

Circle Ten WB 98 – Interfaith Service

Each Wood Badge course has two Interfaith services:

1. The first delivered by staff, in order to not only provide opportunities for Reverence but also to instruct the participants in how to deliver an Interfaith service.
2. The second is delivered by the participants, with coaching provided by the Course Chaplain.

This document includes all elements of the staff-delivered service for Circle Ten’s Wood Badge 98 course, at Philmont in August 2011.

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Introductory Instruction

Introduction to Reverence in Scouting

Good Morning !

My name is Jason Buffington and exactly one year ago, at WB 94, I was sitting where you are now.

Before we begin our Interfaith Worship Service, I'd like you to please open your program handouts and look on that first text on the left side of the first page – and follow along and I read these two letters from a Scoutmaster.

Letters from Scoutmaster

Imagine writing this letter:

Dear Mr. Jones.

I am sorry about your son Johnny's horrible allergic reactions to the peanut butter sandwiches that we serve on all of our campouts. I didn't ask the boys about their food allergies because I didn't want to offend or embarrass anyone.

Your Scoutmaster

How about writing this one:

Dear Scouts and families,

This is to inform you that effective immediately, we will no longer be serving any food on campouts.

While we have always enjoyed preparing and serving food with your sons each weekend, we recently discovered that one of the boys is a vegetarian. Since we are used to serving meat with most meals, we have decided it is easier to simply not serve any food over the campout weekend. Those boys who are interested in eating should bring their own food and eat privately within their own tents.

Your Scoutmaster

Of course the letters are made up, and the examples are extreme, but let's talk about them for just a minute.

- Most of us would never have to write the letter above, because we understand how important food allergies are. So, we are mindful of them before we serve food -- and we handle each boy's food requirements and preferences with sensitivity on an individual boy's basis.

- Most of us would not write this letter either, because we know that we cannot deny the boys food over a weekend. Instead, we might visit with the vegetarian Scout's parents to clearly understand their wishes, and then accommodate that boy. When we have boys who cannot eat pork or beef, we might prepare a vegetarian meal to cover all of those boys, and then later add chicken/turkey (or beef/pork) for the remainder of the boys, depending on the meal. But again, we would ask in advance and then accommodate each boy's needs by organizing the meal in such a way that everyone gets what they need.

The Jewish and Christian faiths summarize it in Deuteronomy 6:3, "Man does not live by bread alone".

Baden Powell on Reverence

Baden Powell in his book, *Scouting for Boys*, said "**A boy cannot become the man he is intended to be, without growing in his faith**". Let's talk about a few aspects of this:

- 1) That guidance from Baden Powell is why the Scout Law says that a Scout is "Reverent". And as a personal observation, have you ever noticed that when you get a list of things, you tend to mostly remember the ones at the front and the back?

In TV shows, the big stars always want their name at the beginning "Starring" or at the end "And". Of course, every part of Scout Law is important, but when the general public thinks about Boy Scouts, many of them first and foremost think about "Trustworthy". It happens that is on the front of the Scout Law. And what is on the back (last)? A Scout is Reverent. It's the "Boy Scouting Show" starring "Trustworthy" and ... and ... and ... and "Reverent".

So, Scouters – let's make sure that we keep Reverence in the show.

- 2) Baden Powell said that a boy needed to grow in their faith. "Their faith" – not yours. That is why "Interfaith Scouting" is so important. It's about creating a climate where the boy can grow in their own faith.

There are Scouting Units out there that are thought of as "closed" units, where their charter org or committee has designed the unit to be deliver a single-faith religious experience. Kids of other faiths are welcome to join, but they do so with the conscious choice that their personal beliefs may not be consistent with the religious elements of that Scouting program.

For the rest of us, part of our charter is to provide our Scouts with an intentional opportunity or mandate to grow in their faith, as they go through their Scouting Adventure.

BSA on Reverence

When I say it is part of our Charter to do that -- that is not a figure of speech.

The Boy Scouts of America national charter says:

Article IX, Clause 1 of the Charter of the Boy Scouts of America states:

The Boy Scouts of America maintains that no member can grow into the best kind of citizen without recognizing an obligation to God.

Cub Scouts, when they first start out, learn to promise:

I promise, to do my best ... to do my duty to God ! It isn't our job to convince them who God is, but to help them to do THEIR duty to THEIR understanding of God.

Boy Scouts have that same promise to God in their Oath, of course the Scout Law, as we mentioned already.

If you want more clarification how to interpret those promises, the Scouting.Org website has an explanation of "Reverence", which states:

In the first part of the Scout Oath or Promise the member declares, "On my honor I will do my best to do my duty to God and my country and to obey the Scout Law."

