

# **The Role of Scouting in the Aaronic Priesthood Program**

**A Supplement to**

*A Scouting Reference for Ward Leaders*

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We're hearing frequently that the Church is going to be discontinuing its partnership with [the] Boy Scouts of America, but it's just not true. . . . Aaronic Priesthood with its quorums is our focus, but Scouting is a valuable tool, that if used properly, can help young men come to know and love the Savior. The Aaronic Priesthood draws upon several resources, including Scouting, to teach and train our young men.

If you have parents and Church leaders with vision who know their responsibility for getting a boy from age 16—when he comes into the priests quorum—safely through to his ordination in the Melchizedek Priesthood, then on a mission and on to temple marriage, they'll find a way to get him there. These leaders need to be with the young men and young women; they need to be part of their lives. They can't do it only on Sunday mornings.<sup>1</sup>

Elder Jack H. Goaslind  
Former Young Men General President

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<sup>1</sup> Mike Cannon, "Valuable Tool in Bringing Young Men to Christ," *Church News*, February 2, 1991, <[www.desnews.com/cgi-bin/libstory\\_church?dn91&9102020123](http://www.desnews.com/cgi-bin/libstory_church?dn91&9102020123)>.

# Introduction

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## Brief History of Church Scouting

The Young Men Mutual Improvement Association (YMMIA) was organized in 1875 under the direction of Brigham Young to provide leisure-time activities of a spiritual and cultural nature for the young men of the Church. Later athletics was added and it became a prominent part of the YMMIA program. When the Church adopted Scouting in 1913, it operated as part of the YMMIA's athletic program under the YMMIA athletic director. When Church Scouting began, it was considered to be a recreational program with one of its purposes being to occupy a boy's leisure time.<sup>2</sup> At that time Scouting was not linked to the Aaronic Priesthood quorums, so Church Scout troops operated as non-LDS troops did.<sup>3</sup> The senior patrol leader and the patrol leaders were elected by the young men or selected by the Scoutmaster, and the Scout committee served as the troop's board of directors. The Scoutmaster was a teacher in the Mutual Improvement Association (MIA), but otherwise Scouting and priesthood were generally two different—and independent—parts of an LDS boy's life. Because of this, no one thought that the troop's leadership structure needed to be aligned with the quorum leadership structure.

During the ninety-plus years that have elapsed since that time, Church Scouting has undergone several major transitions. It is no longer just a leisure-time activity. It is a vital part of the Aaronic Priesthood program, and every priesthood leader now shares the responsibility for successfully integrating the Scouting program into the Aaronic Priesthood program. The biggest change to LDS Scouting occurred in 1973 when the Mutual Improvement Association was integrated into the Aaronic Priesthood. These changes were discussed in an article in the January 1974 *Ensign* and are summarized below:<sup>4</sup>

- First, the programs and activities of youth between the ages of 12 and 18 came under the umbrella of the Aaronic Priesthood. In other words, the programs and activities for both boys and girls are now priesthood oriented.
- Second, it meant involvement of youth to a degree never before experienced. The youth, with shadow leadership from adults, plan and execute their own programs and activities coordinated through the bishop's youth council (now called the bishopric youth committee).
- Third, the activities of youth became service as well as activity oriented. This meant personal service to others, not just games and parties.
- Fourth, the entire effort of the Church became individual boy and girl oriented—not program oriented. The welfare of the individual is the most important factor.
- Fifth, the Aaronic Priesthood MIA focused on strengthening the family, recognizing it as the basic unit in society and the most important unit in all eternity.

This integration has been strengthened in the following thirty years. As described in the *Scouting Handbook*,<sup>5</sup> and the *Church Handbook of Instructions: Book 2*, in the Aaronic Priesthood section,<sup>6</sup> the Scout troop and the deacons quorum are now the same entity, and a Scout activity is a deacons quorum activity channeled through what might be called the "Scouting arm" of the quorum. A similar relationship exists between the Varsity Scout team and the teachers quorum and between the Venturing crew and the priests quorum.

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<sup>2</sup> See appendix A, "Scouting – Its Origins, Principles, and Methods," in *A Scouting Reference for Ward Leaders*.

<sup>3</sup> In 1911, even before the Church officially adopted Scouting, there were Scout troops in the wards. Programs for older boys had not yet been developed.

<sup>4</sup> Victor L. Brown, "Our Youth: Modern Sons of Helaman," *Ensign*, January 1974, 108.

<sup>5</sup> The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, *Scouting Handbook* (USA: The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, 1997), 1 and 3.

<sup>6</sup> The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, *Church Handbook of Instructions: Book 2* (Salt Lake City: The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, 1998), 187-188.

The second significant change was the development in 2000 of the Duty to God program for deacons, teachers, and priests. This program expanded the focus of quorum activities from Scouting advancement to development of the whole young man. Duty to God was developed originally for young men outside the United States without Scouting, but was expanded to include all young men as the value of a broader range of activities became recognized. Although the Duty to God and the Scouting programs each aim at activities associated with their own specific objectives, there are many overlaps that allow a young man to get credit in both programs for an accomplishment.

Stating that a Scout unit and its corresponding priesthood quorum are identical does not make it so. This relationship does not exist until 1) the young men think of their quorum and their Scout unit as being one entity; 2) adult leaders stop thinking of themselves as being *either* a priesthood leader *or* a Scout leader and have no difficulty changing hats as they move back and forth between Sunday quorum activities and weekday Scouting/Mutual activities; 3) youth are given the opportunity to truly lead their quorums as well as their patrols, teams, or crews in caring for members and in planning and executing activities; and 4) Scouting advancement and Duty to God requirements are integrated.

This supplement explores two major topics. First, it discusses the role that Scouting plays in helping a young man fulfill his priesthood responsibilities and become the type of man that we want him to be. Next, it discusses how the organizational structure of Scouting, with its Boy Scout troops, Varsity Scout teams, Venturing crews, and respective adult Scout leaders, can be blended into the priesthood quorum structure, with its quorum presidencies and quorum advisers.

