

Increasing Membership through Religious Emblems

The religious emblems programs have been part of Scouting's "Duty to God" for many years. Although the religious emblems have always been recognized in terms of "program," they have been overlooked in terms of "membership." The religious emblems programs can be used by local councils to increase membership in the following ways:

Chartered Organizations

- The religious emblems programs (the curriculum and recognition items) are created by the national religious organizations, not by the Boy Scouts of America. This allows councils to initiate dialogue with local congregations about one of their own resources designed to serve their youth.
- The religious emblems programs can help a congregation embrace Scouting not as an outside group that meets in its building, but as an integral part of their ministry with youth. Local congregations will not only be providing religious instruction through the religious emblems programs, but they will also be strengthening the spiritual component of the Scouting program.
- When a congregation embraces Scouting as ministry, it will be more inclined to offer all levels of Scouting. Although 62 percent of all units are chartered to religious institutions, and 55 percent of all youth belong to units chartered to religious institutions, only 8 percent of all chartered organizations offer all levels of Scouting. It would seem that current chartered organizations would be the biggest (and perhaps easiest) target to increase units.
- The religious recognitions programs can be presented not only as opportunities for religious education, but also for ministry and outreach. For example, a faith community that offers the God and Country Mentor program for parents is ministering to the whole family, not just to the child. And a faith community that offers a religious emblems class and publicizes it through the council newsletter might be reaching out to Scouts of the same faith who do not have membership in a religious institution but are interested in earning their religious emblem.

Diverse Membership

- The religious emblems programs can help councils reach diverse racial and ethnic groups and specific geographic areas or communities not being served by Scouting. The religious emblems programs provide an instant and visible connection between Scouting and a faith community.

Adult Leaders

- Adults active in a congregation may volunteer as counselors for the religious emblems programs because they see that as a direct extension of their congregation's ministry. The religious emblems programs may be their first exposure to the Scouting program.
- The continuity and tenure of adult leaders in religious institutions is greater than those in other areas.

Resources to Promote Religious Emblems

- Video "Promoting Duty to God (Religious Emblems)" – Available from your council library or download it from www.praypub.org or purchase it from P.R.A.Y.
- Duty to God brochure (SKU No. 512879) – Available from your local council (your council may order these brochures from BSA National Religious Relationships) or view it at www.scouting.org

Please duplicate.

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