
INTERFAITH SERVICES

With resources, outlines, and suggestions covering both
Abrahamic and non-Abrahamic religions.



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Words from the Founder



“For an open Troop, or for Troops in camp, I think the Scouts' Own should be open to all [faiths], 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. Everything likely to make an artificial atmosphere should be avoided. We do not want a kind of imposed Church parade, but a voluntary uplifting of their hearts by the boys in thanksgiving for the joys of life, and a desire on their part to seek inspiration and strength for greater love and service for others.

“A Scouts' Own should have as big an effect on the boys as any service in church, if in conducting the Scouts' Own we remember that boys are not grown men, and if we go by the pace of the youngest and most uneducated of those present. Boredom is not reverence, nor will it breed religion.

“To interest the boys, the Scout's Own must be a cheery and varied function. Short hymns (three verses are as a rule quite enough-never four); understandable prayers; a good address from a man who really understands boys (a homily "talk" rather than an address), which grips the boys, and in which they may laugh or applaud as the spirit moves them, so that they take a real interest in what is said. If a man cannot make his point to keen boys in ten minutes he ought to be shot! If he has not got them keen, it would be better not to hold a Scouts' Own at all.”

-Lord Robert Baden-Powell

Founder of Scouting

Notes on the Material

Robert Baden-Powell regularly invited Scouts from all over the world to participate in his “Scouts’ Own” services, and the services that he lead regularly had readings from the Quran, Hebrew Testament, and the Christian Gospels at the same time.

The material compiled herein contains some of the most effective, moving, and inclusive material that we have seen including in an Interfaith Service over many years. It is a great place to start building your own Interfaith Service, and can get you through running many. However, it is not the ending point for effective service development. Your unit, specifically your *Chaplain* and *Chaplain’s Aide*, are encouraged to add material as you wish.

Before adding your own items, however, consider the following question: **Will a Scout who is not from your religion feel welcomed by this?** Think carefully about what you present, because we are bound by our Oath and Law to be respectful to the religions of every Scout who comes to us.

We encourage following the outline detailed on the next page. It keeps the service fresh, timely, and structured. Remember that the best creativity can arise when limits are put upon it.

The Outline

Some of the most effective Interfaith Services we've seen can be divided into nine ordered parts. These can be planned together or separately, and each assigned to a different presenter or all to one. They are:

- 1) Call to Worship
- 2) Opening Song
- 3) Prayer
- 4) Responsive Reading
- 5) Prayer
- 6) Scoutmaster's Minute
- 7) Silent Prayer
- 8) Closing Song
- 9) Benediction

The purpose of each will be explained more in its section in this resource booklet. Some popular variations include:

- The addition of another song between the second prayer and the Scoutmaster's minute
- A donation offering to the World Fellowship Fund (really only useful for adult-centric services) immediately after the Scoutmaster's Minute.

Preparing an Interfaith Service

The Chaplain or Chaplain's Aide should prepare an interfaith service before the event in question, so that they may compile all the materials into a printable handout. This allows participants to sing the songs, and respond to the readings.

They should choose one item for each of the nine ordered parts in the outline, and print that information in the handout (except, often, the Scoutmaster's Minute, which usually is long and would take up a lot of space). This can be as simple as a word document printed and copied, or a folded brochure.

[1] Call to Worship

"The secret of getting ahead is getting started" – Mark Twain

The call to worship is a short, simple statement, usually read solo by the presenter. The purpose of the call to worship is to announce to the assembly that the Interfaith Service has begun and get the assembly in the right frame of reference to begin.

Examples:

PSALM 100

Make a joyful noise to the Lord, all the lands!
Serve the Lord with gladness!
Come into his presence with singing!
Know that the Lord is God!
It is he who made us, and we are his!
We are his people and the sheep of his pasture.
Enter into his gates with thanksgiving, and his courts with praise!
Give thanks to him; bless his name!
For the Lord is good;
His steadfast love endures forever,
and his faithfulness to all generations.

Worship in Beauty

O Lord, our Heavenly father, we lift our hearts to thee at the beginning of this new day. We come to this time and place of worship with thy beauty all about us; in the sky, in the trees, in the earth, and in all thy creation. We praise thee, and come to worship thee. Blessed art thou, O Lord our God, who gives us each new day. Amen.

