

Faith-Based Initiative: Targeting the Faith Community



What is the Faith-Based Initiative?

The Faith-Based Initiative is a strategy for growth and retention. The Faith-Based Initiative is an approach to developing collaborative partnerships between local Girl Scout councils and congregations. The goal of the Faith-Based Initiative is to increase membership and build relationships. It expands religious recognitions, including My Promise, My Faith, beyond value-added program and leverages them as membership tools, reinforcing the work of the congregation. It also provides resources WHY councils should work with the faith community and HOW to approach them.

This overview of the *Faith-Based Initiative: Targeting the Faith Community* has been compiled by P.R.A.Y. as part of their mission to increase collaborations between local congregations and Girl Scout Councils. For more information, visit the P.R.A.Y. website at www.praypub.org/gsusu.

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Rationale & Benefits

Why Faith-Based Initiatives?

Because it works. It is all about relationships. It is not a quick fix or magical cure for membership growth. It is a strategy for collaboration based on mutual benefits and long-term relationships.

Rationale:

- Congregations are a good place to start new sustainable troops
- Faith-based troops with tenure have continuity in leadership and support from the congregation
- Girl Scout councils and faith-based organizations share similar goals, i.e. membership growth, retention, trained leadership, family engagement, high impact programming, and financial stability
- Collaborations between Girl Scout councils and faith-based organizations will not only benefit girls and young women, but will also benefit the organizations themselves

Rationale & Benefits

Benefits to Girls and Young Women

The most compelling reason for the Faith-Based Initiative is that girls and young women benefit. Young people are stronger when Girl Scouts and congregations intentionally work together. Both organizations possess unique resources in carrying out their work with children and youth. When a congregation and a council collaborate and share resources, young people and their families are served more effectively and efficiently. Both organizations, working together for youth, can reach objectives not attainable by either working alone.

Rationale & Benefits

Benefits to Congregations

Congregations benefit from hosting the Girl Scout program:

- Girl Scouting builds leaders of courage, confidence, and character
- Girl Scouting has high brand recognition to attract young families
- Girl Scouting provides outdoor resources
- Vetted and screened adult leaders receive leadership training
- The skills that girls and adults develop through Girl Scouting can be transferred to the congregation

Girl Scouting provides opportunities for youth ministry:

- Faith formation programs can be supported by the religious recognitions curriculum
- Potential for community outreach and advocacy (typically half of the girls in a troop are not active in a congregation)
- Potential to increase membership
- Not restricting God to services (worship can be the lecture hall, Girl Scouts can be the laboratory)
- Girl Scouting provides intergenerational ministry connecting girls with older adults
- Girl Scouting provides a service to the neighborhood and larger community through its many initiatives and emphasis on civic engagement and volunteerism

Rationale & Benefits

Benefits to Local Councils

Council membership growth:

- Families identify Girl Scouting as ministry; parents are looking for values and religious organizations share common goals
- Congregations can help the local council target diverse and underserved populations
- Adults volunteer to be leaders; they see it as a service to their congregation
- Potential for faith-based troops to have better member and leader retention
- Potential to increase financial support for Girl Scouting (larger pool of potential donors)

Congregations provide High Impact Program:

- Congregations provide To Serve God emphasis
- Congregations reinforce Girl Scout values
- Congregations deliver My Promise, My Faith
- Congregations offer Religious Recognitions workshops
- Congregations provide Girl Scout Sunday/Sabbath celebrations
- Facility cultivation outside of current resources

Networking

- Clergy for Interfaith or Religious Relationships Committees
- Chaplaincy programming for events or facilities
- Peer-to-Peer promotion of Girl Scouting

Faith-Based Programs

Girl Scouting Encourages Girls to Grow in their Faith

Faith-based programs encourage:

- Collaboration between Girl Scouts and Faith Communities
- Family engagement
- Civic engagement in the form of volunteerism and community service projects

Faith-based awards include:

- My Promise, My Faith Pin
 - Created by Girl Scouts
 - Included in each level of the Girl's Guide to Girl Scouting
 - Helps girls connect the Girl Scout Law to their faith
 - May be earned by all Girl Scouts
- Faith-specific Religious Recognitions
 - Created by national religious organizations
 - Are designed to help girls grow in their particular faith
 - Are taught by parents and religious leaders
 - Are listed in the [To Serve God](#) brochure
 - Offer unique opportunities for Girl Scout Councils to connect with Faith Communities
 - To identify where to find more information about specific faiths, visit the P.R.A.Y. [Search-By Faith tool](#).

Religious Recognitions

Religious Recognitions: The Bridge Connecting Girl Scouting and the Faith Community

The Religious Recognitions programs are developed by the national religious organizations to encourage their members to grow stronger in their faith. Girl Scouts has approved of these programs and allow the awards to be worn on the official uniforms, but the recognitions are created and administered by the various religious groups. Understanding this simple fact – Girl Scouts does not create the religious recognitions - is the key to leveraging the religious recognitions programs.

