

February 19, 2013

Wayne Brock, Chief Scout Executive
Boys Scouts of America
P.O. Box 152079
Irving, TX 75015-2079



Dear Mr. Brock and the voting Delegates to the BSA Annual Meeting,

For decades, General Commission on United Methodist Men (GCUMM) has had as a primary goal, a core value, to expand scouting ministries throughout the UMC. For many youth the UMC is the entry point for an exciting journey to discipleship. There is no argument within the UMC that scouting as a ministry is a mark of vitality.

Since BSA announced a possible change in their membership policy dealing with homosexuality, our office has received many phone calls and emails. We realize in the United Methodist Church there are people who have differing opinions on this issue. There are many questions of legal implications, and questions about how this new rule would be managed in our local churches. Many see this change to be in conflict with their understanding of Scripture. Many have stated they will terminate their relationship with BSA, as a leader and as donors. Many have expressed anger that our church was not brought into this discussion as this change was being considered. A few have told us they support this proposed change by BSA; however, overall, the responses have been overwhelmingly against the proposed change.


This potential shift from BSA places GCUMM's primary goal, our core value- expansion and retention- at risk. If approved, scouting programs would decrease, and new programs would be harder to begin due to the uncertainty this proposal has generated. There has not been adequate time for GCUMM or individual church/charter organizations to fully explore the legal and spiritual consequences of these proposed changes. For these reasons, on this date, the Executive Committee of the Board of Directors of the GCUMM affirmed unanimously these two requests of BSA:

1. We would ask that these new membership proposals being considered at the May, 2013 Annual Meeting of BSA not be implemented at this time. More time is needed for the 50 United Methodist Annual Conferences and the thousands of United Methodist churches to research in a thoughtful and prayerful manner exactly what this change might mean.
2. We would further ask that this be the beginning of a new relationship between BSA and the faith communities that provide over 70% of the units and 62% of the membership in BSA. Ongoing work must grow from this experience as BSA and their ministry partners seek ways to implement a new, strengthened, faith-filled response to the Scout Oath and Scout Law.

Mr. Brock, please forward this letter to all voting members of the upcoming Annual Meeting. Feel free to contact our Nashville office if you have questions.

In His service,


Bishop James E. Swanson, Sr.
President, GCUMM


Gilbert C. Hanke
General Secretary, GCUMM

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