From the Baha'i Writings

Blessed is the spot, and the house, and the place, and the city, and the heart, and the mountain, and the refuge, and the cave, and the valley, and the land, and the sea, and the island, and the meadow where mention of God hath been made and His praise glorified.

American Indian Call to Worship

O Great Spirit! Watch over us as we begin this day. Protect us as we live in your care. Give us bounty and hold us from harm. We are your children and wish only to please you. We hold our Mother Earth close to our hearts and wish her goodness. We thank You for your love.

Psalms 133:1

Behold, how good and how pleasant it is
For brethren to dwell together in unity.

From Voltaire:

God is a circle whose center is everywhere
and circumference nowhere.

From the Buddha:

Just as a candle cannot burn without fire,
Men cannot live without a spiritual life.

[2] Opening Song

"He who sings,' said St. Augustine, 'prays twice.'"

The opening song immediately involves the audience in the service. This should be upbeat and easy to follow for all assembled.

Examples

God Bless America (Irving Berlin)

God Bless America, land that I love
Stand beside her, and guide her,
Through the night with the light from above,
From the mountains, to the prairies,
To the ocean, white with foam,
God bless America, my home sweet home.
God bless America, my home sweet home.

Kum Ba Ya (Traditional)

Kum ba ya, My Lord, Kum ba ya.
Kum ba ya, My Lord, Kum ba ya.
Kum ba ya, My Lord, Kum ba ya.
Oh Lord, Kum ba ya.

Some one's crying Lord, Kum ba ya. (x3)
Some one's laughing Lord, Kum ba ya. (x3)
Some one's shouting Lord, Kum ba ya. (x3)
Some one's praying Lord, Kum ba ya. (x3)

Michael Row Your Boat Ashore (Traditional)

Michael row the boat ashore, Alleluia (x2)
Sister help to trim the sail, Alleluia (x2)
Jordan's river is chilly and cold, Alleluia
Chills the body, but not the soul, Alleluia
Jordan's river is deep and wide, Alleluia
Milk and honey on the other side, Alleluia

America the Beautiful (Katharine Bates and Samuel Ward)

O beautiful for spacious skies
For amber waves of grain,
For purple mountain majesties
Above the fruited plain
America! America!
God shed his grace on thee,
And crown thy good with brotherhood

from sea to shining sea!
O beautiful for patriot dream
That sees beyond the years
Thine alabaster cities gleam,
Undimmed by human tears!
America! America!
God shed His grace on thee,
And crown thy good with brotherhood
from sea to shining sea!

You are My Sunshine (Jimmie Davis and Charles Mitchell)

Chorus:

You are my sunshine, my only sunshine,
You make me happy when skies are grey.
You'll never know, dear,
How much I love you.
Please don't take my sunshine away.

The other night dear, as I lay sleeping
I dreamt I held you in my arms.
When I awoke, dear, I was mistaken
And I hung my head and cried

Chorus

Swing Low, Sweet Chariot (Wallace Willis)

Swing low, sweet chariot,
Coming for to carry me home,
Swing low, sweet chariot,
Coming for to carry me home,

I looked over Jordan and what did I see,
Comin' for to carry me home,
A band of angels comin' after me,
Comin' for to carry me home

This Land is Your Land (Woodie Guthrie)

This land is your land, this land is my land
From California to the New York island
From the redwood forest to the gulfstream waters
This land was made for you and me.

As I went walking that ribbon of highway
I saw above me that endless skyway
I saw below me that golden valley
This land was made for you and me

I roamed and rambled and I followed my footsteps
To the sparkling sands of her diamond deserts
While all around me a voice was sounding
Saying this land was made for you and me

Do Lord (Traditional)

Chorus:

Do Lord, Oh do Lord, Oh do remember me.
Do Lord, Oh do Lord, Oh do remember me.
Do Lord, Oh do Lord, Oh do remember me.
Way beyond the blue.

I've got a home in a glory land that outshines the sun,
I've got a home in a glory land that outshines the sun,
I've got a home in a glory land that outshines the sun,
Way beyond the blue

Chorus

I've got a home in a great new land that outshines the sun,
I've got a home in a great new land that outshines the sun,
I've got a home in a great new land that outshines the sun,
Way beyond the blue.

