) participation will be. Therefore, it should be stated that any member that wishes to participate may do so voluntarily.

If there is insufficient information, each individual of the unit will have to make their decisions on whether to attend, whether to dress in Uniform or not, and so on. Even in this case, the Chaplain, in conjunction with the Scout Leader, can be most helpful in relaying information and helping personnel make decisions.

The Chaplain, as a member of the Unit, may attend and participate in service projects. After all, he is a member of the unit and should participate as much as possible just like everyone else. This can be a great time to serve, laugh and enjoy being part of everything.

As part of the spiritual training of the Scouting Unit, the Chaplain should encourage the possibility of visiting other churches, Synagogue, Temples, and Mosques. It can even be helpful for members to attend a place of worship different from their own, even if it is "just" another church. There will be differences, even in the same faith, if your church is smaller or larger than another of that faith and it is helpful for Scouts to acknowledge both minor and major differences. It could be started by everyone that wants to participate to invite the unit members to their house of faith. It can either be during a worship service or it could be just a tour of the facilities. The Scout might be the Leader of the tour or it might be a Scout/Scouter combination to keep it lively and moving. If there is a non-worship activity being held, the home Scout could offer to take some with him or be available to lead. Even something as simple as a meal at their church

could lead to playful questions such as "Do Methodists eat corn?" If the Chaplain and Chaplain Aide emphasize the importance of remembering to acknowledge again BOTH the diversity and the commonality of the situation, then everyone can see the fun of such playful questions. It might even be discovered (again) that the commonalities almost always outweigh the differences.

BSA Chaplains can frequently be helpful in the camping scenarios for summer camps or High Adventure such as Philmont. There is also a significant presence at the National Jamboree and World Jamboree for obvious reasons. Some BSA Chaplains may be prevented from serving in this capacity because of minimum requirements that may involve actual Professional Clergy or Seminary Students. The National Camping School (NCSBSA) also has detailed minimum requirements in the best interest of the Scouts. However, don't hesitate to check into these possibilities and there may be other positions that might work for the individual. If you have leadership interests in more than a Scouting Unit, please remember that there is a Registered Position within the BSA a District Chaplain as well as Council Chaplain. It is frequently not well defined how one becomes a Chaplain in these areas (nor does it outline what the duties and responsibilities are) but if you have an interest in leadership in these areas, it is incumbent on you to speak with the District and Council Leadership and ask questions.

With all of the responsibilities and opportunities for a BSA Chaplain, a couple of significant items should be well known by all Chaplains. One such area could be Faith Specific Requirements to hold the position of BSA Chaplain. Some Chartered Organizations (CO) or the Faith that supports those organizations may require additional training, position within the faith or other details. This is well known and strongly BSA supported and it is up to the individual desiring to be a BSA Chaplain to visit with the Leadership of that faith. In some cases, only clergy from that faith may hold these positions. Others may require a course (or several) and regular supervision. If the CO of your unit does not have these types of requirements but your faith does, then obviously you would want to follow your faith's requirements. As stated previously, BSA is strongly supportive of the specific CO and therefore the BSA has no requirements that supersede that of the CO.

The BSA has stated that all adults must have valid Youth Protection Training (YPT). It is of no surprise then that the BSA Chaplain would also

have to follow this requirement. There may even be some difficulties due to the YPT that make your duties as a Chaplain more difficult. The most obvious one is "No one on one interaction." This is protection for both the youth and the adult but counseling that has privacy concerns can frequently be difficult to achieve unless you resolve the issue so that both are considered. Private counseling can be achieved by separating the Chaplain and Scout from everyone else by a distance outside of hearing range but still in plain sight. This does NOT achieve privacy visually and in some cases such as a Scout that is emotionally disturbed or crying may cause additional concerns but adherence to YPT is vital. With other Scouters help to distract the rest of the Scouts or some other method of compensation will help minimize those difficulties. Remember, BOTH objectives are vitally important.