Religious recognitions provide congregations with an immediate connection. Here's a program for faith formation developed by their own national religious body or committee for use with their own youth members.

- Faith-based awards can be your “foot in the door” into congregations; a warm call

Religious recognitions not only help girls grow in faith, but they also help congregations reach out into the community. They provide a non-threatening way for congregations to invite nonmembers into their congregation. Religious recognitions also create opportunities for Girl Scout families to connect with members of the congregation and build personal friendships within the congregation.

For these reasons, religious recognitions can be seen as the bridge connecting Girl Scouting and the faith community. It is essential to have more than just a cursory understanding of religious recognitions in order for the Faith-Based Initiative to succeed.

Religious Recognitions

Know the Specifics

Since the religious recognitions programs are developed by each individual religious organization and not by Girl Scouts, this means each religious recognition program will be different from the rest of them. What you say about one program may not necessarily be true for the others. Before approaching any congregation, it is important to have a working knowledge of its faith-specific program.

It's important to do your homework. You can start by filling out a [religious emblems analysis sheet](#) found in the P.R.A.Y. online Resource Library.

Religious Emblems Analysis Worksheet	
Program Title:	_____
Religion:	_____
Age/Grade/Rank:	_____ _____
Eligibility:	_____ _____ _____
Books:	_____ _____ _____
Time Required:	_____ _____ _____
Program Features:	_____ _____ _____
Required Signature(s):	_____ _____
Web Page:	_____ _____
Local Contact Information:	_____ _____

Religious Recognitions

Faith-Based Programs Coordinator

It is not enough to know about religious recognitions and how to leverage them. The Girl Scout council must promote them. Local councils should consider utilizing a “Faith-based Programs Coordinator.” This volunteer would be responsible for promoting faith-based programs including religious recognitions.

- The “Faith-Based Programs Coordinator” will focus specifically on promoting the faith-based awards to volunteers. Council staff will be responsible for approaching the faith communities for formal agreements and partnerships.
- Find volunteers who are active in their religious communities. These volunteers will be responsible for promoting faith-based awards to the service unit, not teaching them (the awards will be taught through the faith communities, not by the volunteers).
- This position description is meant to be a tool for your council. It is provided as a sample. Please adapt it and make the changes appropriate for your specific council.

For more information please visit <https://www.praypub.org/faith-coordinator>

Do Your Homework

Selecting the Faith Group

Be strategic in selecting the religious institutions to approach.

There are several different approaches that Girl Scout councils can take in selecting the religious institutions with which to work. Councils may choose a combination of these approaches. Building a profile by zip code at thearda.com, councils may target:

- A single denomination, one that is prominent in the area, and contact its national and/or regional offices to start working with the local congregations;
- A specific geographic area, one that is strong in Girl Scouting and target the various religious organizations in that region;
- Clergy who are already very committed to Girl Scouting and work with their specific congregations;
- A community that is not being served by Girl Scouting and work with the religious institutions in that area.

There are several tools that can help in the selection process:

- Community Assessment - By reviewing (or conducting) a community assessment, local councils can identify the neighborhoods currently being served by Girl Scouting and where the religious institutions are located. A community profile may reveal some natural opportunities for partnerships.
- Profile of national denomination/religion – Becoming familiar with the national denominations - their structure and beliefs - and knowing how they relate to Girl Scouting and if they have common goals or even a national agreement with Girl Scouts of the USA can help the council determine which national organizations to target for partnerships.
- Profile of local religious institution – Becoming familiar with the facilities, programs, and memberships of local congregations can help councils determine which institutions to target.
- Ministerial associations, rabbinical groups, denominational clergy groups, ecumenical groups – Councils can introduce Girl Scouting to these groups by making a keynote presentation or hosting lunch at one of their meetings. A presentation made in this type of group setting is an excellent way to get a feel for which organizations are interested in working with the local Girl Scout council.

Regardless of the selection process, determining the reasons why specific organizations were chosen with specific goals and objectives to help the partnerships succeed.

Do Your Homework

Become familiar with the individual congregation

- Learn the terminology and specific language used in the targeted religion/denomination especially in addressing religious leaders (e.g. pastor, minister, priest, rabbi, elder, etc.) and in referring to the house of worship (e.g. church, synagogue, ward, congregation, etc.).
- Determine the best person to contact. Is it the clergy, president of the congregation, or the youth department? Finding the right person is critical.
- Read several of the most recent newsletters and talk to some of the members to become knowledgeable of the organization's activities and programs and to learn how the organization serves its membership and the community around it. This will help gain insight into where the opportunities for partnership exist.
- Find and develop "cultural informants"

Do Your Homework

Approaching the Faith Community

- Show congregations WHY they need Girl Scouting
- Start selling SOLUTIONS to congregations and their needs
- Show congregations how Girl Scouting can contribute to the congregation's membership growth, retention, leadership, and program
- Be prepared to respond to controversial issues
- Create a Faith-Based Initiative Questionnaire per prospect
- Create a detailed recruitment plan per prospect
- Be knowledgeable of the congregation and faith tradition.

