

YMCA RAG/LEATHER PROGRAM

THE WHITE RAG

Instructions:

The white rag ceremony is and should be the most serious and meaningful of all the rag ceremonies.

The recipient for the white rag is familiar with the meaning and ceremonies of all the other rags. This person is accepting the challenge of dedication of his or her life to Christian service, so they are encouraged to plan and design their ceremony.

The person should not be blindfolded, but should participate fully. Memory work is not required, but the recipient should be instructed well in advance to be prepared to deliver a brief talk, which embodies their philosophy of life and express their motivation in accepting the white rag.

Prior to the ceremony the readings should be delegated to all the participants, except the recipient, so that all have an opportunity to share. There aren't any status relationships in the rag society and so there are none in this service, which should be one of Christian fellowship and sharing.

The ceremony should take place at a Ragger's Point with whatever props and other physical arrangements that best suit the situation. The recipient may choose to invite anyone whom they would like to share in this ceremony.

Ideas For Making Your Rag Ceremonies Special

Use music:

PERSONALIZE: i.e., "Tom, whom do you bring?"
 "I bring Kathy and Ben, who wish..."

Use readings, scriptural and others, which are personalized to reflect the individual's counseling sessions. Use them at the end or interspersed throughout the ceremony.

Speak slowly and clearly. Use pauses.

Be purposeful and serious; no unnecessary talking.

Open and close with prayer.

Everyone should be standing or sitting behind or to the side of the candidates when they take off their blindfolds, so they have an unobstructed view of the point.

Whenever possible, have one person guide each candidate up the trail. This is more personal and intimate than the "chain gang" method and eliminates the need for spoken instructions on where to walk.

Be conscious of rustling papers, etc. Plan ahead when pages will be turned.

Go over the sequence of events at the point beforehand, to eliminate uncomfortable pauses while you figure out "What's next."

At night, candles provide a nice light at the point if it is fire safe and regulations permit.

Put a rag on the cross that symbolizes the ceremony in progress.

Keep the blindfold on the new Ragers until all who wish to speak privately with him/her have had the opportunity. Ask the newcomer(s) to sit and be comfortable during this time.

Allow time after for the new and old Ragers to share some personal thoughts before the ceremony is closed.

Leave the newcomer(s) alone at the point after the ceremony. Be sure to tell them that you'll be waiting a few yards down the trail.

The White Rag – A Challenge for a Life of Full-Time Christian Service

CEREMONY

CALL TO WORSHIP: (Leader)

(Insert appropriate reading.)

FOR CONTEMPLATION:

Scripture, songs, and reading. Material selected by participants may be offered where appropriate.

If I am able to speak to my group with the eloquence of men and of angels, but have not love for the individual, I become as sounding brass and clanging cymbal. And if I have the gift of understanding life and know all the mysteries of psychology, and have all knowledge of child behavior and all faith in my ability as a leader. If I give of my time in unlimited measure, and I continually sacrifice that they may find enjoyment in numerous activities, but in so doing if I am not led in the spirit of love, it profited me nothing.

Love is patient with the mistakes of youth – is sympathetic with their problems. Love keeps me from envying the success of other groups. Loves gives satisfaction other than that found in large numbers. Because it seeks not its own, it gives power for me to be true to my highest ideals for the sake of my children. It gives me satisfaction in those times when, because of my failure to prepare, I have bluffed my way through the meeting, it gives pleasure only when I give my best. It bears all things, believes all things, and endures all things for the sake of my group.

Love never fails as a force to make my work productive. If I depend upon scientific knowledge, my efforts will lack breadth and depth. For now we think only in part, we speak in part, and we know in part. We have outgrown the viewpoints of childhood. The words, the thoughts, the feelings, that we have today will be charged by the experience of tomorrow. But in all this changing, there abides faith in the work I am doing with children, hope in its productiveness in Christian character, and love of children as they are and for what is possible for them to become. Faith, hope, love – these three abide, but the greatest of these is love. (A Group Leader's Version – Paraphrase I Corinthians 13.)

