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September 3, 2021

To the Pastors and Administrative Councils  
of the United Methodist Churches who  
Charter Boy Scouts of America Units:

Greetings in the name of our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ!

You may have read that the Boy Scouts of America, after filing for bankruptcy due to more than 84,000 people claiming sexual abuse while a part of scouting, announced that an \$850 million settlement between the Boy Scouts of America, its Local Councils, and representatives of most of the victims had been reached. It would be the largest settlement in a child sexual abuse case in U.S. history.

We call on all of us to pray for the survivors and their families. Most of the acts of sexual abuse occurred many years ago, yet there are examples of events occurring more recently. Some of the victims allege that the abuse occurred in central and southern Illinois. This tragedy is a reminder to be vigilant, update your Safe Sanctuary Policy, and continue to review your policy to ensure the congregation is following the policy.

While the Boy Scouts have reached a tentative settlement with most of the victims, the victims' lawyers said, "We will now negotiate with the insurers and sponsoring and chartering organizations who have billions of dollars in legal exposure, of which a substantial portion is necessary to fairly compensate the survivors." United Methodist congregations are the largest active collection of chartered organizations.

Some of you have been asking what does all of this mean for our denomination, our conference, our local church, and our local church's scouting ministry? We offer the following in response to those inquiries.

The United Methodist denomination continues to maintain a relationship with the BSA and local churches may continue to support scout troops and engage in a scouting ministry. However, an *ad hoc* committee established by the General Council on Finance and Administration's Legal Department to represent United Methodist interests in the BSA bankruptcy proceedings is very concerned that the BSA did not include chartered organizations in the \$850 million settlement agreement with the victims. This may leave as many as 5,000 United Methodist congregations exposed to potential lawsuits without access to the insurance coverage the BSA has promised to provide. We share that concern.

We are entering a season when local BSA councils will be approaching local churches who sponsor scout units and asking those local churches to renew their charter relationship with the BSA for year 2022. The *ad hoc* committee is recommending that such a request be answered in one of three ways, namely:

1. When a charter comes up for renewal, the local church can tell the Local Council it will not sign a new charter and will only agree to an extension of the existing charter through December 31, 2021.
2. When the charter comes up for renewal, the local church can tell the Local Council it will only agree to enter into a Facilities Use Agreement recommended by the General Commission on United Methodist Men and that such agreement will only extend through December 31, 2021.
3. Whether or not the charter is coming up for renewal, advise the Local Council that the local church wishes to immediately terminate the charter at least until the conclusion of the bankruptcy, or that the charter must be converted to a Facilities Use Agreement which will only extend through December 31, 2021.

The significance of the December 31, 2021, date is derived from the date by which the BSA bankruptcy proceedings are expected to either conclude or by which a more definitive path toward conclusion, including whether protections from the BSA bankruptcy may be extended to chartering organizations, will have emerged.

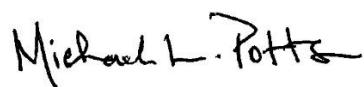
We do not take a position as to which of these three recommendations is preferable. We do not know the history of and importance your church places upon its scouting ministry. We do recommend that you discuss this issue within your administrative council meetings and come to a decision that will be sensitive to the needs of your scouting ministry's participants yet still assist the denomination in sending an appropriate message to BSA leadership that the BSA needs to find a way to protect the local churches who have been active participants in scouting, from the impacts of the BSA bankruptcy if the BSA desires to continue to be in relationship with the United Methodist denomination.

A working group has been established within our Conference to continue to monitor the BSA bankruptcy and to assess the impact the bankruptcy may have upon our Conference and the local churches who maintain scouting ministries. Further communications from that group will be forthcoming as events shall warrant.

The sexual abuse of any young person is a tragic and inexcusable act. We grieve for those who have been harmed and ask that you join us as members of a connectional denomination to pray for their healing and that a fair and just resolution to remediate any of that harm that they have experienced and may continue to experience will be found and implemented.



Bishop Gregory V. Palmer, Interim Bishop



Rev. Mike Potts  
Treasurer/Director of Administrative Services