

Ten Commandment Hikes, for Scout Youth and Families

David Gironda, Interfaith Chairman, Grand Canyon Council-BSA, June 2001

We have had annual Ten Commandment Hikes in the Phoenix, Arizona area since 1996. The hike originated in Miami, FL around 1976. We hold them on the Friday after Thanksgiving, when most people are off from work, and want to avoid the busiest shopping day. In other parts of the country that date may usually be too cold, but it works for us. Steps to plan a hike are as follows:

1) Initial Planning - **a)** set a date; **b)** select a general route area, preferably a circle route; **c)** list all prospective churches for stops; **d)** get commitment from one church to park, start, end; **e)** place on Council & Districts calendars; **f)** advertised at least 3-months prior in Roundtable newsletters and flyers; **g)** design and order event patches 2-months in advance; **h)** drive the route, contacting pastors/etc. about the event; **i)** work out the schedule of stops, coordinating with presenters and a police officer; **j)** take unit reservations, make final arrangements; **k)** pray for good weather!

2) Route Selection - Listing houses of worship from the Yellow Pages, plot a circle route that has more than ten in a 3 to 6 mile long route (nearly 1.5 mile square, or 1 by 2 miles.) Then call those that have offices, and visit others on a Saturday or Sunday, for initial contact. A follow-up letter or fax on letterhead is good, so they have something of record. Jewish, Catholic, Christian and Muslim centers are usually cooperative, as all profess the Commandments nearly the same, while other religions may not revere them. The more diverse the participants, the more interesting is the hike.

3) Alternatives - When there is a no-show or cancellation at a stop, you might adjust and do two Commandments at one, but it is good to plan a route that might have some alternatives, just in case. An alternate date may also be good to coordinate, in case weather does not cooperate.

4) Two-deep Leadership - Planning and coordination by at least two leaders, with others to help call those of their own religion, to do patch design, etc. Hikes typically need 3 or 4 for registration, drivers with water/coffee/cocoa jugs to go ahead at stops and for emergencies, 2 to lead the hike so that 1 can stay and warn hikers at any impediments along the way, and 2 to anchor the hike.

5) Promotion - Mostly from flyers, notices and word-of-mouth; expect increases every year, acceptance also. We invite all Scout levels, Girl Scouts and Campfire thru their local offices, as well as siblings and parents, hiking in one group. Presentations are limited to 10 minutes on the Commandment, 5 minutes on the worship place, and 5 minutes for questions. With an average 20 minutes between each stop and a 40 minute break for a bag lunch (added stop) it takes from 8-am to about 4-pm or around 8-hours for our hikes. However, more than half the time we are sitting!

6) Traffic Control - In every city we have had good cooperation from the Police, who drive ahead to stop traffic at crossings and escort us during the hike, about 200 to 300 hikers, some in strollers and wagons. We carry garbage bags and pick up trash as we hike, so do a public service in return.

7) Transit Backup - For some longer stretches between stops, we have had buses from Scout unit or school organizations drive some of the younger and older hikers, if closer stops were not possible.

8) Bag Lunch - All hikers bring their own lunches and canteens, we provide water/coffee/cocoa at stops, and sodas at lunch (can be donated by stores.) We charge \$5 per hiker getting a patch, free for siblings or others. This is our Interfaith Committee's primary fund-raiser.