



THE UNITED METHODIST CHURCH

VIRGINIA CONFERENCE

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Developments Regarding The UMC and the Boy Scouts

Dear Virginia Annual Conference:

Since writing to you on [September 8, 2021](#), about the profoundly difficult issues between the Boy Scouts and The United Methodist Church, there have been some important developments. To be sure, the Boy Scouts of America (BSA) and its local councils must continue addressing many issues pertaining to their bankruptcy stemming from approximately 84,000 child sex abuse claims and this is a complicated process.

I urge you to continue to pray for the survivors of child sexual abuse and their families. The church remains committed to working to repair harm and to reach a fair and just resolution on these very sad and tragic matters.

Below is an update from the ad hoc committee and leadership team within the national United Methodist Church (“United Methodist Church Leadership”) which is addressing these matters. This was such a well written communication from the United Methodist Church Leadership that I am quoting it and I have provided it below.

A notable development is an agreement to “extend existing charter agreements and facility use agreements in force at this time through March 31, 2022.” This represents a compromise between the Boy Scouts and the Church and the context for this agreement is discussed below.

I commend all churches that have entered Facilities Use Agreements (FUAs) and/or were advocating such agreements. This was an important action to protect your churches. Despite any statements made by others, the FUA does not impair scouting activities in any way, shape, or form.

I also commend all churches that prayerfully chose to recharter or extend an existing charter with the BSA. I recognize that we presented several options, and some chose the charter path as a way to continue to relationship with the BSA. Those that chose to recharter or extend the existing charter did so with full information from the Conference.

I ask that you read the information below from the United Methodist Church Leadership carefully. That information is in *italic and bold*.

Information from the United Methodist Church Leadership

Sometimes there is a need to change a practice to achieve desired results. Today, those working on the Boy Scouts of America bankruptcy and resolving more than 5,200 abuse claims since 1940 against United Methodist congregations are recommending a modification in how UM congregations charter with Scout troops and Cub packs.

Several months ago, it was recommended that congregations pause the rechartering process and extend existing charters through the end of the year or use a facility use agreement. This has been a very helpful practice up until this time. It gained clarity about liability issues, resolved a couple of critical issues through the mediation process, and helped people working on resolution recognize how important United Methodists are in the healing of survivors and serving young people. The following is a joint statement of the Boy Scouts of America and United Methodist leadership working on resolving United Methodist claims.

United Methodist leadership and the BSA have agreed to the following joint statement regarding the status of units chartered by United Methodist churches.

The Boy Scouts of America and United Methodist leadership continue to work together to resolve matters related to BSA's financial restructuring and have agreed, in the best interest of the young people who participate in Scouting, to strongly recommend to United Methodist chartering organizations and Boy Scout Councils to extend existing charter agreements and facility use agreements in force at this time through March 31, 2022. There will be no additional fee required from those chartering organizations through March 31, 2022. This will pause new chartering, re-chartering and the use of facility use agreements with United Methodist churches. This automatic extension will allow Boy Scouts of America, United Methodist leadership, and other parties in the bankruptcy case time to resolve important issues affecting chartered organizations, including a favorable release for chartered organizations for any Scout abuse claims.

Congregations that charter Scouts are strongly encouraged to follow this process as it resolves confusion and helps us resolve our concerns in the mediation process. To be clear, this statement calls for the BSA and UM congregations to pause any rechartering conversations and use what is in place at this time.

There is a team working on a new UM charter for Scouting ministries that may be used in the future.

The United Methodist church has four goals to meet through the mediation process.

- 1. The healing of survivors and commitment to how we will continue to work to end abuse. Our congregations and UMC leadership have and continue to make progress on ending abuse. Less than 1% of our cases occurred in the last 20 years. The other 99% occurred prior to 2000. While this is significant progress, we strive to work toward ending abuse.***
- 2. Gaining a release for all of the UM claims against our congregations that will prevent anyone from suing a congregation for a claim directly related to Boy Scout activity prior to 2020.***

3. *Not using a congregation's insurance to resolve any of the more than 5,200 UM claims.*

4. *A financial settlement.*

We want to assure you that our UM chancellors and more than 200 UM leaders are working on your behalf to reach these goals. In addition to pausing all rechartering through March of 2022 and continuing with the present charter or facilities use agreement, today we ask that you pray for the survivors' healing. We also ask you to pray for those leading this effort. God has gifted us with compassion and wisdom to reach just settlements and faithfully steward the resources of the UMC.

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I will continue to keep you informed of developments on this important situation. Please note that the FAQs about the Church and the Boy Scouts is being updated and new text will be available shortly. Thank you for your attention to these important matters.

Peace and Blessings,

Bishop Sharma D. Lewis