

The Role of Commissioners When Units Are Chartered By Locally Governed Faith Based Organizations



A Thesis submitted to the College of Commissioner Science of the
Dan Beard Council in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the
degree of Doctor of Commissioner Science

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Executive Summary

This thesis discusses some examples of ways in which Commissioners can be helpful in promoting a stronger relationship between units and their chartering organizations when the chartering organization is a locally governed religious organization.

Dedication

This Thesis is dedicated to the adult leaders of Troop 718 of Middletown, Ohio as well as The Reverend Doctor Kevin Scott Robertson, Senior Pastor of First Baptist Church of Middletown, Ohio and Executive Officer of Troop 718. It is through conversations with them that I realized that commissioners could do more to be ambassadors of the relationship between Chartering Organizations and Units.



Rev. Dr. K. Scott Robertson, Left
Troop 718 Middletown, Ohio, Below



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A Scout's Duty to God

Lord Baden Powell, the Founder of the Scouting Movement was quoted as saying "We aim for the practice of Christianity in their everyday life and dealings, and not merely the profession of theology on Sundays..." Later when Baden Powell was asked where religion came into scouting, he responded "It does not come in at all. It is already there. It is a fundamental factor underlying Scouting"

The World Association of the Scouting Movement (WOSM) of which



the Boy Scouts of America(BSA) is a member states the following about duty to God in it's "Fundamental Principles" Under the title "Duty to God", the first of the above-mentioned principles of the Scout Movement is defined as "adherence to spiritual principles, loyalty to the

religion that expresses them and acceptance of the duties resulting therefrom". Note that, by contrast to the title, the body of the text omits

the word "God" to make clear that the clause also covers non-monotheistic religions, such as Hinduism, and those that do not recognize a personal God, such as Buddhism.

The Boy Scouts of America state in their Declaration of Religious

principle "The Boy Scouts of America

maintains that no member can grow

into the best kind of citizen without

recognizing an obligation to God and,

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 organization or group with which the member is

connected shall give definite attention to religious life."



What is a Chartering Organization?

Every Scouting unit “belongs” to a local organization like a school, religious institution or service club. Here’s an overview of this essential relationship.

A chartered organization is a community-based group whose objectives, mission and methodologies are compatible with those of the BSA. It agrees to use the Scouting program to further its mission to serve young people. The partnership is intended to be deeper than, say, a sponsorship arrangement between a youth baseball team and a local business.

The reasons why an organization will become a chartering organization are as varied as the organizations themselves. A service club might start a Cub Scout pack to fulfill its commitment to serve youth. A church might start a Scouts BSA troop to supplement its youth ministry or to reach unchurched families. A boating club might start a Sea Scout ship to engage a new generation in its members’ favorite sport.

What is a Locally Governed Faith Based Organization?

Locally governed Faith Based Organizations are those churches or organizations that have full decision making authority at the local level, rather than at a regional or national organization level.

Examples of Locally Governed Religious Bodies are the Unitarian Universalist Association, Evangelical Lutheran Church in America, American Baptist Churches USA, Southern Baptist Convention, Presbyterian Church (USA), Presbyterian Church in America, Evangelical Presbyterian Church, Church of God (Anderson), Church of God (Cleveland, Tn), United Church of Christ, Christian Church (Disciples of Christ), and Non-Denominational Churches. These are bodies that place full governing authority in the leadership of the local body, whether that is a Clergy, Board, Session, Council, or Elders.

How Many units are chartered by locally governed Faith Based Organizations?

Faith-Based Chartered Organizations

The 25 faith-based organizations with the largest Scouting youth membership

(Source: 2013 Boy Scouts of America Local Council Index, using December 31, 2013, membership data):

<u>Name of Organization</u>	<u>Total Units</u>	<u>Total Youth</u>
Presbyterian Church	3,520	119,879
Lutheran Church	3,728	111,483
Baptist Churches	3,532	91,526
Episcopal Church	1,180	41,340
United Church of Christ	1,154	36,194
Community Churches	1,009	30,114
Christian Church (Disciples of Christ)	1,083	30,113
Church of Christ	495	13,559
Evangelical/independent	299	7,740
Church of God	207	4,354
Reformed Church in America	124	3,921

Church of the Nazarene	154	3,841
Jewish synagogues and centers	146	3,268
Church of the Brethren	101	2,614
Islam, Muslim, Masjid	75	2,226
Community of Christ	66	1,718
Buddhist Churches of America	69	1,698
Assemblies of God	74	1,620
Total		

What can a Unit Commissioner do to facilitate the relationship between a Unit and a locally governed Faith Based Organization?

Many locally governed faith based organizations have chartered BSA units for many years, so much so that no one really has a connection to them any longer, but everyone knows that the scouts have “always” met at the organization.

There are many ways that the Unit Commissioner can facilitate a stronger relationship.

