



# A CENTURY OF Scouting IN THE CHURCH

*For 100 years, the Church has used Scouting to build bridges of friendship, fellowship, and faith.*

When leaders of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints embraced the newly founded Boy Scout movement 100 years ago, it was a decision that would end up blessing the Church, the Boy Scouts of America, and millions of young men and their leaders during the ensuing century.

Scouting in the Church has served as “an extraordinary bridge,” says Young Men general president David L. Beck. “For individual young men, it is a bridge that sets them on the path leading to self-reliance and manhood. For the Church, it is a bridge that has fueled real growth as thousands of individuals and families have joined the Church or become active again. For members of the Church, it is a bridge to join with good people of other faiths and organizations whose values and aspirations are similar to ours and to work together to bless all youth in our communities.”<sup>1</sup>

The book *Century of Honor*, recently published by the LDS-BSA Relationships Office, says: “The inspired decision made 100 years ago to affiliate Scouting programs of The Church of Jesus Christ

of Latter-day Saints and the Boy Scouts of America has resulted in countless good turns, strong relationships, and millions of lives positively affected by both organizations. A century later, this Scouting partnership continues to enable young men to successfully serve as missionaries, husbands, and fathers and fulfill their duty to God, country, and family.”<sup>2</sup>

## Connecting Heart and Mind

The story of the Church’s involvement in Scouting begins at the turn of the last century, when Church leaders were looking for a way to help youth, especially the young men, better internalize what they were learning in Church classrooms.

Leaders noted “a lack of energy” and a “slackness” among many Aaronic Priesthood holders. In addition, “a large number of boys and girls” who faithfully attended Sunday School, the Mutual

Improvement Association, and Primary nevertheless had begun “to fall out of the ranks at about fourteen years of age and upwards.”<sup>3</sup>



Young men needed hands-on training, said President Joseph F. Smith (1838–1918) during general conference in April 1903.<sup>4</sup> During general conference five years later, President Smith requested that the young men be given “something to do that will make them interested in the work of the Lord.” In response, the Church developed an ordination schedule for Aaronic Priesthood holders: “young men served as deacons from 12 to 15, teachers from 15 to 18, and priests from 18 to 21.”<sup>5</sup>

A few years later, the Church Priesthood Committee recommended various associated duties. Along with administering, preparing, and passing the sacrament, young men were to become involved in a variety of service projects.<sup>6</sup> Simultaneously, the Young Men’s Mutual Improvement Association (YMMIA) introduced athletic activities.

### Scouting Is Born

Church leaders weren’t the only ones who saw the wisdom in helping young men learn skills, build moral character, and serve God and their fellowman.

During his military tours to India and South Africa, an experienced British military officer named Robert Baden-Powell wrote a book titled *Aids to Scouting*, which taught scouting and outdoor skills.

Baden-Powell revised the popular book for boys after organizing “an experimental ‘scouting’ encampment” in 1907. The revision, *Scouting for Boys*, would go on to sell approximately 150 million copies, and his small scouting encampment of 20 boys would soon be duplicated throughout England and America.

“Boys everywhere rallied around the promise of adventure through outdoor activities. The enthusiasm of both youth and adults carried the movement forward at an astonishing pace, and Scout troops were soon organized throughout the world.”

Two years later, when American publisher William D. Boyce became lost while traveling through London, an English boy offered to help him find his way. The boy refused to accept payment for his good deed, declaring



### CAN I GO TO SCOUTS TOO?

The Pedro Chipana family’s journey to the Church began with Pedro’s simple question: “Can I go to Scouts too?”

Pedro, whose family had emigrated from Peru a few years earlier, became interested in Cub Scouts after striking up a friendship with elementary school classmate Cameron Moyle. Soon the two were attending a Wolf Pack together in Cameron’s ward in Holladay, Utah.

“We are so grateful we were welcome to Scout activities even though we weren’t members of the Church,” says Pedro’s mother, Tania. “People opened their hearts and homes to us.”