Another limitation or criteria that a Chaplain has to be constantly aware of is that of child abuse. In some states, there are MANDATORY child abuse reporting requirements. In most situations, the Chaplain does NOT have to report that abuse IS HAPPENING, but he MUST REPORT that he is concerned that it MIGHT BE HAPPENING. Like teachers and some medical personnel, it may be a state law and the BSA Chaplain should consult appropriate personnel and be aware of those details before you encounter a situation. Regardless of the situation, the Chaplain must be prepared to do what is necessary and the more knowledgeable in this area may minimize concerns. It is pragmatic to note that even if you are not a BSA Chaplain (just a Scouter) you may still have requirements to make this report if you see or suspect abuse may be happening.

Another area of limitation is that of proselytizing. The BSA Declaration of Religious Principle does have certain requirements that all members must agree to. The situation of proselytizing may not be specifically stated in that Declaration, but it is vital for a Chaplain to agree to never participate like that. Forcing or in the language of YPT "grooming" a Scout to encourage a Scout to change to the Chaplain's faith is inexcusable. A BSA Chaplain is present to help a Scout strengthen his own faith and to deliberately encourage him to change faith is almost the ultimate break of our sincerity.

Finally, even if you are professional clergy, a BSA Chaplain must always be aware of your own personal limitations. There are many possible areas where our own skills can be limited, and it should be the Chaplain's primary goal to find the individual that can give the care recipient the best possible

chance for a solution to the issue. If that means that even if the BSA Chaplain is a professional clergy and the Scout needs professional mental health help (or any other professional help), there must be a significant effort to make that referral happen. The professional clergy are probably better trained to notice this, but it is the primary purpose of whatever Chaplain is involved to do what they can and, in some cases, find more appropriate help.

Myths of a BSA Chaplain

Most people are usually surprised when they find out that to be a BSA Chaplain, one does not have to be a minister, rabbi, imam, or any form of clergy. It might help to remind them that the BSA is supportive of the specific faith and their requirements concerning religious leadership. A specific Chartered Organization's Faith may have additional requirements but the BSA does not. I usually tell the potential BSA Chaplain if their faith does not have additional requirements, and a layperson decides to put the BSA Chaplain patch on their sleeve, they are the primary (and possibly) ONLY individual supervising their work.

Another detail that some find interesting is the fact that no Theological Degree or any Theological Training is required by the BSA. A specific faith may make this requirement but as a Scouting position, it is not required by the BSA. It can be helpful; it might be wise, and it may even be more reasonable, but it is not required by the BSA. Therefore, for these reasons, it is also a Myth that a lay person cannot be a BSA Chaplain.

When confronted with these details, some that are particularly shocked may even continue to insist that a Chaplain has to be extremely knowledgeable about the Bible or some other religious documents. And unfortunately, they will also be shocked that the BSA does not state anything in this area either. I have told such dissenters that it is probably better for a Chaplain to have such knowledge but as Lord Baden-Powell seemed to infer, what an individual believes and how they follow the Scout Oath, Law and Scouting Ethics, in general, is more important. With apologies for the bluntness of this next statement, what Scouting is interested in is developing the character of a Scout and not reinforcing his religious dogma. The character of someone that went through Scouting and now is a repeated example of what we are striving for, is why most of us are interested in Scouting.

The non-sectarian attitude of Scouting also makes the requirement that a Scout (or BSA Chaplain) be a Christian is a perfect contradiction. Now some may assume that like the fact that each Scouting Unit can only have one Scoutmaster or one Cubmaster, etc., it follows that a unit can only have one Chaplain. This simply is a trivial and conceptually misunderstood myth. The opposite approach is more appropriate. The purpose of a BSA Chaplain is to help with the spiritual growth of both the Scouts and the Scouters. Therefore, it makes more sense that the more Chaplains (or simply HELPERS) present, the better the end result. And to that same point, the more Chaplains that are available, the stronger the Scouting Unit will be. Many other consequences also become available. If the Unit only has one Chaplain, then the Unit will not have a Chaplain going camping if he is ill. However, the opposite becomes a major benefit. And so, on the list continues. A much better similar scenario is the position of Assistant Scout Master. The more Scouters assisting the Scoutmaster, the stronger the unit and each will have the opportunity to help with a portion of the end goal.