Chorus

Morning has Broken (Eleanor Farjeon, As sung by Yusuf (Cat Stevens))

Morning has broken, like the first morning,
Blackbird has spoken, like the first bird.
Praise for the singing, praise for the morning.
Praise for the springing fresh from the world.

Sweet the rain's new fall, sunlit from heaven.
Life the first dewfall, on the first grass.
Praise for the sweetness of the wet garden.
Sprung in completeness where His feet pass.

Mine is the sunlight, mine is the morning.
Born of the one light, Eden saw play.
Praise with elation, praise every morning,
God's recreation of the new day.

[3] Prayer

"Prayer is the key of the morning and the bolt of the evening." –Gandhi

Prayers can take many forms, and should be drawn from many religions – even those not represented in the assembly. Most are read by a single presenter, or by the assembly in unison. They should have simple and uplifting messages related to Scouting, the outdoors, and the quest for character improvement.

Examples

Scout's Prayer

We have hiked along life's pathway, Our packs upon
our backs,
We have pitched our tents and rested, Here and
there along the tracks.
We have used our compass wisely, To guide us on
our way
And hope to reach the campsite, Of our Great Chief
Scout some day.
We have tried to be trustworthy -, Kept our honor
high and clean,
We have been as loyal as any To our homeland and
Country.
We have done our best at all times - Kept our
Promise - been prepared,
And hope our good deeds please Him, When at last
our souls are bared.
We have lightened others' burdens, With our smiles
along the way,
We have kept our hand in God's hand, Walked
beside Him day by day.
And when our span of life runs out, We'll make this
gentle plea -
May we sit around His Campfire at the Final
Jamboree.

Prayer of a Cheerful Servant

Lord, give me the strength to be unselfish
In service and devoted to the welfare of others,
Help me do my best to do my duty to you and our
country
And let me follow your example to be helpful to
others
Cheerful in service, kind to all, and to do in this
world, those
Thanks which will bring me to you in the next.
Amen.

Prayer Composed by Chief Yellow Lark, a Blackfoot Indian

Oh, Great Spirit, whose voice I hear in the winds and
whose breath gives life to all the world, hear me
I come before you, one of your many children. I am
weak and small. I need your strength and wisdom.
Let me walk in beauty and make my eyes ever
behold the red and purple sunset; my ears sharp so I
may hear your voice.
Make me wise, so I may learn the things you have
taught my people, the lessons you have hidden
under every rock and leaf. I seek strength, not to be
superior to my brothers, but to be able to fight my
greatest enemy--myself.
Make me ever ready to come to you with clean
hands and straight eyes, so whenever life fades, like
the fading sunset, my spirit will come to you without
shame.

A Navajo Prayer

Before me peaceful
Behind me peaceful
Under me peaceful
Over me peaceful
Around me peaceful

A Christian Prayer

Great Spirit, who has blessed the Earth that it
should be fruitful and bring forth whatsoever is
needful for the life of man, and hast commanded us
to work with quietness and eat our own bread;
Bless the labors of those who till the fields and
grant such seasonable weather that we may gather
in the fruits of the earth.

-Adapted from The Book of Common Prayer

A Jewish Prayer

God of the World, I stand before you and before my neighbors - pardoning, forgiving, struggling to be open to all who have hurt and angered me. Be this hurt of body or soul, of honor or property, whether they were forced to hurt me or did so willingly, whether by accident or intent, whether by word or deed

I forgive them because we are human...I am ready to take upon myself the commandment, Love your neighbor as yourself.

-Levi Yitchak of Beditschev

Sanskrit proverb

Look to this day,
For it is life,
The very life of life.
In its brief course lies all
The realities and verities of existence,
The bliss of growth,
The splendor of action,
The glory of power.
For yesterday is but a dream,
And tomorrow is only a vision.
But today, well lived,
Makes every yesterday
A dream of happiness
And every tomorrow
A vision of hope.
Look well, therefore,
To this day

A Buddhist Prayer

May all beings have happiness and the causes of happiness;

this is immeasurable loving kindness;

May all things be liberated from suffering and the causes of suffering;

this is immeasurable compassion;

May all beings be free of suffering and always stay happy;

this is immeasurable joy;

May all things be free of grasping and aversion toward others, and develop faith in

the equality of all beings;

this is immeasurable equanimity.