### Three Components of the Aaronic Priesthood Program

Details of Aaronic Priesthood and Scouting programs can be daunting, but programs can be easily understood as including three components. The *Church Handbook of Instructions* provides an explanation of the Aaronic Priesthood program in three parts as follows:

- *Aaronic Priesthood Duties.* The first, and most important, component is Aaronic Priesthood duties. These duties include blessing, preparing, and passing the sacrament; gathering fast offerings; home teaching; and, baptizing and ordaining deacons and teachers when authorized by the bishop. Additional responsibilities include participating in temple baptisms; participating in quorum activities (including conducting and presiding when in a quorum presidency); preparing for the Melchizedek Priesthood; and preparing for a mission.<sup>7</sup>
- *Aaronic Priesthood Activities.* The second component is Aaronic Priesthood activities. Six activities are specifically mentioned: Mutual (weekly activity night), Scouting, combined Aaronic Priesthood – Young Women activities (usually held monthly), service activities, Sunday evening discussions, and youth conferences. These activities are designed to be a part of every ward and stake youth program.<sup>8</sup>
- *General Activities in Support of the Family.* The third component encourages participation in family activities—especially family scripture reading and study, family prayer, and family home evening. Ward activities add flavor to the Young Men program and help the family fulfill a young man’s social, cultural, athletic, and recreational needs. They may vary from ward to ward and may include such things as dances, socials, parties, potluck dinners, athletic activities, and recreational activities.<sup>9</sup>

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<sup>7</sup> The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, *Church Handbook of Instructions: Book 2*, 175-177. These pages reiterate the duties laid out in D&C 20. Additional responsibilities included in this section of the *Church Handbook of Instructions* include quorum participation and leadership. Quorum participation includes attending quorum meetings, attending ward priesthood meeting, stake priesthood meeting, general priesthood meeting, ward conference, stake conference, general conference, sacrament meeting, and Sunday School, all of which teach him gospel principles in general and priesthood responsibilities in particular. Additional leadership responsibilities involve presiding over the quorum and participating in the bishopric youth committee and quorum presidency meetings.

<sup>8</sup> *Ibid.*, 186 – 189.

<sup>9</sup> *Ibid.*, 178.

## Scouting and the Aaronic Priesthood

Scouting is one of the specifically mentioned elements of the Aaronic Priesthood activities. Scouting normally includes weekly meetings during Mutual, an extensive outdoor program, and weeklong events such as Scout camp and high adventure. Young men wear uniforms and participate in an advancement program developed by the Boy Scouts of America (the BSA). Leaders are registered with the BSA. Church Scout leaders are directed to be trained, and they are encouraged to attend the BSA meetings that will help them increase their Scouting skills. Church Scout leaders follow BSA policies and procedures in addition to Church Scouting policies. The Church recognizes the Scouting traditions developed during the last almost one hundred years of Scouting history. Church Scout units participate in Scouting activities in their local Scout district and council, as well as in some national Scouting activities, such as the national jamboree. Because of all of these things, Scouting requires special understanding to integrate it as an activity in the Aaronic Priesthood program.

Thane J. Packer summarized it well in his book, *On My Honor – A Guide to Scouting in the Church*:

Latter-day Saints see the revelatory wisdom of the Brethren in delivery Scouting to the Aaronic Priesthood quorums of the Church. When properly applied, Scouting acts as a laboratory for boys with dedicated leaders serving as trained laboratory instructors, monitoring and encouraging the application of the purposes of the Aaronic Priesthood by providing action experiences that appeal to quorum members.<sup>10</sup>

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<sup>10</sup> Thane J. Packer, *On My Honor – A Guide to Scouting in the Church*, (Salt Lake City: Bookcraft, 1998), 2.

“There is no teaching to compare with example.”<sup>11</sup>

Sir Robert Baden-Powell

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<sup>11</sup> <<http://twc-woodbadge.freesevers.com/bpsays.htm>>

## How Scouting Helps Young Men Fulfill the Purposes of the Aaronic Priesthood

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What specific roles should Scouting play in the Aaronic Priesthood program? How should Scouting help young men reach the goals of the Aaronic Priesthood? What qualities can Scouting develop in a boy that will help him become an effective missionary, husband and father? How can a young man accomplish both Scouting and the Duty to God program? The following paragraphs address these issues.

### The Purposes of the Aaronic Priesthood<sup>12</sup>

The eight purposes of the Aaronic Priesthood are to help each young man who is ordained to:

- Become converted to the gospel of Jesus Christ and live its teachings.
- Serve faithfully in priesthood callings, and fulfill the responsibilities of priesthood offices.
- Give meaningful service.
- Prepare and live worthily to receive the Melchizedek Priesthood and temple ordinances.
- Prepare to serve an honorable full-time mission.
- Obtain as much education as possible.
- Prepare to become a worthy husband and father.
- Give proper respect to women, girls, and children.

The Church has developed the Duty to God program to work with Scouting to help a young man reach these purposes.<sup>13</sup> This program not only includes activities that are directly related to priesthood responsibilities, but also includes activities of a spiritual, physical, cultural, and social nature. Scouting also has a role in accomplishing Aaronic Priesthood purposes. It expands the opportunities for leadership, facing challenges—especially outdoors—and personal development. Just as Priesthood and Scouting work together, Duty to God and Scouting advancement join to create a full program for the young men.

### Scouting Contributes to the Purposes of the Aaronic Priesthood

Activities in the Aaronic Priesthood program range from fun activities, such as quorum members getting a pizza after completing a quorum service project, to more spiritual activities like going to the temple to be baptized for the dead or carrying out Sunday sacrament responsibilities. Each activity in the Young Men program contributes in a different way and no single activity contributes equally to each of the purposes. Scouting significantly contributes to four of the purposes, as explained below.

Give Meaningful Service — Service is a key word in Scouting. Helping others is one of the points in the Scout Law. To earn the Star and Life ranks, a boy must participate in service projects that help his community, his school, his church, or another worthy cause. To attain his Eagle Scout rank, a boy must plan and carry out a significant service project, soliciting other volunteers to help him. This last requirement helps him develop leadership skills as well as contribute to the cause that he is helping. Additionally, Scout units often participate in community projects

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<sup>12</sup> The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, *Aaronic Priesthood (Deacon—Teacher—Priest): Fulfilling Our Duty to God*, (The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints.: Salt Lake City, 2001), 7 (page 7 in each of the three guidebooks).

