

Healthy Outposts in Smaller Churches



The core purpose of the Royal Rangers ministry is to reach boys with the gospel of Christ and lead them through a process of growth into Christlike manhood. Our goal is that every boy be introduced to the Savior and brought to an understanding of His purpose for his life. We seek to achieve this goal by partnering with churches and church leaders across the nation and around the world, resourcing, training, and equipping them with tools designed for that purpose.

But ministry leaders in smaller churches often face specific challenges when implementing the program. Some may even come to believe that Royal Rangers only works in larger churches with many leaders, plenty of specialized equipment, and a large budget. But in truth, the process of mentoring boys into Christlike manhood can take place as effectively in a smaller church as in a larger one, provided the features of a healthy outpost are employed.

What is a Healthy Outpost?

A healthy outpost may be defined as one that effectively applies the "seven methods" of Royal Rangers to achieve the mission of the program within the unique context of their church and community. The seven methods represent the key components that should be present in every Royal Rangers program in some

way, and most of them can be applied in smaller churches in essentially the same way as in larger ones:

- **Friendship:** bringing men and boys together around activities of common interest
- **Activities:** providing a diversity of activities that include outdoor events, sports, trade skills, technology, and arts
- **Interactive Learning:** learning fun things in hands-on, interactive ways
- **Group Identity:** be part of something "big" and meaningful
- **Service:** providing opportunities for boys to live out their faith through service to others

But the other two methods - the **Patrol System** and the **Advancement System** - may need to be applied in a slightly different way in smaller churches where the entire Royal Rangers program may only consist of a handful of boys. For example, if an outpost were to be comprised of only one Ranger Kid, two Discovery Rangers, one Adventure Ranger, and one Expedition Ranger, the traditional application of these two methods may not be feasible. In an outpost like this, it is likely that all the boys would be kept together in one group rather than in four separate age groups. The number of leaders or meeting rooms in a smaller church may also dictate that all boys be kept together in one group.

Although this example is hypothetical, it may represent a far more common situation than that of a larger outpost with 30 or 40 boys in four separate age groups. Consider these two statistics:

- According to US Census data from 2012, boys of Royal Rangers age (grades K-12) represent approximately 10% of the general US population, with roughly half being in grades K-5 and half being teen boys.

- According to the National Congregations Study conducted by Duke University in 2015, over 90% of all churches in the US have fewer than 350 people in attendance on Sunday morning, and the "average" size church in the US is about 75 people.

Taking these two statistics together, it can be inferred that the typical church in the US would have about 75 people in attendance with about 7 or 8 boys. Half of the boys being teens, and half being younger boys. If these assumptions are true, the example given above becomes more of the norm than the exception.

It therefore, becomes imperative that we help smaller churches understand how the Royal Rangers program can be effectively implemented within this context, empowering them for success within the ministry environment God has placed them in. If we truly believe in our mission of reaching every boy, we must do so by providing churches with ministry tools that work as effectively in smaller church environments as in larger churches. The following represents a way to apply these two methods that is much more realistic for smaller churches while maintaining the objectives of the program.

Patrol System

The purpose of the patrol system is to give boys the opportunity to work together as a team and participate in the leadership of their group. This can be achieved in a smaller, combined group setting as well as a larger group. In a combined group as described above, the entire group can be treated as one patrol with the older boys naturally serving as the patrol leaders. Leadership duties can be shared among the boys according to their abilities with the group leader serving in an advisory role as he would in any outpost.

Advancement System

Advancement within a combined group could be handled in several different ways. The Royal Rangers advancement system consists of a series of four advancement "trails," one for each age group. Each trail consists of a series of advancement "steps." Boys earn steps by earning a specified number of "merits" of a specified type and color. Merits are earned by completing a specified set of merit requirements that are unique to that merit.

Although the Royal Rangers advancement system and all award requirements are fixed and not subject to change, the outpost does have the freedom to determine the degree to which the advancement system will be used. Outpost leaders are empowered to apply the advancement system as needed to fit their unique setting and environment.

For example, one outpost may choose to ignore the advancement system altogether and present no awards of any kind, while another outpost may choose to present merits but not advancement steps. Both options have advantages and disadvantages that outpost leaders must evaluate in determining the best plan for their setting, and neither would provide all the benefits of utilizing the full advancement system. However, these options may provide a more suitable solution for smaller outposts with combined groups.

Review this table entitled [Advancement System Options](#) for additional details on this concept.

Regardless of the way the methods of the program are applied, the objectives of the program remain the same—to evangelize boys for Christ, mentor them into true biblical manhood, and engage them in service to "God, (their) church, and (their) fellowman." The way in which this is accomplished within an outpost is left to the leadership of the church to determine as they are directed by the Holy

Spirit. That's the ultimate mission of all ministries in the church, whether large or small.



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