Summary and Conclusions

So how does a BSA Chaplain help the Scouting Unit? We discussed many of the opportunities that a Chaplain can help with. Many of these situations may fall by the wayside in smaller units that have too few Scouters. We also need to review data about the percentage of units where BSA Chaplains are currently working. Our Longhorn Council has approximately 15 districts with an average of about 40 units per district for a total of 600 units. A goal of at least 1 Chaplain per unit and that estimate would be approximately 900 Scouters. Our Council has held an introductory course for BSA Chaplain for about 6 years and currently, I have a list composed of 50 to 75 Chaplains that have attended that course or acknowledged serving as a Chaplain. It is highly probable that this list is not totally accurate but a goal of at least 1 Chaplain per unit is still reasonable. It is my belief it could be a strong method of helping a unit achieve the type of excellence that most desire.

So why do the numbers appear to be in the range of 10% of the goal? Well, one rationale is that lots of Scouters will not commit to lead in areas unless they have prior training and/or experience. This is certainly the case with positions like Treasurer, Training Coordinator, Outdoor Activities Coordinator or Religious Emblems Coordinator. Scouters with prior

experience (as a Scout or with Occupational skills) do step up more frequently but those without theological training may tend to defer to other positions.

Another reason is that larger Scouting Units (both Packs and Troops) will have 8-10 leader positions in addition to the Key 3 by necessity and smaller units never seem to find enough parents to fill positions that are not absolutely necessary within BSA requirements.

A third reason is "the attitude" that some positions are required by BSA National to be chartered and other positions are only considered as optional positions. This can cause some to believe that the optional positions are just not needed unless you have adults without any duties.

While BSA has always been a strong supporter of Duty to God, it has not had a specific Duty to God requirement in Advancement in the past. This causes some to believe that Religious Emblems and some of the other Duty to God activities are so optional that limited Scouter Leadership simply runs out of time. Therefore, without additional Scouters to initiate/fulfill this part of the program, it becomes more strongly relegated to be truly optional.

As always, there are remedies and solutions to each and every problem.

If a potential BSA Chaplain has no prior experience or training, then courses (online as well as Council Level) can be started. However, the knowledge that these courses exist at the Council Level is frequently not well promulgated throughout the many districts without strong notification or word of mouth. There are even Scouters that are unaware that the BSA Learning Center has programs that qualify a Scouter as Trained. But once again, without knowing that a Scouter can Register with the BSA as a Unit Chaplain, that training may not reach the Scouter within the unit. It becomes his or her responsibility to volunteer to work with the Chaplain Aide and encourage additional faith activities. BSA National now has specific Advancement Requirements for faith but Scout Leaders (all positions) need to encourage the Scouts to select those requirements.

It does appear that maybe our opinions within Scouting may be working in a direction toward more spiritual activities. The Religious Relations Committee and Duty to God Sub-Committee are clearly helping in this respect. The BSA Chaplains that have "boots on the ground" are perhaps

clearly the most appropriate resource to help pass along this information. Many of the pieces for the solution may be starting to be focused on the right spots.

Now some may assume that like the fact that each Scouting Unit can only have one Scoutmaster or one Cubmaster, etc., it follows that a unit can only have one Chaplain. This is simply a trivial concept. The opposite approach is more appropriate. The purpose of a BSA Chaplain is to help with the spiritual growth of both the Scouts and the Scouters. Therefore, it makes more sense that the more Chaplains (or simply HELPERS) present, the better the end result. And to that same point, the more Chaplains available, the stronger the Scouting Unit will be. Many other consequences also become available. If the Unit only has one Chaplain, then the Unit will not have a Chaplain going camping if he is ill. However, the opposite becomes a major benefit. And so, on the list continues. Like the position of Assistant Scout Master, the more Scouters assisting the Scoutmaster, the stronger the unit. So, while some of us believe strongly that a BSA Chaplain can help a unit, and the information seems to yield the obvious answer that while a Chaplain can help, the more Chaplains present the stronger the unit. We simply see that the numbers tell us that we have too few Chaplains that are registered and trained.

So, what is the BSA Chaplain's purpose? Well, they can provide training in areas of their specialty. They can provide support for all the team (youth and adults). However, a Chaplain is not limited to only those areas only and as a member of the Scouting Unit can see things from a broader viewpoint. This view could help those hard-working Scouters that are "trying to herd the cats."