<sup>13</sup> On September 28, 2001, the First Presidency sent a letter to “General Authorities and the following leaders in the United States and Canada: Area Authority Seventies; Stake, Mission, and District Presidents; Bishops and Branch Presidents” which stated: “In January 2000, we introduced an Aaronic Priesthood Achievement program in areas outside the United States and Canada where Scouting was not available. The purpose of the program is to help young men prepare for the Melchizedek Priesthood, the temple endowment, a full-time mission, marriage, and fatherhood. This program has now been adapted for use in the United States and Canada to include the important role of Scouting in the development of young men. The name has been changed to *Aaronic Priesthood: Fulfilling Our Duty to God*.” The letter is available online at <[www.lds.org/pa/display/0,17884,5153-1,00.html](http://www.lds.org/pa/display/0,17884,5153-1,00.html)>.



such adopting a highway (which obligates them to keep it free of trash) and collecting food for the disadvantaged. Each year many councils hold an annual Scouting for Food drive and ward Scout units are encouraged to participate.

Prepare to Serve an Honorable Full-time Mission — Preparing for a mission has many aspects, some spiritual and some practical. Scouting does not concentrate on scripture study nor does it provide a course in LDS doctrine. Through its outdoor program, Scouting acquaints a boy with God’s handiwork. It teaches him how to take care of himself. These practical skills are especially useful if the mission is in a country where the lifestyle is different from what he is used to and the amenities of home are not available. From his Scouting experience a young man will learn how to cook, plan meals, and do cleanup (Cooking merit badge); how to do housework, make minor clothing repairs and sew on buttons (camping experiences); live without frills (taking a five-day hike and living on what is in his pack); and how to budget and manage money (Personal Management merit badge). He will also appreciate the need for safety when driving the mission car or riding his bicycle (Safety merit badge); will be able to handle minor injuries and emergency situations when necessary (First Aid merit badge); and will recognize the importance of good health habits (Personal Fitness merit badge).

Prepare and Live Worthily to Receive the Melchizedek Priesthood and Temple Ordinances — Being prepared to receive the Melchizedek Priesthood has many demands. Most important, of course, are personal purity and faithfulness in carrying out priesthood responsibilities—which require a personal commitment to live the commandments. Scouting urges a young man to do this as he lives the Scout Oath and Scout Law. In Scouting a young man also learns leadership skills, which will serve him well as he later fulfills his Melchizedek Priesthood assignments and callings.

Prepare to Become a Worthy Husband and Father — This is a monumental goal to which every young man should aspire. Being an honorable husband and father places a heavy responsibility on a man, one that requires much from him. Some of these demands are practical ones. He must support a family, face the challenges of life, surmount obstacles that adversity brings, and persistently hold to the right course. We show how Scouting helps a young man develop these qualities in the following section.

## **Lifetime Priesthood Qualities Developed Through Scouting**

Successful Aaronic Priesthood programs contain activities that help a young man develop the qualities we want him to have. These activities require commitment from the young man. Scouting activities require action by the young man. Lord Baden-Powell, the founder of Scouting, believed that “Boys learn what they practice. If you want them to become good citizens, you must encourage them to practice citizenship. If you want them to learn to play fair, to take responsibility, to get along with other people, to be self-reliant, you must give them the chance to practice all of these things.”<sup>14</sup> For example, if he is to be resourceful there must be activities that require him to be resourceful. If he is to learn how to face adversity, then there must be activities that present him with difficulties to overcome. These activities must last long enough so that the desired qualities will develop over time, because it takes time to develop important qualities.

To illustrate, let’s consider the Aaronic Priesthood purpose of preparing a boy to serve a mission. This long-range spiritual activity exemplifies what we are talking about. While this is not a Scouting activity, it demonstrates how—when an activity places demands on a young man—it causes him to develop desirable qualities.

Committing to, preparing for, and serving an honorable full-time mission are important goals in the Aaronic Priesthood program. Putting aside the most important reason for going on a mission—to bring the gospel message to the world—let’s consider what practical qualities it develops. Serving a mission teaches a young man to:

- Take care of his own needs.
- Be obedient to rules even when it might be so easy to break them.
- Discipline himself in both his actions and his use of time.
- Put aside personal things.
- Meet with people and draw close to them.

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<sup>14</sup> Boy Scouts of America, *Scoutmaster's Handbook*, 5th edition, 7th printing (New Brunswick, N.J.: Boy Scouts of America, 1959), 123.

- Learn to study.
- Learn to appreciate the customs and traditions of others.
- Learn to love those who listen to his message.

All of these lessons come from real life experiences, not something learned from reading a Church manual, a sermon he has heard, or from a passage in a scholarly text that he has read. Because he has experienced it, it means more to him, and the testimony that he gains through what he has experienced will be real and not theoretical. Let's look at some characteristics essential for these qualities and consider how some of the experiences that Scouting provides can help develop these characteristics.

**Persistence.** Stick-to-it-iveness, if you will. This is a difficult characteristic for a young man to acquire, and yet is very important for him to possess. It will hold the key to his adult success. Today we live in an instantaneous society. A lot of people believe that everything must be done immediately, must involve no lasting commitments, and must have immediate results. Many youth programs are so geared, with ephemeral projects, and if something cannot be done in a short time, it is dropped. In contrast with this craving for immediate satisfaction, Scouting provides a valuable tool—the advancement program. Advancement in Scouting is long range; it takes time and effort in order to acquire the skills, earn the merit badges, and develop the leadership required of a young man in order to progress in rank. The Scout will learn about many different things while he persists in working on the requirements for advancement, and he will feel a greater sense of satisfaction when he succeeds in his long-term goal.