When Pedro turned 11, his father, also named Pedro, accepted an invitation to join his son on the first of many Scout campouts. On that campout he became friends with Mark Pace, a member of the stake presidency who had served a mission in Spain and would later invite the family to his home to hear the missionary discussions in Spanish.

Despite “many wonderful experiences on campouts” and the love, patience, and fellowshiping of Cub and Scout leaders like DeAnn Moyle, Drew Menlove, Matt Longson, Dee Hansen, Kristi and Ryan Taylor, and many others, the family

was not quite ready to accept the gospel. Pedro, however, continued attending Scout activities in Cameron’s ward even after his family moved from the ward’s boundaries. Both young men eventually earned their Eagle rank before Pedro’s family moved back to the ward after being gone eight years.

At that point, the family could no longer ignore the stirrings of the Spirit. On May 7, 2011, Pedro, his parents, and his younger brother, Aldo, were baptized. A year later they were sealed in the Salt Lake Temple.

“The best part of the story is that Pedro was baptized by his best friend, Cameron,” Tania says.

At his baptism, Pedro realized he now had an additional duty to God—to prepare for a mission. Today he is teaching the gospel in Spanish in the Nevada Reno Mission, while his friend Cameron is serving in the Mexico Chihuahua Mission.



For Pedro Chipana, pictured at left with Cameron Moyle (right) and Peter Searle (left), being baptized by Cameron was an experience he will never forget.



that he was a Boy Scout. Curious, Boyce looked into the movement and returned to America with information about Scouting. On February 8, 1910, the Boy Scouts of America was incorporated.

### Scouting Comes to Utah

That same year, English immigrant Thomas George Wood learned about Scouting from an uncle in England. He resolved to bring the program to the 50 “noisy and not easy to manage” young men in his Salt Lake City ward, organizing a troop on October 12. Other wards soon followed suit, organizing troops within their respective YMMIA organizations.

The following March, the YMMIA board organized a committee to study Scouting and to “investigate the possibility of standardizing Boy Scout troops within the YMMIA and affiliating with the national organization.” Shortly thereafter, the YMMIA officially integrated the program.

On September 2 of that year, the *Deseret News* reported that Scouting had been adopted “to promote discipline and develop character, to instill honor and trustworthiness in the lives of young boys and to inspire them with a sense of duty to parents, country, and religious ideals.”

With the organization of “MIA Scouts,” the foundation was laid for a partnership with the BSA.

By January 1913, approximately 20,000 young men were involved in the Church’s Scout program. That same month a committee that included Elder Heber J. Grant met with BSA leader Samuel A. Moffat to discuss a partnership. The meeting left Elder Grant “favorably impressed.” Two months later, on March 15, the YMMIA approved a resolution to affiliate with the national Boy Scout program, a move approved by President Joseph F. Smith.



### A Fruitful Partnership

With the issuance of an official charter to the Church on May 21, 1913, the Church became the first nationally chartered organization to affiliate with the Boy Scouts of America. The bridge that would bless the Church and the BSA for the next century was now in place. The welcome from the BSA immediately proved beneficial to both organizations, with the BSA readily adopting innovations that came from the Church’s Scouting program.

“The synergistic partnership propelled Scouting forward across the United States and throughout the Church as Scout troops were registered in every ward.” In addition, the partnership paved the way for the affiliation of other organizations with the BSA, which helped the organization acquire a national charter from Congress a few years later.

Because Scouting added achievement and excitement to MIA activities, it attracted and retained boys. By 1919, Scouting had become too large in Utah to be headed by a single Scouting commissioner. As a result, four councils were created with paid professionals administering the program. BSA soon duplicated the council structure throughout the nation.