The recognition of God as the ruling and leading power in the universe and the grateful acknowledgment of His favors and blessings are necessary to the best type of citizenship and are wholesome precepts in the education of the growing members. No matter what the religious faith of the members may be, this fundamental need of good citizenship should be kept before them.

The Boy Scouts of America, therefore, recognizes the religious element in the training of the member, but it is absolutely nonsectarian in its attitude toward that religious training. Its policy is that the home and the organization or group with which the member is connected shall give definite attention to religious life.

In fact, you can't join the BSA without agreeing to this. The application form for youth and adults has that same passage we just read and adds:

Only persons willing to subscribe to these precepts of the Declaration of Religious Principle and to the Bylaws of the Boy Scouts of America shall be entitled to certificates of membership.

Scouters, brothers and sisters, most of us are used to public schools where religion is taboo. And at the risk of soapboxing, then they shouldn't wonder why they have issues of Character in school children. We, as Scouters, are in the business of building character, and according to the founder of our movement and the charter of the BSA, that requires each boy to recognize and nurture a relationship with their Deity.

How to Deliver an Interfaith Experience

What we call “Interfaith Worship”, Baden Powell called “Scouts’ Own”. Here is his guidance:

To interest the boys, the Scouts' Own [a worship service] must be a cheery and varied function. Short hymns (three verses are as a rule quite enough - never more than four); understandable prayers; a good address from a man who really understands boys (a homely "talk" rather than address) which grips the boys, and in which they may laugh or applaud as the spirit moves them, so that they have a real interest in what is said.

Let’s put that into practical terms that we can apply today:

- Choose a setting that promotes reverence – a grove of trees, a site with a view of a lake, pond, brook, etc. For small groups, sitting in a circle is effective.
- Everything in good taste. Those attending the service will be courteous, kind and reverent. They should respect the rights & feelings of others even if their beliefs and religious practices differ from their own.
- The service should be planned, timed and rehearsed. (generally 30 minutes).
- Everyone in attendance should have opportunities to participate, if they wish, through responsive readings, silent & group prayer, singing, etc.

With the structure defined – let’s talk about what “Interfaith” really means.

“Interfaith” does not mean “sanitized of any reference to any source of theology” – it is about Inclusiveness of multiple faiths, done in a respectful way that offends no one and enables each Scout to experience their own understanding of God.

- Me personally, I attend a relatively contemporary Baptist church in Lewisville, Texas. Certainly, I might enjoy a Scouting experience that uses nothing but a Baptists’ interpretation of a Christian Bible.
- There is a Troop forming in Coppell that has decided to be a non-denominational Christian-oriented Troop. By non-denominational, I mean that Baptists, Methodists or almost any Protestant or Christian would feel completely at ease with something like the “God & Me” or “God & Family” offerings that a youth can participate in. But that is not what we are talking about here.
- Broadening the scope of religious inclusion, I might offer a worship service from just the Old Testament of the Bible, and with some mindful respect of certain key phrases, I could include not only Christians but also my Jewish Scouting friends. But that also isn’t where most of us need to be.

The BSA charter says that we “ecumenical”, so you could almost say that the only religion that we don’t support is atheism. That isn’t entirely accurate, but the point is to plan a worship service that is:

(1) Inclusive of the faiths represented, not sanitized of them

- (2) To use wisdom from multiple doctrines – words, passages, and songs that allow each of us to have a personal dialog with our understanding of our Creator

That is what we are going to do this week:

This morning, I will be modeling for you an Interfaith Worship service – and hopefully providing you with an opportunity to commune with God in a way that is personally uplifting.

As with most things in Scouting and certainly this course, first you will have the chance to observe and then you will have the chance to apply it, in hopes of better equipping you to bring this back to your Scouts. So, later this week, some of you will have the opportunity to deliver another worship service.

In that frame of mind, let us turn our minds and hearts from instructional – to a spirit of worship and reverence.

An Example of an ‘Order of Service’

As is typical in many places of worship, let’s take a moment to stand up and shake the hands of a friend or two -- and then we will sing a song.

<Welcome>

Let’s remain standing, as we invite Sam Peterson to lead us in a song to help our hearts continue to move to a place of reverence.

<Song>

Thank you so much – please be seated.

For our next activity, I would like to invite four of my friends to help me.

Gary, Bobby,

We will now do a responsive reading, we will be using wisdom from a variety of faith traditions – each of them as a way to help us grow in our faith and apply our hearts to each of the aspects of the Scout Law.

After each passage, I would ask that you respond out loud with an affirmation of the Scout Law.