**Resourcefulness.** When you are in camp or on some high-adventure activity where immediate help may be some time and some distance away—and where what you brought with you is all you have to take care of your needs—resourcefulness is often not just a virtue, it can become a real life necessity. This is no play-acting exercise taking place in a classroom. The lack of resourcefulness has a penalty that must be paid. This is what prods a young man to become what we want him to be—resourceful.

**Facing Adversity.** The adversity that a young man may face while doing Scouting activities in no way resembles the adversity that he may experience as an adult, nor will it have the same intensity. It does, however, introduce him to hardships and difficulties, many of which he may not yet have experienced in his everyday life. As he faces this unaccustomed adversity and surmounts it, this early success can profit him later in life. For a young man, being cold and uncomfortable as he huddles in his tent on a wet night isn't his idea of fun. Nor does he enjoy going to bed hungry because he slipped and spilled his dinner into the campfire, or burnt his meal beyond repair because he was inattentive. Nor is it entertaining when he experiences many of the other annoying and unpleasant things that may happen to him while he is “supposedly having fun.” For an adult these nuisances may seem insignificant or even humorous, but for a young man they are an adversity, and he develops the ability to face such adversity by overcoming it.

**Responsibility.** Scouting challenges a young man to be responsible. For example, consider a young man who has just slipped into his sleeping bag in his tent on a camping trip. It is cold and raining. He suddenly remembers that he is responsible for protecting his patrol's food, which he left out where it will be totally ruined by morning. Should he get out of his nice warm sleeping bag and protect the food, or should he not bother? This is just one example of the numerous situations that continually pop up in an active outdoor program. Being in the outdoors, a young man is always facing circumstances that require him to decide whether or not he will do what everyone in his patrol is depending upon him to do to insure the patrol's comfort and safety. These are real issues he faces, not just play issues that he might leisurely discuss in a Sunday School class. As he faces a variety of dilemmas and problems, he will learn to accept responsibility for his actions, whether right or wrong, and he'll learn to face the consequences for his own choices and see how these decisions can affect others.

**Accepting a Challenge.** For some reason young men seem to like a challenge. In the masculine mystique there appears to be a desire to face an opponent and overcome him. This opponent need not necessarily be a *him*. It could be some *obstacle* that needs to be surmounted or defeated. Stories of knights jousting or explorers facing the dangers of the jungle, although they may attract a young man's interest and hold his attention, cannot compete with a real dyed-in-the-wool challenge. This challenge, especially when it is met and overcome, can have good results—even amazing results—at times. A young man's life can be changed by it. Overcoming a

challenge can develop bravery and persistence, and create a sense of self-worth. It can build confidence when the young man knows that the skills he has learned as a Scout may, later in life, pull him through a difficult situation. Challenges can come in various sizes and shapes, and Scouting does not hold a monopoly on them. Scouting can, however, provide challenges—such as reaching the peak of a seemingly insurmountable mountain or finishing a long hike that seemed like it would never end. These challenges hold the interest of young men, deliver the rewards thereof, and give the young men the satisfaction that always comes with accomplishment. Most of these challenges are physical, but not all of them. Sometimes they involve putting one's own interests aside and helping others when the way is tough on a hike or in a camp, and where bailing out and leaving others stranded is tempting. The potential of challenge in Scouting is a powerful tool. This is why a good outdoor program is essential, especially for older young men.

**Helpfulness.** Not only is being helpful a part of the Scout Oath and a point in the Scout Law, but it is also built into the way Scouting operates. Doing service projects is part of the advancement program and the earning of awards. Scout projects often cannot be successful without the coordinated help of all young men in the troop, team, or crew. Often on the trail or when climbing a mountain, help is offered by one young man and accepted by another in order for everyone to finish the activity successfully.

**Resilience.** In Scouting, being able to spring back is essential because there can be many setbacks in Scouting. A young man may not pass a merit badge test the first time he tries; a young man's tent may fall down on a rainy night because he didn't put it up correctly; a young man must renew his effort to earn a new rank when he has let his progress lag; and a young man must eat scrambled pancakes in camp because he didn't read the recipe correctly. These and scores of other things fail in Scouting and must be retried or redone. A young man learns to be resilient in Scouting because Scouting requires him to be resilient, and because it gives him so many opportunities to master this quality. Through these experiences a young man learns to spring back, and every time he springs back it is easier for him to spring back the next time.

**Excitement.** It might be surprising to see excitement in this list of characteristics, but even if everyone admitted that it was a useful feature of Scouting, most people would consider it to be a trivial one; certainly not one that has any spiritual or cultural content, or one that would be useful in molding young men into men. Yet it can often play a vital role in a young man's life. Most young men consider a white water rafting trip to be more exciting than collecting fast offerings or going home teaching. During a precarious time in a young man's life, sometimes Scouting activities are the only things that keep him interested in coming to Church. But, if these Scouting activities can keep him coming to Church until maturity finally catches up with him and he learns to appreciate spiritual things, these activities may save him. Leaders should not forget that this tool exists, and, for some young men, and at certain times, it is the only tool that they have at their disposal that will keep a young man in the Church.

## Scouting and Duty to God

Aaronic Priesthood purposes lead directly into the personal development areas discussed in *Aaronic Priesthood: Fulfilling Our Duty to God*. Becoming converted to the gospel and living by its teachings is encompassed in spiritual, meaningful service. Living worthily to receive the Melchizedek Priesthood is delineated in the Priesthood Duties and Standards section of each of the Duty to God guidebooks and in *For the Strength of Youth: Fulfilling Our Duty to God*. Preparing to serve a mission includes all of the areas. Obtaining as much education as possible is an important element of educational, personal, and career development. Preparing to become a worthy husband and father is the goal of family development activities. And giving proper respect to women, girls, and children is critical to citizenship and social development. Accomplishing the Duty to God activities gives young men experiences that will help in this growth. Scouting activities provide many opportunities to complete Duty to God requirements. Topics 60, 61 and 62 provide a list of comparable Duty to God and Scouting requirements that could be accomplished at the same time for deacons, for teachers, and for priests. Good planning will include the integration of the various elements of each program and encourage recognition in both programs.