About ten years after the Church affiliated with the Boy Scouts, Church leaders decided that MIA meetings would be dedicated solely to Scouting and no longer divide their time



### PREPARING YOUNG MEN TO WALK UPRIGHTLY

“In this world where some misguided men and women strive to tear down and destroy great movements such as Scouting, I am pleased to stand firm for an organization that teaches duty to God and country, that embraces the Scout Law. Yes, an organization whose motto is ‘Be prepared’ and whose slogan is ‘Do a good turn daily.’”

“The Aaronic Priesthood prepares boys for manhood and the weightier duties of the Melchizedek Priesthood. Scouting helps our boys to walk uprightly the priesthood path to exaltation.”

President Thomas S. Monson, “The Upward Reach,” *Ensign*, Nov. 1993, 48.

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who became one of the first women to serve on the National Cub Scout Committee, to adapt the Primary curriculum to include Scouting and priesthood preparation for 11-year-old boys. Chief Scout Executive Joseph A. Brunton Jr. met with Primary leaders to help organize the program and, at the request of the Primary board, authorized women to serve as Scout leaders.

As Scouting matured in the Church, leaders took steps to correlate the program more closely with the Aaronic Priesthood, and Church manuals emphasized unity between the Aaronic Priesthood and Scouting.

between Scouting and religious activities. That determination rested on the conclusion “that religious training could naturally occur through Scouting activities.”

That approach reflected Robert Baden-Powell’s vision of Scouting. “There is no religious side to the movement,” he declared in 1920. “The whole of it is based on religion, that is, on the realisation and service of God.”

In 1928, when the Church named Scouting as the activity program for deacons, it created an advanced program called Vanguard Scouting for older boys. Five years later the Boy Scouts of America asked for, and received, permission to use the program as the basis for its own program for older youth, which it decided to name the Explorer program (the Church adopted this name in 1935).

In 1938, Latter-day Saints celebrated Scouting’s silver anniversary in the Church. During general conference that April, Ray O. Wyland, BSA director of education, said, “The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints is using the Boy Scout program in a larger way than any other church in existence.” He added that the Church “has given a volunteer and a loyal leadership and support that is unequalled by any other religious body in America.”<sup>7</sup>

In 1952, President David O. McKay (1873–1970) asked Primary general president LaVern Parmley to incorporate Cub Scouting into the Primary program. With the new program, Scouting was now available for LDS boys ages 8 through 18. President McKay also asked Sister Parmley,

The Church introduced the Venturing program in 1971, and LDS Scout leaders developed Varsity Scouting for youth ages 14 and 15 a few years later. Both programs eventually became national BSA programs.

After Elder George Albert Smith was appointed to the Boy Scout National Executive Board in 1931, the Church enjoyed increased opportunities to share its desires and opinions with other national Scout volunteers. That influence grew as members of the Young Men and Primary general presidencies and their boards began serving on national Scouting committees and later on the National Executive Board. Church influence also grew internationally through affiliation with international Scouting organizations.

Elder Ezra Taft Benson succeeded President Smith to the national board in 1949. President Thomas S. Monson, who succeeded Elder Benson in 1969 and has served on the board ever since, said on the 100th anniversary of Scouting, “To Scout leaders who build bridges to the hearts of boys, to parents of Scouts, and to you fine young Scouts yourselves, on this the 100th anniversary of Scouting in America, I salute you and pray our Heavenly Father’s blessings upon you.”<sup>8</sup>

Today the Church’s influence continues unabated. In 2012, Wayne Perry became the first Latter-day Saint to serve as national BSA president. And in May 2013, the Church’s Presiding Bishop delivered the keynote address to national Scout leaders at their annual Duty to God breakfast in Grapevine, Texas.



*Bill Mallett (at left with Elder Getúlio Carvalho Jr.) is grateful for mentors like David and Rebecca Melonakos (with Bill at far left) who reached out to him.*

## MENTORS WHO MADE A DIFFERENCE

Twelve-year-old Bill Mallett loved his first Scout camp-out, but as a new member he was hesitant to become fully active in the Church and its programs. Fortunately for Bill, his Scout leaders didn't give up easily.

