



TROOPS OF SAINT GEORGE

VIRTUS. HONOR. FRATERNITAS.

TROOP STARTER KIT FOR THE TROOPS OF SAINT GEORGE 2015 EDITION

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Table of Contents

The Troops of Saint George Mission	3
Purpose	3
TSG Officer's Handbook	3
Startup Phase	3
1. <i>TSG Officer's Selection</i>	3
2. <i>LLC or 501c3 Formation</i>	4
3. <i>Open Troop Bank Account</i>	4
4. <i>Liability Insurance</i>	4
5. <i>Accident Insurance</i>	4
6. <i>Local Dues</i>	4
7. <i>Order Uniforms</i>	4
8. <i>Locate Meeting and Camping Property</i>	5
9. <i>Advertising & Recruitment</i>	5
10. <i>Troop Level Website & Online Payment Processing</i>	5
11. <i>Importance of Organization, Delegation, and Perseverance</i>	5
Troop Meetings	6
1. <i>Initial Planning Meeting</i>	6
2. <i>Troop Meetings</i>	6
3. <i>Welcome BBQ</i>	7
Troop Campouts	7
1. <i>Campout Overview</i>	7
2. <i>Campout Planning</i>	7
3. <i>Example Campout Agendas</i>	7

The Troops of Saint George Mission

"The Troops of Saint George apostolate aims to use the outdoors as our canvas and the sacraments as our path to light the way for the formation of Holy Catholic men and boys. Whether called to the vocation of the priesthood, the religious life, or that of Holy fatherhood, our fathers and sons will take a prayerful pilgrimage together to fulfill Christ's desire for them to grow in virtue and in their Holy Catholic faith as they journey toward heaven." - Saint George, Pray for us.

Purpose

The purpose of this document is to help new TSG troops begin their journey. We hope to accomplish this by sharing some practical tips and advice each TSG troop can use to get started. You might think of this as a TSG startup roadmap.

With this said, it's important to realize that the advice offered in this document is just that – advice. As TSG grows, and best practices are shared across the organization, we plan to update this document accordingly. So, if you have suggestions please share them with the National TSG organization so we can all learn, and grow in Christ, together.

Additionally, feel free to deviate from our suggestions as needed. We simply hope to inspire and encourage new troops to take action with this document.

TSG Officer's Handbook

This Troop Starter Kit is meant to compliment the TSG Officer's Handbook. As such, it's critical every TSG leader have a deep understanding of what is shared within the Handbook. If you haven't read the TSG Officer's Handbook, please do so prior to proceeding with this document.

Startup Phase

1. TSG Officer's Selection

Aside from God's grace, nothing is more important to the success of a TSG troop than a strong Officer's team. This starts with a dedicated, entrepreneurially minded, Captain.

A strong, and committed, 1st Lieutenant is also required since the Captain cannot manage a growing troop by himself. The Captain and 1st Lieutenant will work closely with one another so it's critical they work well together.

So, the first step to getting started is to select a Captain and 1st Lieutenant. Once these men are identified it's time to identify 2nd (Patrol) Lieutenants. Refer to the Officer's Guide for more details.

2. LLC, Incorporation or 501c3 Formation

Once a Captain and 1st Lieutenant are identified, and the troop is officially chartered, we strongly encourage each troop to file as an LLC, Incorporate or 501c3. We'd encourage each troop to seek out a qualified lawyer to assist with this step, as guidelines and benefits vary by state / country.

3. Open Troop Bank Account

Once your troop is chartered, and is recognized as an LLC or 501c3, we'd encourage you to open a dedicated troop bank account. This will allow you to keep your troop finances organized and separate from anyone's personal finances.

We also strongly encourage you to nominate, or hire, a bookkeeper, or CPA, who can help you manage your troop finances. As your troop grows in size your ability to manage your troop's finances will be critical. You may also need to file troop level tax returns according to the laws of your land.

4. Liability Insurance

We encourage each troop to seek out a liability insurance policy at the troop level. Many existing TSG Troops have already done this so please contact the National TSG Organization if you'd like to learn more about how this has been handled.

Prior to purchasing liability insurance for your troop, you are encouraged to check with the local parish in order to see if your local troop can be added to their parish liability insurance policy.

5. Accident Insurance

US based TSG troops are covered under a nationally sponsored \$25,000 secondary accident policy. Once a troop is officially chartered, all members qualify for coverage.