## **Merging the Organizational Structures of Scouting and the Quorum**

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Thus far we have discussed how Scouting can help a young man reach the goals of the Aaronic Priesthood program. We now turn our attention to how Scouting is organized within priesthood quorums. We sometimes casually say that “Scouting develops boy leaders and teaches important skills” as though this occurs automatically. We fail to recognize that it is the leadership structure of Scouting and its organizational framework that make this possible. It is within the framework of patrols, troops, teams, and crews that young men practice Scouting principles and adult Scout leaders teach youth leaders *how* to be leaders.

The youth leadership parts of both the priesthood and the Scouting organizations function similarly. The adult structure is where most differences exist between LDS Scouting and non-LDS Scouting. The adult structure should not get in the way of the young men being responsible for themselves and their activities. We will first look at the youth organization, then at the adult organization, and finally at the adult leaders role as they interface with the young men.

### **What Scout Units and Quorums Bring to the Youth**

The Scouting organization should fit into the Aaronic Priesthood quorum. The priesthood and Scouting organizational structures should blend together seamlessly, so the advantages of Scouting are retained within the quorum framework. In both organizational structures, the young men are responsible for themselves and their program. Having the young men be the leaders is the first key to a successful experience for the young men.

The priesthood quorum has a youth leadership structure called a quorum presidency directly supervised by an adult quorum adviser and the bishopric.<sup>15</sup> The quorum presidents are given keys to administer the work of the quorums over which they preside. Quorum presidencies are charged with presiding over the quorum, helping plan quorum activities, serving on committees including the ward Aaronic Priesthood committee and bishopric youth committee (BYC), and keeping records.<sup>16</sup> The quorum president reports to the bishopric member responsible for that quorum. Planned activities are normally reviewed in BYC.

The young men should be allowed to do as much as they are capable in fulfilling these responsibilities. Elder Backman explained the importance of these leadership experiences for the young men.

The Church leadership of the future will be built upon the foundation that is laid today. If youth are denied opportunities to test their own strength, then the leadership foundation will be weak and unready. Equally as serious, however, is thrusting unprepared youth leaders into situations in which they fail because the demands of that situation exceed their experience and capacity. Discouragement and doubt will result. The balance between enough responsibility and too much calls for fasting, prayer, and diligent service by youth and adult leadership as they labor together to build the kingdom. ... With the bishopric of the ward, ... the bishop[ric] youth committee ... can be totally involved in selecting their activities and be tested and taught great leadership principles without being smothered by too many adult leaders.<sup>17</sup>

Obviously, the priests quorum presidency will be more capable to act independently than the deacons quorum presidency, but each presidency should function together with the help of advisers and bishopric members to ensure that they fulfill their charge.

Each Scout unit—a troop with patrols, a team with squads, or a crew—has youth leadership responsible for Scouting activities. The youth leadership in Scouting is generally elected by the members. In the Church, “each

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<sup>15</sup> In the priest quorum, the bishop is the president with two young men as assistants.

<sup>16</sup> The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, *Church Handbook of Instructions: Book 2*, 182-183.

<sup>17</sup> Robert L. Backman, “Youth’s Opportunity to Serve,” *Ensign*, July 1973, 84.<sup>18</sup> A nonmember may serve as the youth Scout leader if the bishopric calls him to this position, but usually a quorum president (or an assistant to the bishop in the priests quorum) is called to these leadership positions. *Scouting Handbook*, 3.

Scout unit should have a senior patrol leader, a Varsity team captain, or a [Venturing] president who is nominated by the bishopric and sustained by the quorum members, which for Scouting purposes constitutes election.”<sup>18</sup> These youth leaders meet together with advisers to plan weekly meetings, and monthly and annual events. They supervise the activities of the unit members, giving encouragement and instruction as required. They meet together in committee meetings and are responsible for records. This method of training young men to lead is called the patrol method in Scouting. A quote from the 1959 *Scoutmaster's Handbook* explains this well:

Baden-Powell, the founder of Scouting, said “To get the best results, you must give the leader real freehanded responsibility. If you only give [them] partial responsibility, you will only get partial results.” Let patrol leaders take over in practically everything. Let them work out their own problems with the young men in their patrols. Interfere as little as possible—but always be there to give guidance when they ask for it. Mistakes are bound to be made—therefore, be ready in a friendly spirit to urge the young man leader and his [patrol] to try again. “Train ‘em, trust ‘em, and let ‘em lead!” That is the formula for success in using patrol leaders and for building strong patrols.<sup>19</sup>

When a problem is faced, or a decision needs to be made, the young men need the opportunity to resolve the problem. Adult leaders might need to insert guidance when the discussion is going far afield and young men need to be refocused on the problem at hand, or when the young men don't recognize some of the consequences of the plans they are making, or when young men stop planning too soon and the issue isn't yet resolved. Adults should resist using their veto unless the young men's decision is unsafe, will cause damage to someone or some thing, pushes young men beyond their limits, or incurs some similar risk that requires mature intervention. Through this process young men are taught how to lead by actually carrying the responsibilities of a leader. Young men are allowed to fail as long as this failure will not be catastrophic and they are able to recover from the failure as wiser young men and better leaders.

When Scouting is conducted this way, Scouting is *boy run*. An example will illustrate what is meant by *boy run*. Before a troop meeting is held, the Scoutmaster meets with the senior patrol leader and reviews the program that the patrol leaders' council<sup>20</sup> has planned for that evening. Once the meeting is under way, the senior patrol leader is in charge. The Scoutmaster does not interfere or take over, even when things may not be going as well as they might. This allows the senior patrol leader to experience the burden of leadership. When the meeting is over, the Scoutmaster conducts an evaluation session in which he and the senior patrol leader discuss how the meeting went. The Scoutmaster offers advice that will help the senior patrol leader better conduct the next meeting. This is shadow leadership in its purest form.

With LDS Scouting, young men are taught these principles of group leadership and responsibility in both quorum presidency and Scouting leadership positions. The young men see a single leadership process and feel the unity of focus from both organizations. So how do the LDS adult organizations function to support this seamless blending?