-The Four Immeasurable Vows, Tantric Buddhism

A Muslim Prayer

Let the beauty we love be what we do. There are a hundred ways to kneel and kiss the ground.

-Rumi, a 7th century Sufi mystic

The Voice (Shel Silverstein)

There is a voice inside of you

That whispers all day long,

"I feel this is right for me,

I know that this is wrong."

No teacher, preacher, parent, friend

Or wise man can decide

What's right for you--just listen to

The voice that speaks inside.

[4] Responsive Reading

A responsive reading involves audience participation. Usually the presenter reads a sentence, and the audience responds with a prescribed response in unison. Only one is presented here due to their length. In this example, the assembly reads the words in bold.

A true and worthy person recognizes his obligations and does them without being watched or compelled.

A SCOUT IS TRUSTWORTHY.

We owe much to many - to home, school, community, nation, and to God.

A SCOUT IS LOYAL.

The good Samaritan showed the spirit of doing a Good Turn.

A SCOUT IS HELPFUL.

Courtesy is the mark of all faiths. It is shown in thoughtful acts and kindly respect for everyone.

A SCOUT IS COURTEOUS.

Kindliness is the way people show respect for others.

A SCOUT IS KIND.

Life is filled with things that we must do whether we like them or not. One of the marks of growing up is our readiness to accept responsibilities willingly.

A SCOUT IS OBEDIENT.

Our moods make our days. If we are grouchy, our day is gloomy. If we are happy, our day is always happier.

A SCOUT IS CHEERFUL.

The world offers many gifts. a wise person uses them with care.

A SCOUT IS THRIFTY.

To each of us comes danger, difficult tasks, and temptations. In choice of courage or cowardice, may we be brave.

A SCOUT IS BRAVE.

Cleanliness is next to Godliness. To have a clean body, a clean mind, and a clean record is a rewarding achievement.

A SCOUT IS CLEAN.

Character is determined by the things we worship. If we respect ourselves and our brothers and sisters, and see them as gifts of the goodness of God, we live on a high plane.

A SCOUT IS REVERENT.

[5] Prayer

This is a great opportunity to have someone other than the Leader speak and read a prayer.

Examples

See the example prayers in section [3]

[6] Scoutmaster's Minute

"I am indebted to my father for living, but to my teacher for living well."

-Alexander the Great

This is the time for a longer reading from the Scoutmaster, Chaplain, or other adult role. Good resources for this come from books like *Leading Lives that Matter* (Schwehn and Bass), *It was on Fire when I Lay Down on it* (Fulghum), and *The Heavenly Village* (Rylant) to name just a few. The leader should have a reading prepared before the event, and shouldn't "improvise" on this point.

[7] Silent Prayer

"Silence is a source of Great Strength." – Lao Tzu

The presider reads: "And now we will take a moment for silent prayer, each in your own way."

Then waits at least one minute (it will feel like an eternity – use a stopwatch if you have to) to allow everyone to worship in their own way.

[8] Closing Song

Much like the opening song, this closes the event and gets all of the assembly participating in the service. This should still be upbeat.

Examples

See the examples in section [2].

Benediction

Endings are beginnings, and beginnings are ours to turn into something good.

- Elizabeth Chandler

This is a simple message to close the service with. Once it is completed, the Interfaith Service is concluded.

Examples

May we all remain fast and firm in faith
that the glory of glories may rest upon us.
Thou art Gracious, the Bountiful, the Merciful, and
the Compassionate.

-From the Bahai faith, Abdul Bahai.

The Lord bless you and keep you,
The Lord make His face to shine upon you, And give
you peace.

-Traditional

For what we are about to do, may the Lord make us
truly responsible.

For what we are about to think, may the Lord make
us truly wise.

For what we are about to say, may the Lord make us
truly sensible.

For what we are trying to achieve, may the Lord
accept and bless our efforts.

May the Lord watch between thee, and me
While we are absent from one another.

-The Mizpah

May you walk in Peace,
Live with Love,
work with Joy,
and May Your God go with you.

May the road rise to meet you,
May the wind always be at your back,
May the sun shine warm upon your face,
The rain fall soft upon your friends,
And until we meet again,
May God hold you in the palm of His hand.

May the great master of all Scouts be with us until
we meet again



A Scout is a "friend of all the world" and "a brother to every other Scout." "The way to have a friend is to be one."