1. Regular visits

Dale Rossman had the following example in his thesis *The Importance of the Unit Commissioner*

“A Boy Scout Troop meets typically at their charter organization, which is a church. A new Pastor is in place and he is not familiar with the Boy Scout program or the evenings that they meet. He changes the lock and relocates the Troop’s equipment to a storage facility without notifying the Scoutmaster. The Scoutmaster becomes frustrated and decides the church must not want the troop to meet at the church any longer. He insists on a new charter organization. He

has his own church in mind. Meetings get canceled at the last minute; parents are getting frustrated as well. The Problem may not have existed if a commissioner had been making monthly visits.

With a Unit commissioner's help, understanding of the scouting program was explained; a service project for the church grounds was developed to demonstrate the value of sponsoring a youth organization to the church congregation. Then a bond between the church and the Troop Committee was created so a line of communication was always in place. The role of the Charter Organization Representative was discussed and both parties would always know future changes in leadership."

This is a prime example of the opportunity that a Commissioner has for relationship building between the Unit Leadership and the Chartering Organization. In the setting of a locally governed faith based organization, leadership in the chartering organization and the Unit can be changing often. This requires an emphasis on communication between the groups. So that both entities know what is going on with the other entity. A unit commissioner can be a voice of consistency to assist in making those introductions each time that the

leadership changes in either the chartering organization or the unit. The Commissioner can also be of assistance in preparing the Chartering Organization Representative in the responsibilities and expectations that will be expected of them by both the leadership of the Unit and the leadership of the Chartering Organization.



2. Presentation of Annual Charter

The Unit Commissioner, or appointed commissioner can make a presentation of the Annual Charter, to the Unit leaders at a Chartering organization service or meeting.

Using the presentation of the charter to emphasize the important

relationship between the chartering organization and the unit. This also emphasizes to the membership of the Faith Based Organization that the Unit is an active part of their community service and outreach!

3. Presentation of Awards

The Unit commissioner or Appointed Commissioner can present any awards that the unit or members of the unit have received

from the District of Council. The Unit commissioner can inform the Chartering Organization Representative and Executive Officer that these awards are being presented.

4. Meeting with Key 3 and Executive Officer

The Commissioner can also have a meeting with the Unit Key 3 as well as the Executive Officer to be able to have an open dialogue to discuss successes and challenges for all parties.

This should be done at recharter time as well as at one other time during the year, possibly 6 months through the charter year.

Being a Conflict Resolution Resource

A Commissioner can be a resource for assisting in conflict resolution between Unit Leadership and the leadership of the Chartering organization. Especially in the area of removing a volunteer, as commissioners have special training in how to gracefully and professionally remove a volunteer. This can be a great resource to the unit that the commissioner can continue to be a guide and support in their relationship with both the Unit Leaders as well as the Chartering

Organization. It is needed to be noted that a Unit Commissioner should not be the one to remove a unit volunteer as that Authority rests in the unit leadership and ultimately the chartering organization representative.

Being a Training Resource

Commissioners are some of the highest trained registered adults in scouting. Commissioners are routinely receiving additional training. Commissioners can be supporters and encourage unit leaders and scouts receiving more training. They can be a source of information and encouragement of participation in training such as National Youth Leadership Training, Wood Badge, Sea Badge, Powder Horn, and more! We set the example in the continuum of training, and can encourage all to continue it as well. The more training unit members can receive the better they will be able to understand their program, as well as have a stronger relationship with their unit through a better understanding of communication and leadership.



Ways that Faith Based Chartering Organizations can recognize Youth and Adult Leaders

To encourage members to grow stronger in their faith, religious groups have developed the religious emblems programs. The Boy Scouts of America has approved of these programs and allows the emblems to be worn on the official uniform. The various religious groups administer the programs.

Religious Emblems are medals created by the various religious groups represented in Scouting. Their purpose is to encourage youth

and adults to grow stronger in their faith as part of their Scouting experience. Studies by the BSA have shown that Scouts who earn a religious emblem stay registered longer in Scouting's programs. Considering that nearly three of every four units is chartered to a faith-based institution, this connection is vital to sustaining those relationships.



Units with a Religious Emblems Coordinator have a designated adult who promotes emblems and tracks which ones have been earned. The purpose of a Unit Religious Emblem Coordinator is to Encourage all youth to earn the emblem of their faith, Promote religious emblems usage like BSA promotes other youth advancement, and Establish goals and track the number of religious emblems to be completed every year.

Adult religious emblems can be presented after nomination by a Faith Based Organization, traditionally that the Adult leader is a participant. These require nominations after years of service to both scouting as well as the faith based organization. These are excellent tools for faith based chartering organizations to use as recognition of their scouters.



Conclusion

Unit serving Commissioners who serve units that are chartered by Faith Based Organizations can support their programs by building relationships with both the unit leadership as well as the Chartering Organization relationship. The commissioner can serve as the example of executing the scouting program under the supervision of trained and qualified adults. This can also allow them to be the cheerleader and promoter of ongoing training and proper program execution. In promoting the relationship between the Chartering Organization and the Unit, the commissioner creates a stronger program, as well as ensures a longer tenure of the scouts in that unit, as studies have shown scouts who have a relationship with a faith based organization stay in scouting longer. It is in the best interest of scouting for a Unit Serving Commissioner to build a strong relationship with Faith Based Organizations that serve as locally governed Chartering Organizations.

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