## **How the Adult Organizations Function To Support the Young Men**

In non-LDS Scout units, the Scout committee acts as a board of directors reporting only occasionally to the chartered organization representative for approval of adult leaders. The committee recruits volunteers for Scouting positions, plans fund-raising projects to secure funds, guides the unit's program, and handles other administrative needs. A Scout unit uses the traditional Scouting leadership structure and Scouting methods to plan its own program. A wide variety of help is available from the Scout district and council, and wise Scout leaders take advantage of this; nevertheless, each Scout unit can choose how much assistance it wants to receive. Being guided by their adult leaders, young men choose their own activities and submit their choices to the Scout committee for its approval. The committee judges the feasibility of the activities, taking into account the resources of the Scout unit, the safety factors that are involved, the ability of young men to participate in those types of activities, and other decisions that require mature judgment. Once the committee approves an activity, the unit moves forward to implement it.

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<sup>19</sup> Boy Scouts of America, *Scoutmaster's Handbook*, 1959, 123.

<sup>20</sup> The patrol leaders' council consists of all of the patrol leaders in the troop.

A priesthood quorum operates differently. A quorum is a fundamental unit of Church government. The leadership structure of the quorum is described in the Doctrine and Covenants and the priesthood obligations of quorum members are enumerated there<sup>21</sup> and in the *Church Handbook of Instructions*.<sup>22</sup> Quorum functions and activities are under direction of the bishopric. Quorum activities are directed toward teaching young men to fulfill their priesthood responsibilities and accomplish the purposes of the Aaronic Priesthood program. Adult leaders are called by the bishopric and are sustained by the Church membership.

As Scouting becomes a quorum activity, one might ask how two seemingly different organizations can be merged together. Each has what might be called a “chain of command” that specifies who is to report to who, and who is responsible for what. How are these two different “command chains” to be merged into a single command chain? How are the two leadership structures to be melded together, so their different methods, goals, constraints, obligations, and traditions work together harmoniously?

How do all of these ingredients fit together and work together? Some instructions are found in the *Scouting Handbook*:

1. The *Scouting Handbook* states that wards should organize Scout committees. It lists four committee responsibilities and suggests who might, and who should, serve on these committees.<sup>23</sup>
2. The role of the chartered organization representative (COR) is briefly described in the handbook and the bishop is asked to assign one of his counselors or another worthy adult to fill this responsibility. Seven COR responsibilities are listed.<sup>24</sup>
3. The handbook describes how adult leaders and some youth leaders are to be called. The Scout leader who works with the young men (the Scoutmaster, Varsity Coach, and Venturing Advisor) is to be either a quorum adviser or an assistant quorum adviser.<sup>25</sup>

Applying these instructions, both the Young Men adult organization and the Scout committees function as support for the quorums/Scout units. As shown in the graphic below, the Young Men presidency, advisers and Scout leaders support the young men in their activities, particularly in the planning phase. They report to the bishopric counselor for those responsibilities. They receive additional program support from the Scout committees. The committees also handle Scouting administrative functions such as membership, advancement, and training. The coordination between the various groups are done through quorum presidency, patrol leaders council, BYC, and key Scout leaders’ meeting. These meetings encourage communication between groups for planning and execution.

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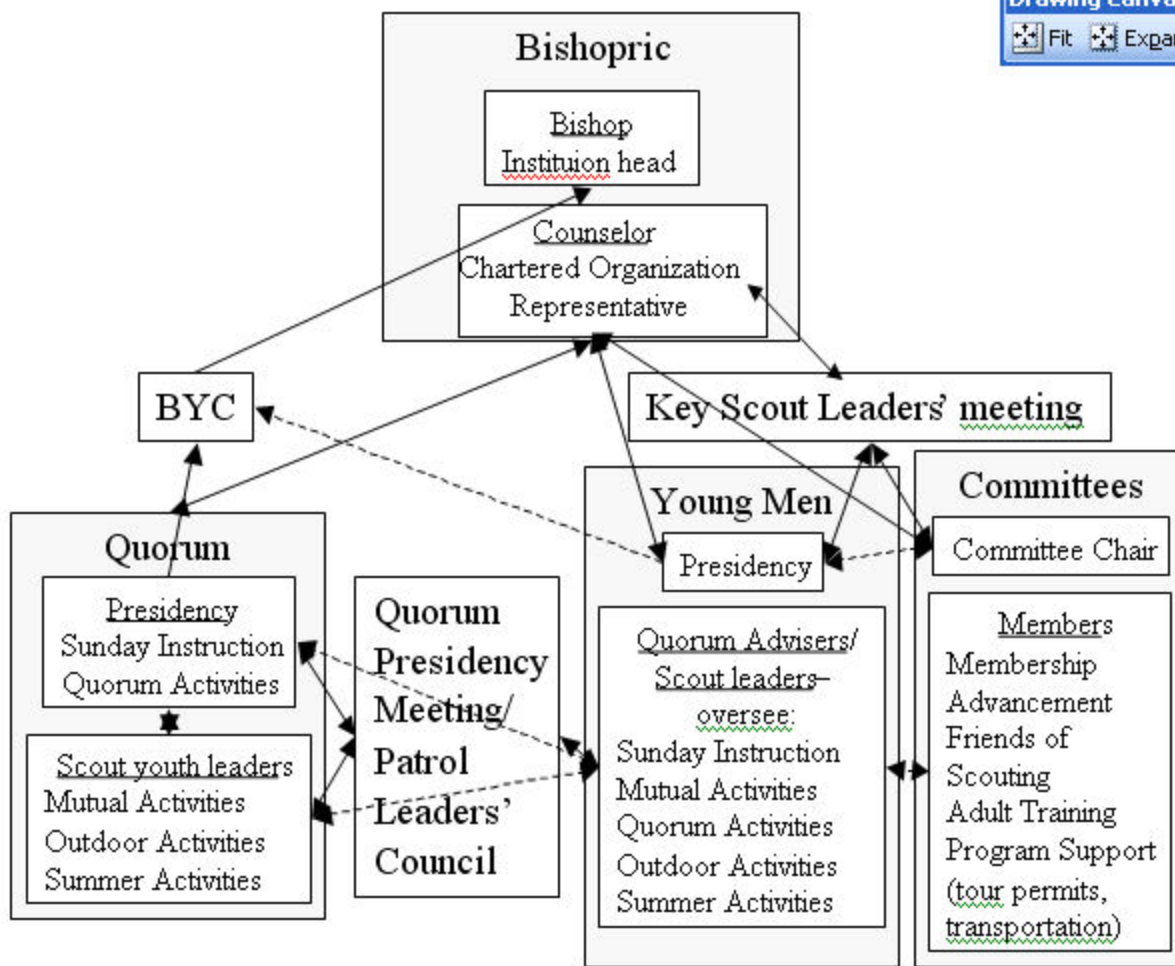
<sup>21</sup> Doctrine and Covenants 107:85-87.