I particularly like the paraphrased words of Rear Admiral Thorton Miller that said:

"A Chaplain was on the beach during D-day and shells were going off to the right and the left. One soldier was momentarily crouched behind shelter from gunfire and had the opportunity to talk to the Chaplain. He said, I saw you helping men all over the beach and you never stopped to ask them if they were a Christian, a Jew, a Catholic or anything. The Chaplain said, "If you're a Chaplain, then there is only one necessary question. And that question is, do you need help?"

With the BSA non-sectarian approach to faith, I see the BSA Chaplain's purpose as just that... Do you need help? And from my experience, it seems like everyone always needs help. In any event, the question of whether a BSA Chaplain can help a Scouting Unit is no longer the issue. The biggest issue becomes "How many units will have the presence of a BSA Chaplain. This is primarily because "a Ministry of Presence" as we say in the Protestant Faith is the first part of helping a Scouting Unit.

Appendix

Definitions

1. A Chaplain is an adult that has accepted the responsibilities to work with a faith group and assist each member to learn and grow within their faith and spiritual beliefs.
2. A BSA Chaplain is an adult position within BSA National to serve as a Chaplain to all youth and adults and is sincere about this task.
3. A Chaplain Aide is a youth position in the BSA Scouting Program that has the duties to encourage unit members to strengthen their own relationship with God.
4. An Interfaith Service is a brief opportunity to experience and participate in an uplifting or inspirational activity for all faiths present. All should be welcome, and the service should be sensitive and encouraging but is not meant to be restrictive or limiting to any specific faith. If only one faith is present, then the service may be as traditional for that faith as desired.
5. A Scout Own (or Scouts Own Service) was an activity primarily led by youth similar to an interfaith service but many of these were based on specific themes such as friendship or fairness. Today, the terms interfaith service or outdoor worship service are encouraged instead of the previous Scouts Own. It is not wrong to use that phrase now, but the Language of Scouting has previously encouraged the new terms and has now deleted the Scouts Own phrase.

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Acknowledgments

Obviously, I need to not only acknowledge and say thank you to all my Scouting friends, colleagues, and collaborators. Without a doubt, this would include my mentor for this work, Mr. David Ball. We first became involved as we started the Longhorn Council BSA Chaplain Training Course and it was clearly evident that both of us felt that our BSA Chaplain work was that important. However, I found out he was both a strong church member and we were both involved in Commissioner Service. I chose him for all of those reasons plus he completed his Doctorate in Commissioner Science just before me and I wanted his meticulous Mentorship. Thank you, Sir, for a job well done and for our friendship that evolved because of Scouting.

There are many other Scouters that helped so much along the way. Mr. Bill Harrison for both his help in both the Chaplain and Commissioner fields in Scouting. Lots of other leaders in the Roadrunner District also nudged me along, Mrs. Gloria Coyle, Mrs. Ping Mayo, Mrs. Denise Taylor and all of you were so kind to me.

My time with Troop 340 and Pack 320 (at FUMC Hurst) gave me my opportunities to become a COR, a Unit Chaplain, a District Member at large, Unit Commissioner, District Commissioner and now an Assistant District Commissioner and Assistant Council Commissioner. The Scouters from those units that were so helpful were Michael Ramsey, Toni Tharp, Kevin Johnson, and Brenda and Mike West. My friends and other members of First United Methodist Church of Hurst supported our units as well as encouraged me to become a Stephen Minister and that training as well as my training for BSA Chaplain will hopefully support many personnel in Care Receiver situations.

It is apparent that none of us become what we become without support of those around us and that includes my wife Barbara in our 50 plus years of marriage. There are no words that can adequately express my thanks for all of her support and love.

Saying thank you to people is so easy and never adequately does what is intended. It is probably not possible to adequately do what is intended. Nor can it ever be totally understood how much each of them gave to me. All a person can do is make sure that they hear the phrase thank you and hope that they understand a portion of my gratitude. Therefore, I will indeed say

Thank You to those listed above. But I must also say Thank You to those that helped and were not listed and Thank You to everyone for this great experience!

David Hammond