<Responsive Reading>

SERMON

Look around ... at Creation

Many people call this place Scouters' Paradise. Others call it God's Country. Certainly, many of us might agree with both of those sentiments.

This Place

When we want to introduce a sense of reverence in our Scouts (or our families), it often helps to put people in a setting that helps them imagine aspects of their God.

- Inside buildings, we might use a star, or a crescent, or a cross.
- We might add banners, or stained glass, or artwork that represents key stories or tenants of our faith.
- And then, a recognized leader within the organization would then stand up and lead the rest of the participants through a series of events that is somewhat typical for that particular institution.

Today will be a little different <grin>

- First and foremost, I am not a leader within your church, or synagogue, or mosque. In my own church, I am ordained, but as a servant – not as a pastor. In fact, my only suitability to be here today is that (1) I was here last year as a participant in WB94 – and (2) My God has put a passion in my heart for the Reverence that Scouting is supposed to offer and how I might hopefully help other Scouters fulfill that part of our mission as Scout leaders.
- We are not inside a building, nor do we have a shared star, or crescent, or cross. In fact, the only symbols that we share in regard to our faith are the Fleur-de-lis that represents the Scouting movement, and the purple knot that reminds us of the diversity of the Brotherhood of Scouting.
- But most notably, while we do not have banners or man-made artwork – look around !
 - Have you ever seen a stained glass window as beautiful as a Philmont sunset?
 - (NO) – looking for audience participation
 - Have you ever seen a religious painting that gave you the sense of awe from our Creator that those hills show?
 - (NO)

- As you imagine the tranquility of basking in the comfort of our Creator, draw from the quiet still of this **morning's breeze**, of the **warm glow** of the sun that is rising, in the **eyes of the deer** that walk freely throughout this camp.
 - (YES)
- THIS place surely is GOD's COUNTRY. It IS Scouters' PARADISE. This is a place that our Creator carved out for us to understand the power and the majesty and the peace of living within our God's will. And while we may not all have the same understanding of Deity, surely this is a place where each of us can recognize our Creator's hand and sovereignty.

PRAYER of Translation

- So, please take a moment of quiet – and open your heart and your mind to your God, in the hope that God will use my imperfect words to reveal our Creator's perfect wisdom.

Other Places

Of course, there are other places to hold a worship service besides Philmont. Like everything else at Wood Badge, the goal is not just to give you experiences that impact you this week, but also to equip you for when you return to your own part of the Scouting experience.

- You may not have an outdoor chapel at the base of Scouting Paradise, but ...
- You have your own campsites
- You have your charter org's building or other meeting place

The place is not as important as your intent to maximize its use to help your Scouts and Scouters to observe Reverence and recognize **their** creator in **their** lives. So, use what you've got. Today, I am going to use what I've got <grin> ... the nature in Scouting's Paradise.

Look around ... at the Plants

Months ago, when I first started praying about what I might offer you today, I thought a lot about the wide range of nature that we would see out here this week. In fact, as the week goes on, you will continue to see an ever growing variety within nature – and perhaps, you might think about our talk this morning.

Let's state the obvious first:

Flowers

- There is more than one kind of flower – and they are all beautiful.
- In fact, there are photographers among us who might spend an afternoon taking amazing pictures of a single bloom. I confess that I am more often even more impressed when I see fields covered in flowers like many of us enjoyed as we drove in over the weekend.
- Just as much, I always find myself staring when a vase or garden is artfully composed of a range of flowers whose colors seem to build on each other.

Trees

There is more than one kind of tree. Again, each is impressive on its own, but ...

- They are perhaps more impactful on our eye when we see them clustered in forests.
- They may be more appreciated when we sit beneath their shaded canopy that they offer collectively.
- Next week, I will be in Boston and folks there are starting to look forward to Fall, when the variety of trees is so easily discernible as their colors independently change with the season.
- And, of course, depending on the tree:
 - it may offer a home or a meal to animals,
 - it might provide a place for birds to rest along their journeys,
 - or it might be destined to be wood – for a beautiful podium that draws us together in Reverence or a campfire that draws us together in warmth and friendship.

Let's think about a single tree for a moment:

(1) Created by our Creator, with an intricacy that man can barely understand but cannot imitate. It is perfect in its lifecycle from (2) starting as a small seed, (3) slowly growing roots as its foundation and key to success, (4) reaching upwards as it grows and prospers, it thrives by receiving nutrients that it cannot

create for itself, (5) dropping its own seeds to multiply in a form similar to itself and (6) serving its greatest purpose when it is among others whether similar or varied.