<sup>22</sup> The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, *Church Handbook of Instructions: Book 2*, 182 – 183.

<sup>23</sup> Boy Scouts of America, *Scouting Handbook*, 3.

<sup>24</sup> *Ibid.*, 2.

<sup>25</sup> “... the bishopric generally calls members of the ward Young Men presidency to serve as Scout leaders (such as Scoutmaster, Varsity coach, and Venturing [advisor] . . .). Or instead, the bishopric may call assistant quorum advisers to serve as adult Scout leaders.” *Church Handbook of Instructions - Book 2*, 181.” Generally, they [the quorum advisers who serve as the Young Men presidency] serve as Scoutmaster, Varsity Scout Coach, or [Venturing crew Advisor], respectively. . . . If assistant quorum advisers are called, they may serve as Scoutmaster, Varsity Scout Coach, or [Venturing crew Advisor], or they may assist the quorum adviser in these responsibilities. *In either case, both the adviser and the assistant adviser attend all meetings of the quorum and the Scout unit and must be duly registered with the Boy Scouts of America.*” *Scouting Handbook*, 3.



The committee chairmen report to the chartered organization representative (COR) for their responsibilities. As the bishopric member over Young Men is typically the COR, he can coordinate any items not already resolved at the committee/ Young Men leadership level. Well functioning wards have an active COR working with the Young Men presidency and the Scout committees to ensure strong support for all quorum and Scouting activities. The COR and Scout committee responsibilities are described below.

### The Chartered Organization Representative

The COR is one of the bishop's counselors or another worthy adult who the bishop has called to this position. The COR's responsibilities delineated in the *Scouting Handbook* are to: ensure that all Scouts and leaders are registered; encourage well-planned programs; assist young men in achieving progress in Scouting; inform Aaronic Priesthood leaders and Primary leaders of meetings and training opportunities; help organize a committee for each Scouting age group in the ward; encourage unit leaders and committee members to participate in Scout leader training; and help provide recognition for young men and their leaders.<sup>26</sup> In short, the COR must make certain that the ward's Scouting program is functioning properly, and ensure that the program fulfills the desires of its sponsor (the ward). The COR should link the ward's Scout units together in a continuous program that will carry a young man from a Cub Scout pack to a Venturing crew. The COR, therefore, is the logical person for all the committee chairmen to report to, and get direction from, when policy matters are considered.

<sup>26</sup> Boy Scouts of America, *Scouting Handbook*, 2-3.

In Scouting, the COR is the registered representative of the institution head. In LDS units, the institution head is the bishop. The bishop, as president of the Aaronic Priesthood in the ward and president of the priests quorum, oversees all aspects of the Aaronic Priesthood program, including Scouting. Accordingly, the bishop should play a direct role in shaping the policies of ward Scout units. He communicates his interest and concerns during his regular interviews with the COR. Likewise, the COR should have regular interviews with the chairman of each ward Scout committee, and should frequently attend committee meetings. Through these interviews, the COR acts as a two-way communication channel—bringing the bishop’s concerns to the ward Scout committees and relaying the concerns and needs of the committees to the bishop. When other priesthood leaders want to relay their concerns or suggestions to a Scout committee, they should do this through the COR.

Let’s consider how the ward Scout units can be linked together. The vehicle for linking them together is the monthly Key Scout Leaders’ meeting.<sup>27</sup> In attendance: the COR (who conducts this meeting), the four unit committee chairmen (pack, troop, team, and crew), the Primary president and/or the Primary counselors with Scouting responsibilities, Cubmaster, pack trainer, Scoutmaster, patrol leader for the eleven-year-old Scouts, Varsity team Coach, Venturing crew Advisor. If the Aaronic Priesthood quorum advisers and the Young Men presidency members are not the unit leaders (Scoutmaster, Varsity team Coach, Venturing crew Advisor) it would be wise for them to be in attendance at the meeting, as well. This is the meeting where Primary – Young Men issues are coordinated; where the progress of young men through the Scouting chain is monitored; where pack, troop, team, and crew interrelated activities are tracked; where Scouting and other quorum activities are balanced; and where scheduling problems are resolved. In other words, this is where all aspects of Scouting come together and are made to fit together as they should. This meeting is especially important for Primary leaders because they have responsibilities in both Boy Scouting and Cub Scouting and they must make certain that Webelos Scouts are advanced (bridged) into the troop when they become eleven years old. The Key Scout Leaders’ meeting should truly be a key meeting for bringing Scouting and priesthood together at the adult level.

To properly fill the role of a COR, he or she must not only know what *is* happening in ward Scouting, but also must know what *should be* happening. The COR must be able to recognize the warning signs that indicate that something is amiss. The COR should be certain that leaders are trained, and yet at the same time be able to recognize when a young man’s interest is lagging because activities are being poorly planned (or not being planned at all). This means that LDS CORs themselves (as well as all other CORs) *must have BSA training*. There is a specific COR training course, but it would greatly benefit the ward Scouting programs if the COR would also choose to take basic training in the four age-level Scouting programs.

In the BSA organizational structure, the COR is automatically a member of the district committee and acts as a liaison between the sponsor and the Scout district/council. The COR’s involvement at the district level could include activities such as camporees, adult or youth training programs, Eagle boards, or other district functions. The level of activity of the COR within the district committee should be determined by the individual COR but, at a minimum, the COR should attend the annual district committee meeting to vote on the leaders and the members at large of the district committee for the coming year.

