



Scouting in a Multifaith Society

One important principle in Scouting's program is developing **A Spiritual Dimension** — a commitment to seek the spiritual value of life beyond the material world. If we look in a dictionary, Religion is defined as: "a belief in or worship of God or gods." Spiritual is defined as: "of or having to do with the spirit as distinct from material things". Think of it as the essence of one's being. It is what we are, what we do and say. Baden-Powell understood it as "one of the qualities making people of good character and outstanding citizenship." Each section explores spirituality a little deeper.

Spiritual Resources

A commitment to seek spiritual value of life beyond the material world in a multi-faith society is challenging, but at the same time exciting for one and all.

There are twelve major world religions and within those faith communities, there are many subsets. For ex-

ample, the Christian church has forty or more denominations according to The Ontario Multifaith Council on Spiritual and Religious Care. Bahai, Buddhism, Christianity, Hinduism, Islam, Jainism, Judaism, Native Spirituality, and Sikhism make up some of the major world religions. Many of our youth and adult members come from the above religious groups and others profess spirituality without a deity that is formalized and structured.

Many resources exist in order to deliver the spiritual component of Scouting. The Religion-in-Life Award is developed by each faith community and is available on the Scouts Canada website www.scouts.ca (go to About Us, Our Partners and click on the Religion-in-Life button).

Other resources are available through organizations on the Internet such as:

- Interfaith Youth Core www.ifyc.org;
- United Religions Initiative (URI Kids World Religions) www.uri.org;
- Scarboro Missions' Golden Rule Interfaith section www.scarboromissions.ca/Interfaith_dialogue/index.php;
- World Scout Bureau www.scout.org (Spirituality)
- North American Interfaith Network (NAIN) <http://www.nain.org/>.

One of the fundamental convictions of the Scout Movement is that spiritual development should bring people together in fellowship instead of separating or bringing them into conflict. Since modern societies are those which thrive on communication and exchange and comprise a multiplicity of cultures and faiths, it is essential to prepare young people for such diversity. Scouting provides a safe environment for youth to overcome prejudices and develop open-mindedness and respect for faiths which are different from their own, whilst being able to express their personal convictions without aggressiveness.

The Water Cooler

One day while chatting at the water cooler, a colleague asked, "Have you heard the difference between religion and spirituality?"

"No. Tell me." I responded.

"Religion is a guy in church thinking about fishing. Spirituality is a guy out fishing thinking about God."

What a great way to communicate what true worship is. True worship is not going to church and getting worship points. It is thinking about God in relation to everything else. Worship is not what you do once a week, but what goes on in your head and your heart all the time.

What a perfect way to think about it. X

– *This article was compiled with assistance from John Plumadore, Marilyn Johnson (Voyageur Council) and Paul McKenna (Scarboro Missions Interfaith).*

Linking to Strategic Direction #6.

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HOW SPIRITUAL EMPHASIS FITS – A SKIT

Cast and Equipment: Five people to wear sandwich boards, each bearing one name; Program, Social Development, Physical Development, Intellectual Development and Spiritual Development. Make the lettering for each name identical in colour, style and size.

ACTION: Enter Program, Intellectual Development, Physical Development and Social Development.

PROGRAM: The Beavers will soon be here, so I better get myself ready. I have all my support with me to make this evening complete.

ENTER Spiritual Development.

SPIRITUAL DEVELOPMENT: You forgot to pick me up on your way.

PROGRAM: We are having a special meeting tonight. We are not having any prayers. I'll call you next Sunday morning. You haven't forgotten that we have a camp next weekend for the Cubs and Beavers have you? You'll have to do the Scouts Own. We'll have it at 9:00 AM Sunday.

SPIRITUAL: I thought that Scouting helped youth and young adults develop their characters as resourceful and responsible members of the community by providing opportunities and guidance for their intellectual, physical, social and spiritual growth. I thought the program worked on all those areas.

PROGRAM: It does. But I told you! We are having a special meeting tonight!

SPIRITUAL: Everyone else is invited. Why can't I come?

PROGRAM: I already told you! We don't have a prayer scheduled for this evening's meeting, so I thought we'd give you the night off.

SPIRITUAL: Do you really think that is the only thing that I am good for? I come in for a prayer at the end of the meeting or go to a camp for a Scouts Own? I get so tired of Program sometimes! How can you develop a youth spiritually if that is all that you do with me?

PROGRAM: How else can we possibly use you?

SPIRITUAL: (To Social, Intellectual and Physical Development) Are you guys invited every week? (ALL nod "yes") Do you ever miss a program? (ALL nod "no")

PROGRAM: That is a bit different though.

SPIRITUAL: Why?

PROGRAM: Intellectual, Physical and Social Development happen all the time. When we are doing games, crafts, stories, outdoors or any other activities, we are developing the youth in those areas.

SPIRITUAL: Why are you not developing them spiritually when you do those things? Do you think

that spiritual development means only going to church or saying a prayer now and again in your meetings?

PROGRAM: It seems to have worked so far!

SPIRITUAL: Has it? How many times do you think that I have had to sneak into your program? All the youth have taken a promise which either says they promise to love God or do their duty to God. Right?

PROGRAM: Yes.

SPIRITUAL: That isn't just done by saying a prayer, or did you not realize that?

PROGRAM: I never really gave it that much thought.

SPIRITUAL: You are trying to develop the youth in four areas. If you invited me every night to your program, like you do other Developments, do you realize how successful you would be in accomplishing this goal?

(ALL the other Developments whisper something to Program.)

PROGRAM: We can't figure out how you really could improve our program, but we will listen to you. Just keep it short. We don't have a lot of time.

SPIRITUAL: What about fair play in games? What about showing that people care for each other throughout the program? What if we go outdoors and the youth are encouraged to see the beauty of their surroundings? Why can't you use me as part of a story? When the youth are doing a craft, wouldn't it be nicer if they shared the supplies instead of fighting over them? I can do so much more than I am given credit for! You seem to have the same line of thinking that so many humans have! They keep on thinking that I am such a little part of their lives. If you really look at it, I am always there.

(PROGRAM and the other Developments stand aside to confer with each other.)

PROGRAM: We have decided that we really haven't thought of it your way before. I guess you can help the boys and girls develop spiritually if you were present more often. Why don't you stay for tonight's meeting and plan on joining us from now on? Just remember, though, you may have to assert yourself because we're not used to having you here all the time.

SPIRITUAL: (With a smile) You will probably be pleasantly surprised. I've usually been around. You just haven't recognized me in some of my disguises.

(ALL five form a circle and walk off the stage.)

– *The Leader Magazine*, November 1986

GOLDEN RULE WORKSHOP

The Golden Rule Workshop on Spirituality produced by Scarboro Missions can be presented by Scouting members by going to the Scarboro Missions website www.scarboromissions.ca and logging on to Workshop Guidelines. This workshop will offer Scouters a program resource that will be innovative and creative in offering spirituality to a diverse membership. (See the November 2005 *Leader Magazine* for more on the Golden Rule.)