I'm going to repeat that, so that you hopefully see where I am going:

- Created by a Supernatural Creator, with detail and perfect design that man cannot achieve
- Starts as a small seed and slowly grows roots that will be the foundation of its success
- Reaches upwards as it grows and prospers
- Thrives when it receives nutrients, and in most cases, the more nutrients, the better it thrives – often growing not just incrementally but exponentially as it is nurtured
- Multiplies by consistently reproducing itself
- Most effective when it is among others, whether nearly identical or greatly varied, as long as it is not alone

Are we really talking just about plants anymore?

Look around ... at us

This is what I hope you will take away from the message this morning – YOU ARE:

Created by a Creator

- You are supernaturally made – and your design is perfect:
 - Your lungs take in oxygen and release carbon dioxide, which not only works perfectly well for you, it is in perfect design and symbiosis with our plant friends who take in CO₂ and give back oxygen
 - You have amazing crafted engineering, including the neural pathways of your mind, the electrical conduit of your nervous system, and the superhighway of your heart and blood
- And you are beautiful, both in the eyes of your Creator, as well as those around you who love you.

How you grow

You Start Small and Grow Up from Your Roots

Your life started with our Creator's perfect design – as a tiny seed.

At first, you were weak and frail. You built a system of roots (a foundation) that was mostly a factor of your environment. For most of us, the better the environment, the better your roots grew. For most plants, your foundation is rooted in the soil (pun intended).

Some soil is rich and you almost can't help but get all that you need and want.

Some of you come from climates where you had to reach out on your own to get the nutrients that you needed. You've been on hard places that toughened you and you grew through it. Some plants are like that too. Their roots will extend further in one direction over another, if they gain better nutrients from a certain direction – or even perhaps nearby water.

Be careful that you don't find yourself in the wrong soil.

Did you know that **not all plants need soil**, per se. Most do, but of course, there are cactus that persevere on hard sand or clay. There are other plants, referred to as hydroponics, that actually live on/in water, with no solid foundation at all. If you put a plant used to hydroponics in the dirt, it won't thrive because it wasn't designed for that.

If we map that back to our conversation today on Interfaith Worship – we don't all have the same soil either. In our case, our heritage and environment have given us different perceptions of who or what our creator is.

Putting a Jewish Scouter in an evangelical Christian worship service will not enable that Jewish scout to thrive any more than putting a water-based plant in soil. It isn't the soil's fault that the plant cannot thrive there, but it is the planter's. Scouters – we are the planters, when it comes to Interfaith Worship within our units.

It's our job to make sure that we aren't asking a sand based plant to try to float in water, or a scout to be in a worship service that they not only won't thrive in but may actually cause confusion with their own spiritual development.

Regardless of what kind of soil that we are planted on, as long as we designed for it, then we will thrive at a certain pace. As we get more nutrients, we will thrive more.

That is why you are here this week – to get nutrients, so that you will thrive!

Brothers and Sisters in Scouting, that is what we are doing this morning. As part of our Worship Service today, we are reaching up to our fuel source, to our creator. And the more that we prosper and thrive, the more important that it is to continue reaching higher, both in **aspiration** and **appreciation**.

Sermon Wrap up

OK, let's wrap this up with a few suggestions for you to consider:

- 1) If you are an apple tree, don't try to make oranges. Be authentic in who you are; and help the best of what you are be amplified in others.
- 2) As great as it is to sit under apple tree and enjoy the shade, an apple tree isn't great because it offers shade. It's great because it makes apples. And the trees that are most appreciated are those that make the best apples – sometimes by quantity, sometimes by quality, preferably both.
- 3) Remember, if you were created as an apple tree, life is not about you growing higher, it's about you producing apples – some apples will be fuel for others, and some will become apple trees (leaders) like you some day.
- 4) You are better together. Like most flowers and trees, you are most effective when you are among others. It doesn't mean that we are all the same. Sometimes, a single red rose amongst white carnations is exactly what is needed. In other cases, an orchard of apple trees is better than just a few. Just know that we, like those plants, are designed to be part of something bigger.
- 5) Seek out nutrients. Sometimes, you will find yourself in a place where good stuff just keeps landing on you. Bask in it. Take advantage of it. Thrive while you can. In other times, nutrients may seem sparse, so be intentional in stretching out your roots, and reach for what you need.
- 6) As you thrive, reach up! Just like we are doing today – and we will do again as a Troop on Saturday. Do Not Forget that your source of fuel is your creator (not just the environment around you or your own efforts).

This is why you are here in Scouting – to be a tree that produces great fruit.

That is why you are here at Philmont – to gain new nutrients.

That is why you are here in this service – to reach up

And the expected response from all of this is for you to thrive, not just for yourself but in what you will do with it when you return home.