### **The Scout Committee**

What role does the Scout committee play in Scouting, and does this role change when Scouting operates as part of a priesthood quorum? To answer this question, let’s review the responsibilities of a Scout committee. The four responsibilities of the Scout committee are: discuss ward Scouting and accept assignments from the committee chairman; support Scouting activities by providing needed services; see that Church policies and BSA standards are followed; and encourage young men to earn the On My Honor and Faith in God Awards.<sup>28</sup> The *Scouting Handbook* also lists some individuals who might be considered as prospective committee members and specifies that the member of the Primary presidency responsible for the eleven-year-old boys should serve on the troop committee.

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<sup>27</sup> Additional information about this meeting can be found in topic 34, “Coordinating the Ward’s Scouting Program: The Key Scout Leaders’ Meeting.”

<sup>28</sup> Boy Scouts of America, *Scouting Handbook*, 3.



Some of the committee’s duties for accomplishing these responsibilities are: applying for tour permits and providing transportation for Scouting activities; approving and providing adult support for Scouting activities; tracking advancement; organizing boards of review, courts of honor, and award ceremonies; overseeing unit finances and conducting Friends of Scouting campaigns; annually renewing the unit’s Scouting charter; and making certain that youth and adults are trained for their specific positions, in Youth Protection and in any special training for high-adventure activities. These duties are important to ensure the unit is following standard Scouting methodology and the rules and procedures of the BSA. Of course, for this to be the case committee members must be BSA-trained so they know what a committee is supposed to do. Accomplishing these duties is the same whether the unit is LDS or not. Notable differences between LDS and non-LDS units are (1) the number of young men typically in the unit and (2) the level and types of fund-raising required.

## **Scout Leaders and Priesthood Advisers Link the Youth to Adult Support Groups**

The advisers link the youth and adult support organizations together. The adviser brings the support of the Scout committee to the youth planning and execution process. The adviser ensures there is clear communication between the youth and the adults. The adviser ensures that all activities have a priesthood purpose. The adviser works with the youth leadership to ensure that the quorum president oversees all activities and that the youth fulfill their responsibilities.

The adviser works closely with the quorum presidency and the youth Scout leaders to plan activities and solicit Scout committee support. Planning meetings bring the quorum and its Scout unit together and can provide opportunities to link adult resources to the youth-planned activities. Although the committee is primarily organized to provide resources for Scouting, the committee may be available for any quorum activity.

The quorum presidency meeting accomplishes four things. First, it coordinates all quorum activities, not just Scouting activities. Second, it defines the purpose of each activity, remembering that every activity should have a priesthood purpose. Third, it only spells out the activities in a broad-stroke manner, leaving other planning meetings to fill in the details—this is especially important for major activities. Fourth, it determines the general approach for carrying out each activity, and decides who is responsible for working out the details. Detailed planning of outdoor activities could then be assigned to youth Scout leaders who might be different from the quorum presidency.

Scout planning meetings may be held in conjunction with quorum presidency meetings or separately. The *Scouting Handbook* states that “these youth leaders in each Scout unit should hold a monthly meeting to plan the program for their Scout unit.”<sup>29</sup> The handbook also contains the following guidance:

1. The meeting may be held as part of the quorum presidency meeting after other quorum business has concluded.
2. One purpose of the meeting is to correlate each Scouting activity with other quorum activities.
3. Quorum advisers attend the meeting to provide adult support and direction to those who preside over the meeting.
4. The quorum president presides at and conducts the meeting. But the handbook also states that “if another young man is called to be the youth Scout leader, the president may invite him to conduct the meeting.”<sup>30</sup>

Additionally, the adult leader must recognize the quorum president as the presiding officer in all activities, including Scouting activities. To build in this recognition, some Scouting “business” might be conducted in the quorum and some priesthood “business” might be conducted in the Scout meeting. Let’s look at what opportunities exist:

1. At each Scout meeting, there can be a brief time slot set aside for quorum business. This should not be a quorum planning session, but rather a time for announcements, reminders, and a brief spiritual thought

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<sup>29</sup> Ibid.

<sup>30</sup> Ibid.

(similar to the Scoutmaster's minute at the close of a troop meeting). If the quorum president is in charge of this time period, this will emphasize his role as the presiding quorum officer.

2. In each Sunday quorum meeting Scouting announcements and reminders may be put on the agenda, but detailed planning should be done at another time. "Scouting is part of the quorum presidency's responsibilities, but the Sunday quorum instruction period should not become a Scout planning session."<sup>31</sup>
3. The nature of a particular Scouting activity may make it difficult to have a special "quorum time slot" within the activity, but every Scouting activity should begin with prayer and end with prayer. In a long-term camp or other activities where a routine schedule has been established, and morning and evening assemblies are held, a brief spiritual moment should be held during the assembly, conducted by the quorum president.
4. At every appropriate opportunity during a Scout activity, the quorum president should encourage young men to read their scriptures and remind them of their responsibility to abide by gospel principles. The adult Scout leader will be doing the same thing. This should be done constructively, not in a negative way. Nagging would only be counterproductive. By repeatedly encouraging scripture study, the quorum president (or the first assistant in the priests quorum) will essentially be acting as the "troop chaplain" (which formerly was a Boy Scout youth leadership position).
5. During lengthy Scouting activities such as summer camp or a three- or four-day hike, if the youth Scout leader is not the quorum president, the two young men should be in close contact so they can jointly monitor the activity's progress. This will assure that the youth Scout leader and the quorum president are in agreement on all matters as the activity proceeds.

## Conclusion

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When the Aaronic Priesthood quorum program and Scouting activities for the age-appropriate quorum are combined properly, the result is a program that will assist young men in becoming confident, knowledgeable, self-sufficient, and worthy leaders. The combined program, when administered in the way the Church directs, will help each young man to enjoy his Scouting activities at the same time he is earning his Duty to God certificates and accomplishing the purposes of the Aaronic Priesthood program.

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<sup>31</sup> Ibid., 3.