

GENERAL SYNOD

PRIVATE MEMBER'S MOTION: GIRL GUIDES' PROMISE

Background Paper from Mrs Alison Ruoff

1. The Girl Guide movement began in 1909 when girls saw the fun that boys were having with the new Scout movement started by Lord Baden Powell and wanted to join. His sister Agnes Baden Powell decided that girls needed their own organisation and so began Girl Guides. Younger girls were later called Brownies and older girls progressed from being Guides to Rangers.
2. There are now in the UK over 500,000 girls of all ages meeting weekly in their units with their leaders.
3. Early in 2013 it was announced from the Guide HQ that a consultation; would take place online; a survey monkey, for a possible alteration of the Guide promise, which is said when a girl is enrolled as a Rainbow (Youngest section), Brownie, Guide or Ranger member.
4. As I understand it many were in favour of some alteration. However, when the new promise was announced there was to be no choice. The old promise, (see below for both and for comparison) was to be jettisoned and replaced by an entirely new promise.

I promise that I will do my best
To love my God
 To serve the Queen and my country
 To help other people
 And to keep the Brownie / Guide Law

As compared with the 'new' promise

I promise that I will do my best
To be true to myself and to develop my beliefs
 To serve the Queen and my community
 To help other people
 And to keep the Brownie / Guide Law

5. Many Guides and their leaders are content with the change, which came into use on 1st September 2013 but equally many are extremely upset, disappointed and worried since the decision is final and any unit refusing to change to the 'new' promise is threatened with expulsion. This has already happened to a Brownie, Guide and Ranger unit attached to a church in Jesmond, Newcastle upon Tyne. The date for the expulsion was the 31st December but the Chief Guide has given an extra 19 days for further reflection.
6. My reason for bringing this to the attention of all General Synod members is as follows:
 - a) Most Guide units meet in church premises and for all these units to now be banned from being able to say in the promise that I 'love my God' cannot be right. Of course many

secular organisations use church premises but in this case there has been imposed from GG HQ an outright ban after over a century of use of 'loving God'.

In no way, however, am I suggesting that Guides should be prevented from continuing to use church premises.

Girl Guiding has always been a faith based organisation as begun by the Baden- Powells. Obviously at the time it was predominantly Christian but over the years has been extended to include girls of any faith. Why should this change and exclude a sense of spirituality? The new promise revolves around self.

Muslim girls are quite content to say 'love my God'.

- b) From a wholly Christian perspective, how can a Christian girl or leader revert to the new promise? They are being forced to choose between faith and Girl guiding. It is also a wonderful opportunity for girls to hear about God and the Lord Jesus Christ when learning to understand what the Promise means. This then is a serious Gospel issue.
- c) The Scout movement have retained their 'old 'promise, to love God, as well as having a secular promise. Why therefore should the Guiding movement NOT be allowed to have choice? It is rank discrimination against the girls of this wonderful youth movement.
- d) Finally it could be seen as contributing to the further marginalisation of Christianity in this country which as Christians, it surely is our duty to resist.

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