6. Local Dues

Each troop is encouraged to collect local dues, which are separate from the national dues required during the chartering process. These local dues will help the troop purchase supplies and pay expenses such as bank fees, bookkeeper fees, trailers, Dutch ovens, etc.

Each troop must decide how much to collect for local dues. Currently chartered TSG troops collect between \$20 - \$35 per member, annually.

In addition to local dues, troops often require a nominal fee for activities such as camping, cookout, and field trips. Typical campout fees range from \$10 to \$20 per camper per campout.

7. Order Uniforms

Once your troop is officially chartered, it's time to order official TSG uniforms. Our Uniform Guidelines documentation will be provided to the captain to aid in this process.

8. Locate Meeting and Camping Property

It's important each troop find a consistent place to meet each month. We encourage meeting outside whenever possible but meeting inside is also acceptable.

Examples of meeting locations may include local parks, Knight of Columbus halls (if approved by the local council), or someone's land.

We'd also encourage each troop to seek out a camping "home base" whenever possible. This may be a parishioners' land, or a local park. But having a consistent place to camp may add tremendous value to your troop. Each troop can also, obviously, make "road trips" whenever that makes sense and is feasible.

No matter where your troop meets, and camps, it's important to ensure you leave the location better than it looked when you arrived.

9. Advertising & Recruitment

The key to growing a troop lies in the ability to effectively advertise and recruit. Examples of advertising may include:

- Pastor introducing the new troop to the parish
- Announcements in parish bulletin
- Announcements on Catholic homeschool forums and networks
- Announcements in Catholic school bulletins
- Catholic radio or TV
- Catholic newspapers or publications
- Troop members supporting the local parish
- Word of mouth

10. Troop Level Website & Online Payment Processing

If possible, each troop is highly encouraged to launch a troop website where information about the troop can be found, however, ALL troops will have a troop page on the National TSG website.

We also strongly encourage some sort of online payment system be built into the local troop website enabling money to be collected electronically instead of via cash or check. The National TSG organization uses Stripe.com to collect online funds.

Some examples of existing troop level websites include <http://www.tsg1.org> and <http://tsg5.org>. These sites were built using a technology called Wordpress by fathers within the troop.

11. Importance of Organization, Delegation, and Perseverance

Starting, and being a part of, the Troops of St. George just may be one of the most incredible journeys a father and their son(s) will ever experience.

With this said, successfully starting and growing a troop will require a lot of prayer, hard work, and dedication by all involved.

We cannot stress enough the importance of staying organized and not expecting one or two people to do all of the hard work. As such, it's important for each Captain and 1st Lieutenant to delegate tasks as needed.

It is also important to persevere through obstacles and any setbacks you may encounter. There is little chance everything within your troop will go as smoothly as you'd hope. St. Paul may have summed this up best when he proclaimed, "Let us not grow tired of doing good, for in due time we shall reap our harvest, if we do not give up." Gal 6:9

Troop Meetings

1. Initial Planning Meeting

In order to initially organize your troop an adult only meeting of the minds is almost certainly required. Potential items of discussion at this meeting include, but are not limited to, the following:

- **Opening Prayer.** All TSG functions should begin, and end, with prayer.
- **Who is interested in joining the troop?** How many men and boys? And what are the ages of the boys? We'd encourage sharing as much TSG literature as possible with each adult before this meeting so all attendees have a better understanding of what TSG is about.
- **Who is interested in leadership?** Identifying men interested in troop leadership is critical. This is also a good time to identify specific talents from each of the men (i.e. who is a lawyer, CPA, website designer, etc.).
- **Meeting & camping locations.** While not mandatory, beginning to think about where the troop will meet and camp will be helpful.
- **Parish support.** Identify if your parish priest, or another priest in good standing with the Catholic Church, is ready to support your troop.
- **Chartering.** If you've not already done so, you will need to prepare to charter your troop with National Troops of St. George. This will require collecting national dues, etc.
- **Q&A.** There will be many questions so it's important to leave lots of time to address these.
- **Closing Prayer.** All TSG functions should begin, and end, with prayer.

2. Troop Meetings

Most troops meet one time per month during the months of September through June (this may differ in areas of the country where winter and summer months are extreme). These monthly meetings often occur a week before the troop campout. In most cases, these troop level meetings last for 1 to 1.5 hours.

Optimally, fathers and their sons will attend these meetings together but if the father has a conflict, the boy(s), can be dropped off and picked back up, by another parent or appointed guardian.