SERVICE wrap-up

Our time today is almost over. And we have the last page of your program to do.

Offering

First, as is common in many faith traditions, we will take up an offering. May I please ask that my friends pass a hat amongst the pews. And if you are so inclined and have your wallet with you, consider giving to the Wood Badge Scholarship fund, as another way that you can help grow more leaders.

Thanks

Baden-Powell also wrote that we should give Thanks. In your program he stated:

Lord Baden-Powell wrote: "First love and serve God, second love and serve your neighbor. In doing your duty to God, always be grateful to Him. Whenever you enjoy a pleasure or a good game, or succeed in doing a good thing, thank Him for it, if only a word or two."

So, where you are, you can stand, sit, kneel or however you would like to be in your own commune with God. We will take about one minute to pause for a time of silent, personal meditation.

<Personal Prayers>

We are now going to invite Sam back up to lead us in singing our last song. But please, do not switch your brain and your heart from pray mode to singing mode. As our final song, since we are the Boy Scouts of America, let's sing "God Bless America".

But may I ask that instead of singing it as just a song of patriotism, let's slow it down just a little bit and with our hearts still in their spirit of reverence, sing it as a Prayer this morning.

<song>

God (please) bless America - land that I love.
(please) stand beside her – and guide her
Through the night, with a light, from above.
From (these) Mountains, to (those) prairies
To the Oceans, white with foam
God (please) bless America – (our) home sweet home.
God (please) bless America – (our) home sweet home.

In keeping with that spirit, let me offer our closing.

<Benediction>

Oh Lord, thank you for the wondrous opportunities of today and this week.

We thank you for the efforts of those thousands of men and women who have brought Scouting to millions of youth around the world, including many of us during our earlier days. We rededicate ourselves to the principles of our Movement -- to do our best -- to do our duty to you, God -- and to our Country.

This week, we thank you for this Wood Badge course. Please give us the energy and wisdom to enjoy each moment, and the courage to push ourselves further than we ever have before – burning these memories and these lessons into our hearts forever.

Please bless all of the members of our troop and its leaders as we continue our journey through Scouting. Amen

With that, our Worship Service is concluded and I turn the day back over to our SPL.

Podium Notes

Intro & Letters

Baden-Powell – A boy cannot become ...

- TV Lists
- They grow in THEIR faith, not yours

BSA

- Charter
- Cub/Boy Promise
- Membership Card

Interfaith Worship Service

- Baden Powell “Scouts’ Own”
- Inclusive; not sanitized
- Use multiple sources of wisdom (respectful, enable individual commune)
- We will model today ; you will do on Saturday

This Place

- Buildings ... Symbols ... Banners ... Leader
- I am not
- We don’t have those buildings today
- Our Symbols – Fleur-de-lis ... Brotherhood-knot
- Have you seen : stained glass, compared with a Philmont Sunset
- Bask in today
- Prayer – Open your heart ... imperfect words ... perfect wisdom

- Other Places ... use what you've got

Prayed a lot about what I would offer you today ... Lets start with obvious

Look around – Plants

- More than One kind of flower
- Photographers of a single blossom ... whole fields ... an artful vase

Look around – Trees

- More than one, impressive on their own, but:
- More impactful in forests
- Appreciated underneath ... Fall
- Depending on the tree
 - May offer home or a meal to animals
 - May provide a place for birds on a journey
 - Might be wood ... for a podium (reverence) ... campfire (friendship)

Look at a single tree

- Created by a Supernatural Creator
- Starts as a small seed
- Reaches upwards as it grows and prospers
- Thrives when it receives nutrients
- Multiplies by consistently reproducing itself
- Most effective when it is among others

Wrap-up

1. If you are an apple tree, don't try to make oranges. Be authentic in who you are; and help the best of what you are be amplified in others.
2. As great as it is to sit under apple tree and enjoy the shade, an apple tree isn't great because it offers shade. It's great because it makes apples. And the trees that are most appreciated are those that make the best apples – sometimes by quantity, sometimes by quality, preferably both.
3. Remember, if you were created as an apple tree, life is not about you growing higher, it's about you producing apples – some apples will be fuel for others, and some will become apple trees (leaders) like you some day.
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6. As you thrive, don't forget to reach up! Just like we are doing today – and we will do again as a Troop on Saturday. Do Not Forget that your source of fuel is your creator (not just the environment around you or your own efforts).

CLOSING SERVICE

Service Team

Sermon, Opening and Closing	Jason
Song Leader	Sam
Responsive Reading (4)	Gary, Bobby, Jim, Joe
Offering (2)	Mike & Donna