What is your ask?

Articulate your goals. What are your designed outcomes?

- What do you want?
- What would be amazing?
- What would you settle for?

- Samples:
 - Forming a new troop
 - Teaching a religious recognitions class
 - Distributing lead generation info
 - Sending youth to camp
 - Celebrating Girl Scout Sunday/Sabbath/Jumu'ah
 - Providing meeting space for existing troops
 - Interfaith events that promote inclusion and diversity

Sustaining the Faith-Based Initiative

Sustainability

Sustainability is the goal. With sustainability comes long term growth through healthy programs and trained, committed troop leaders. Healthy programs exist within sponsoring organizations that view Girl Scouting as an integral component of their mission and vision, and in the case of faith-based organizations, the buy-in goes even deeper. Girl Scouting is seen as a youth and family “ministry”, not as an outside group that rents their facility once a week.

Sustainability requires:

- Improving relationships with existing congregations- this may require a re-visioning effort and a paradigm shift for many faith-based and community partners, who currently view their role as that of a provider of a meeting facility. The goal is to help them change from a sponsor mindset to an owner mindset...thus seeing Girl Scouting as an integral part of their vision for youth development and ministry.
- New Troop development - the opportunity to set the tone and expectation right from the very first meeting about the essence and values of the partnership.

Sustaining the Faith-Based Initiative

Treat your Faith-Based Organizations as you would a Major Donor

- The Faith-Based Initiative is not a quick fix
- The key to the success of the Faith-Based Initiative is long-term relationships
- Pay attention to your faith-based organizations
- Stop treating them as meeting places
- Treat them as partners in delivering a quality Girl Scouting experience
- Make your faith-based partners a priority
- Utilize Adult Religious Awards to recognize outstanding service by clergy and lay leaders.
- Invite clergy to a Clergy Appreciation breakfast or recognition events
- Send letters to clergy who have helped girls earn their religious recognitions

Measurement

If you want to make sure that something happens you need to make it a priority and agree on goals and how you are going to measure it.

- Number of visits to faith-based organizations
- Number of congregations offering religious recognitions classes
- Number of religious recognition recipients
- Number of Faith-Based Programs Coordinators

Expanding

- Peer to peer recruiting - ask clergy for help in contacting and presenting to other clergy
- Develop Interfaith or Religious Relationships Committees

National Interfaith Committee for Girl Scouting

Roster

The National Interfaith Committee for Girl Scouting is comprised of the chairpersons of the national religious committees and scouting associations that administer religious awards for their members who are Girl Scouts. These groups can serve as an invaluable resource in opening doors to the faith community for Girl Scout Councils.

African Methodist Episcopal Church
Anglican Scouting Committee
Association of African Methodist Episcopal Scouts (AAMES)
Association of Baptists for Scouting
Baha'i
Christian Methodist Episcopal Church
Christian Science
Church of the Nazarene
Community of Christ
Disciples of Christ (Scouting Association)
Eastern Orthodox Committee on Scouting
Friends Committee on Scouting
General Commission on United Methodist Men
Islamic Committee on Girl Scouting
Members of Churches of Christ for Scouting (MCCS)
National Association of Presbyterian Scouters
National Buddhist Committee on Scouting (NBCS)
National Catholic Committee for Girl Scouts and Camp Fire (NCCGSCF)
National Federation for Catholic Youth Ministry (NFCYM)
National Jewish Committee on Girl Scouting (NJCGS)
National Lutheran Association on Scouting (NLAS)
North American Hindu Association
Polish National Catholic Church
Programs of Religious Activities with Youth (P.R.A.Y.)
The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints
Unitarian Universalists Association
United Methodist Church Office of Civic Youth-Serving Agencies/Scouting
Unity Worldwide Ministries

About P.R.A.Y.

Programs of Religious Activities with Youth

Programs of Religious Activities with Youth (P.R.A.Y.) is a not-for-profit organization whose national board of directors includes representatives from Protestant and Independent Christian Churches and national youth agencies.

With the support of thousands of volunteers, P.R.A.Y. delivers the curriculum and recognition programs that fortifies a Girl Scout experience through education and reinforcement of the beliefs found in the Girl Scout Promise and Law.

P.R.A.Y. encourages collaborations between churches and youth agencies to benefit young people. Both organizations have unique resources in carrying out their work with children and youth, but when a congregation and a council work side-by-side sharing their resources, more young people can be served more effectively. Both organizations, working together for youth, can reach objectives not attainable by either working alone.

P.R.A.Y. offers webinars and training for council staff and volunteers to encourage collaborations with the faith community. Please contact P.R.A.Y. CEO Jason Noland for more information.

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