Some suggestions for meeting agenda items may include, but are not limited to, the following:

- **Opening Prayer.** All TSG functions should begin, and end, with prayer.
- **General Updates.** The Captain, or 1st Lieutenant, will usually provide an overall troop update to the men and boys in attendance.
- **Campout Planning.** Planning campouts takes a lot of work! We will cover this in more detail later in the document but this is a popular item of discussion at troop meetings.
- **Fun activity for the boys.** We strongly encourage every meeting include a fun activity for the boys. Ideas may include a whittling project (after knife safety training and insurance is in place), nerf gun target practice (very popular), survival techniques, fire safety, first aid, or any sort of outdoor game or activity (i.e. kickball, etc.).
- **Closing Prayer.** All TSG functions should begin, and end, with prayer.

3. Welcome BBQ

Many troops hold an annual “kickoff BBQ” so new members can meet one another at the beginning of the year. In most cases, moms and siblings are also invited to this event. This is often done at someone’s home or at a local park where the kids can run and play.

Troop Campouts

1. Campout Overview

Troops of St. George are encouraged, but not required, to camp out up to 8 times per year. Depending on your location, and weather, the months will vary.

Within the US, many troops camp out from September to May. Some troops also hold an annual “family day” in June where moms and siblings get to come and see what the men and boys have been up to all year. Many US based troops choose to not camp during the summer months but, again, troops are free to camp whenever they’d like so be sure to do what works best for your situation.

Next, it’s important to stress that camping out isn’t mandatory. Some troops market this as follows, “With TSG you have the opportunity to camp out up to 8 times per year.” This way busy families, who may have children in other activities, will realize they aren’t required to camp out every time the troop does.

2. Campout Planning

Successful campouts essentially come down to one thing – excellent planning. Everything from the location, to food preparation, to bathrooms, to activities, to what you will do if it rains/snows should be carefully thought through.

Additionally, if at all possible, we highly encourage Mass be celebrated at the campout on Saturday evening or Sunday morning. This will obviously require appropriate planning with a priest.

3. Example Campout Agendas

Each troop is encouraged to plan all aspects of their campouts. But, to give you some ideas of what other troops have done, we'd like to share a real campout agenda below. Feel free to use this as a guide to planning your own campout.

Camp Schedule for January Campout

Friday January 24

- 3:00-5:00 pm Dig latrines, prepare camp, and collect wood for fire
- 5:00-7:00 pm Arrival, Tent Set-up
- 7:00 pm Welcome, orientation, camp rules by Captain Musty, Signing of Waivers of Liability□
- 7:30 pm Bonfire with Prayer, Saint Reading (Mr. Lowtower) and S'mores by the Fire
- 9:00 pm Rosary (Lead by Fathers)
- 10:00 pm Lights out

Saturday January 25

- 7:30 am Morning Prayers in the Chapel□
- 8:00 am Breakfast - Cowboy Casserole in Dutch Ovens□
- 9:00 am Flag Ceremony
- 9:15 am Troop will divide into individual patrols.
- St. Matthew Angels (1st grade)
- St. Mark Lions (2nd grade)
- St. Luke Bulls (3rd grade)
- St. John Eagles (4th grade)
- St. George Dragon Slayers (5th grade)
- Senior Patrol (6th grade and higher)
- 9:30 am Cadets will participate in rotation of activities
- Knot Tying – Mr. Hawkeye
- Compass Orienteering – Mr. Robert

Whittling project – Mr. Lowtower

Kickball – Group

12:00 pm Angelus in the Chapel

12:15 pm Cleanup for Lunch

12:30 pm Lunch - Cold Cut Combos, Soup

1:30 pm Camp Cleanup

2:00 pm Free Time (zip line, etc.)

3:00 pm Father Arrives

3:30 pm Confession

5:00 pm Holy Sacrifice of the Mass

6:00 pm Dinner - Tacos☐

8:00 pm Bonfire & Camp Cobbler in Dutch Ovens

8:30 pm Star Gazing with Telescopes (Mr's. Blue, Lowtower, Brown)

9:30 pm Rosary (Lead by Cadets)

10:00 pm Lights out

Sunday January 26

7:30 am Morning Prayers in the Chapel☐

8:00 am Breakfast - Oatmeal buffet☐

9:00 am Breakdown and police camp for trash

10:00 am Depart the Ranch