"I always had people reaching out to me to keep me linked to the Church in some way," Bill says.

One Scoutmaster, William Faulkner, regularly drove across Newton, North Carolina, to give Bill rides to Scouting activities and Church meetings. During one of those trips, Bill remembers Brother Faulkner encouraging him to set and accomplish five goals: receive his Eagle Scout Award, graduate from seminary, serve a full-time mission, graduate from college, and be sealed in the temple. Bill says this simple conversation gave direction to his life.

"I doubt he knew at the time that it would have such an impact on me that I would look at those five things and would really want to do them because I admired him so much," Bill says.

Having grown up without a father in his home, Bill turned to his Scout leaders for good examples. Another Scoutmaster, David Melonakos and his wife, Rebecca, eventually took Bill in as a foster son.

For the first time, Bill lived in a home that had daily family dinner and weekly family home evening. He saw how a father could preside consistently and worthily in a home.

David mentored Bill through the process of receiving his Eagle Scout and Duty to God awards. Eventually, Bill graduated from seminary, became the valedictorian of his high school, received a top BSA scholarship, and attended Brigham Young University. In November 2012 he completed his mission service in the Brazil São Paulo South Mission.

"I've seen people run after me and do a lot of simple, little things that really changed my life and made me who I am," Bill says. "I really see the Lord's hand in my life through these people."

Bill is grateful to those inspired leaders who listened to the Holy Ghost, prayed for revelation, and helped him through Church and Scouting activities.

"That has made all the difference in my life," he says.

In his remarks, Bishop Gary E. Stevenson said: "Speaking on behalf of the organization I represent, . . . I feel that it is this common belief in duty to God that has forged the iron-strong connection with Boy Scouts of America we have shared over the last 100 years. . . . Duty to God is where the power lies. Duty to God is what changes lives."<sup>9</sup>

## The Bridge of Scouting

On a table in President Monson's office sits a small, sculpted bridge. A figurine of Robert Baden-Powell that President Monson purchased in London stood nearby until a visiting child picked it up and placed it on the bridge.

"Well," responded President Monson in deciding to leave the figurine on the bridge, "Lord Baden-Powell was definitely a bridge builder."<sup>10</sup>

And so is the program he created, especially in the Church.

"With President Monson's vision and

leadership, we have never been positioned better to use that bridge to bless individuals and families," says Brother Beck. "This is a great day for the Church to utilize Scouting in the sacred work of salvation."<sup>11</sup> ■

## NOTES

1. David L. Beck, interview, June 13, 2013, Salt Lake City.
2. Unless otherwise noted, quoted material and historical information in this article come from *Century of Honor: 100 Years of Scouting in The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints* (2013).
3. Joseph B. Keeler, *The Lesser Priesthood and Notes on Church Government* (1904), v, vi.
4. See *Improvement Era*, May 1903, 545.
5. Barbara Jean Jones, "A Century of Aaronic Priesthood," *New Era*, Jan. 2000, 30; see also *General Priesthood Committee Minute Book*, no. 6281, 13–15.
6. See "Practical Duties for Members of the Lesser Priesthood," *Improvement Era*, July 1916, 847.
7. Ray O. Wyland, "The Knighthood of Youth," *Improvement Era*, Aug. 1928, 860, 861.
8. Thomas S. Monson, "President Monson Discusses Strengths of Scouting" (video), [lds.org/prophets-and-apostles/unto-all-the-world/2011/01](http://lds.org/prophets-and-apostles/unto-all-the-world/2011/01).
9. Gary E. Stevenson, speech, May 23, 2013, [mormonnewsroom.org/article/bishop-gary-e-stevenson-boy-scouts-of-america-national-annual-meeting-keynote-speech](http://mormonnewsroom.org/article/bishop-gary-e-stevenson-boy-scouts-of-america-national-annual-meeting-keynote-speech).
10. As related by Thomas S. Monson.
11. David L. Beck, interview.

