

SCOUTING MINISTRY:
SIMPLE, INCARNATIONAL, AND MISSIONAL

Effective churches exhibit the following characteristics: (1) they are “simple” in how they approach ministry, (2) they are “incarnational” in how they do ministry, and (3) they are “missional” in how they view ministry. Scouting in a Baptist church should be tailored to fall in line with each of these aspects of effective ministry.

The first step is to view Scouting, whether that involves Cub Scouts, Boy Scouts, Venturing Crews, or American Heritage Girls, as a ministry of the church to the community. These are not merely programs. Nor are they local civic organizations borrowing space from the church. They are ministries of the church in their own right. They should be given equal billing and equal treatment with every other ministry of the local church in calendaring, use of facilities, and linkage to the church’s website and/or newsletter. Church leadership should be obvious in the Scout units and in setting standards for Scout leader recruitment, training, and retention, just as in any other ministry of the church. Beyond that, though, Scouting must be made to align with the mission of the church and its other ministries (i.e., it should be “simple”), it should make the church’s presence in the community something that is vibrant through service (it should be “incarnational”), and it should have as its goal reaching youth and their families with the Gospel (it should be “missional”).¹

Scouting Ministry Made Simple

- **Clarify the role Scouting will play in your church’s overall ministry.** Scouting is an excellent form of outreach for making first contact with unchurched families. In this sense it is an excellent evangelistic tool. Scouting also provides young people and adults opportunities to give back to the local community through service projects, and so it is also an excellent tool for developing and providing social ministries through the church.
- **Position Scouting events and activities in the church’s calendar for maximal opportunity, exposure, and effectiveness.** Set Scout unit meetings times on the church calendar and keep the church informed about Scout happenings and needs. Begin working with the unit chaplain/chaplain aid no later than mid-summer to plan the annual Scout Sunday service. Offer P.R.A.Y. courses through your children and youth small group/Sunday School programs annually or biannually on a set basis.
- **Synchronize Scouting with other aspects of your children and youth ministries as well as your ministry to families.** Watch for scheduling conflicts between church camps and Scout camps. Coordinate RA or other children’s campouts with Cub Scout campouts to maximize resources and minimize conflicts. Make Scouting a part of the natural flow of opportunities for families in your church.

¹These concepts are adapted from Rainer and Geiger, *Simple Church*, and Stetzer, “Toward a Missional Convention,” in *Southern Baptist Identity*, David S. Dockery, ed.

- **Keep Scouting in your church focused on the aims of Scouting *and* the mission your church.** Remember, the Scout unit belongs to your church, not the Scout leaders. Your church, through the Chartered Organization Representative (COR), is responsible for setting the agenda for Scouting as a part of your church's overall ministry. The aims of Scouting are (1) *character development*, (2) *citizenship training*, and (3) *mental and physical fitness*.² While your church can play a role in each of these three areas, your church's mission will most likely bring you into the role of character development. Character development involves both spiritual and moral foundations as well as leadership development for both youth and adults.

Scouting Ministry Made Incarnational

- **Connect with the community you serve through Scouting.** As the United States becomes increasingly secular there is a tendency for churches to retreat into their own subculture. Scouting gives your church a way to break out of that subculture through its outdoor activities, community involvement, and positive name recognition. Make sure your church's name appears on unit flags and class B T-shirts, and provide clearly visible and attractive signs and meeting facilities for your Scout units.
- **Minister to the community you serve through Scouting.** Scouting focuses on community service, on giving back to the community through projects and "good turns". Make sure your Scout units demonstrate intentional service in your community through participation in Scouting for Food as well as other, unit organized and church approved local service projects that are carried out in the names of Scouting and your church. Involve members of your church alongside the Scouts and their parents in completing service projects.
- **Reflect the values of your church through Scouting in the community you serve.** Be sure that your Scout leaders as well as your Scouts live by the Oath and Law, and that they pledge to conduct themselves in a way that will always reflect positively on your church. Scout leaders need to be onboard with and share the moral and ethical values of your church.
- **Make a positive impact in the community you serve through Scouting.** Scouting should always reflect positively on your church. This means that Scout and Scouter behavior in public, and especially when in uniform, should represent the positive values of your congregation as well as the Scout Oath and Law. Service projects should be selected and carried out with a view to making a positive impact and creating a positive public perception of both Scouting and your church.

²*The Scoutmaster Handbook* (Irving, TX: Boy Scouts of America, 2004), 7.

Scouting Made Missional

- **Keep Scouting a ministry of the church.** Be sure your Scout leaders know your church's mission, for the Scout unit is chartered to the church, in part, to help the church fulfill its mission. Unit leadership selection is the responsibility, ultimately, of the church. This is done through the Charter Organization Representative and the unit committee. The COR and the committee need to understand clearly the church's ownership of the unit(s). The church has every right to set its own standards for leader selection in addition to (but not contrary to) BSA or AHG guidelines.
- **Treat Scout families like members of your church.** Get to know the Scouts and their parents. Attend significant Scouting events like pack meetings, Blue and Gold, and courts of honor. Support your Scout families with prayer, visits, and ministry to their temporal and spiritual needs as opportunities present themselves.
- **Offer P.R.A.Y. courses for completion of Duty to God rank requirements.** This is the easiest way to engage Scout families with the Gospel. The P.R.A.Y. courses are age specific, recognized by BSA for completion of duty to God requirements for rank advancement, and Gospel focused at each level. Scouts should be encouraged to take these classes, and the classes should be taught by adults in your church who can connect well with the Scouts and their parents. Members of the pastoral staff should conduct an exit interview with each Scout upon the completion of a P.R.A.Y. course.
- **Involve Scouts in mission projects and ministries of the church.** Scouting can easily be coupled with children's and youth's mission ministries in your church. Joint camping events between your missions groups and your Scouts make wonderful opportunities to "cross-pollinate" the two groups. If your church's youth group is taking a mission trip, invite the Scouts to come along. They can complete needed service hours while on the trip and see what Christian missions is all about. The World Scouting Movement exists in almost every country on the globe. Boy Scouts and Venturing Crews can take international trips as Scouts, and mission service projects can be carried out in foreign countries in conjunction with such trips as part of a Scout's duty to God.