RESPONSIVE READING:

(Leader)

Think truly, and thy thoughts shall the world's famine feed; speak truly, and each word of thine shall prove a fruitful deed; live truly, and thy life shall be a great and noble creed.

(All)

"I would be true for there are those who trust me."

(Leader)

"Four things you must learn to do
If you would make your record true;
To think without confusion clearly,
To love your fellowman sincerely;
To act from honest motives purely,
To trust in God and heaven securely."

(All)

"I would be pure, for there are those who care."

(Leader)

Be strong!
We are not here to play, to dream, to drift;
We have hard work to do and loads to lift;
Shun not the struggle, face it.
'Tis God's gift.
Be strong! Be strong!

(All)

"I would be strong, for there is much to suffer."

(Leader)

Strong men to stand beside the weak
Kind men to hear what others speak,
True-men to keep our country's laws
And guard its honor and its cause;
Men who will bravely play life's game,
Nor ask rewards of gold or fame.

(All)

"I would be brave, for there is much to dare."

(Leader)

The world needs many men today,
Red-blooded men along life's way.
With cheerful smiles and helping hands,
And with faith that understands
The beauty of the simple deed
Which serves another's hour of need.

(All)

"I would be friend, to all – the foe, the friendless."

(Leader)

He has not served who gathers gold;
Nor has he served, whose life is told
In selfish battles he has won,
Or deeds of skill that he has done,
But he has served, who now and then
Has helped along his fellowmen.

(All)

"I would be giving, and forget the gift."

(Leader)

Whoever wants to be great among you must be your servant,
And whoever wants to be first among you must be your slave; just as the Son of Man has come not to be served,
But to serve and to give his life as a ransom for many.

(All)

"I would be humble, for I know my weakness."

(Leader)

Teach me to do the best I can,
To help and cheer our fellowmen;
Teach me to lose my selfish need,
And glory in the larger deed;
Which smoothes the road and lights the day,
For all who chance to come my way.

(All)

"I would look up, and laugh, and love, and lift."

PHILOSOPHY OF LIFE: (By recipient)

(Recipient shares their Philosophy of Life Statement.)

ACT OF DEDICATION:

(Leader)

And now will the recipient and all others present who wish to rededicate themselves to the cause of Christ join with me in the Pledge of Dedication.

PLEDGE:

I believe that service to one's fellowmen, in the spirit of Jesus Christ, is man's highest calling. I now humbly dedicate my interests, my effort, my time, my talents, myself and my worldly possessions, to such service, with the help of the Almighty God.

As a member of the White Rag Society of the Young Men's Christian Association, I pledge myself to join with all its members and officers around the world in a common and united crusade to "Build Christian personality and more Christian society."

Recognizing that the strongest influence on people is the power of personal example, I shall strive ever so to live that my life may help, not hinder, the Christian growth of others.

I shall highly prize those opportunities for friendship which Christian service affords and I will seek to be ever worthy of the esteem and regard which such friendships engender.

Remembering that, "Without vision the people perish," I shall seek to retain humility, conviction and direction by constant endeavor to discover God's will in my daily living, through prayer, Bible study, worship, and meditation.

I will stand by the Christian growth of those who I am privileged to serve as the final test of my service.

Amen

(Leader)

Do your best to present yourself to God as one approved, a workman who has no need to be ashamed, rightly handling the word of truth.

"Finally brethren, whatever is true, whatever is honorable, whatever is just, whatever is pure, whatever is lovely; whatever is gracious, if there is any excellence, if there is anything worthy of praise, think about these things."

(The candidate now kneels at the foot of the cross, and the leader designated ties the rag about the shoulders of the Ragger, whispering whatever statement he wishes to make.)

CLOSING:

(All Ragers kneel and sing the Ragers' creed in unison. A leader may suggest sentence prayers.)

BENEDICATION:

(Leader)

(It may then be suggested to the recipient that he might wish to stay at the point for a period of meditation alone.

All participants congratulate the new white ragger in turn, and leave the point.)