



ROMAN CATHOLIC  
**DIOCESE**  
**OF CHARLESTON**  
OFFICE OF THE BISHOP

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February 15, 2017

To All Pastors and Administrators,

Recently the Boy Scouts of America announced a change in its policy for youth membership; the revised policy will allow for transgender youth to be enrolled in Scouting. While these youths will be permitted in the movement, membership in individual packs, troops and venture crews will continue to be the responsibility of the chartering organization. Therefore churches and other religious institutions will continue to offer membership in their units according to their religious beliefs, traditions and policies. In essence, for us as Catholics, the parish or school chartering the Scout unit determines qualifications for inclusion in a Catholic pack, troop or venture crew. Youth not able to be a part of a religious unit are to be assisted by the local Scout Council in finding a unit that would be able to accommodate them. Churches should refer these youth to the Scout Councils.

The Boy Scouts of America have assured us that they will continue to indemnify churches with regard to all their policies regarding religious chartering units.

I encourage you to continue support of our Catholic youth in scouting (presently 300,000 scouts nationally) and to offer the programs through chartering scout units in your parish. Remember, the scout unit belongs to the parish and should be administered as any youth program in the parish. Leadership should be chosen by the pastor or his delegate.

In the Lord's Peace,

Most Reverend Robert E. Guglielmo  
Bishop of Charleston

Enclosures (2)



YOUTH  
MINISTRY

# National Catholic Committee on Scouting®

P.O. Box 152079 • Irving, TX 75015-2079 • (972) 580-2114

## Renew - Rebuild - Rejoice

February 14, 2017

We wish to communicate with all interested Catholic Scouters further information on the recent change in membership requirements. Scouting serves the Catholic Church through the charter concept which is similar to a franchise. The units chartered to a Catholic institution are owned by that organization. The BSA has stipulated that religious partners will continue to have the right to make decisions for their units based on their religious beliefs. Scouting's chartered organizations have the right to uphold their own moral standards within the units they charter. The teachings of the Catholic Church are upheld! Thus this change by the BSA has no impact on the operation and program delivery of scouting program in Catholic Chartered units.

Following are a few questions which have arisen:

- (1) Can a unit, sponsored by a Catholic institution, recommend that a youth would be better off with another unit, such as the one sponsored by another chartered organization? **Yes, A Catholic parish can establish a membership guideline that follows Catholic teaching.**
- (2) Do the camping rules, which currently cover the previous membership changes, also now apply or will there be further changes? **Yes, nothing has changed relative to the camping rules of BSA or Catholic youth protection policies.**
- (3) How about the bathroom/shower rules? Thank you for your consideration. I will keep both of you in my Sunday Mass intentions. **The current Guide to Safe Scouting and Youth Protection policies protect the privacy of all individuals, youth or adult.**

The following should provide a clear understanding of the relationship between the Boy Scouts of America (BSA) and the Catholic Church and National Catholic Committee on Scouting (NCCS.) A formal relationship between the BSA and the Catholic Church in the U.S.A. was established with the 1933 Plan of Cooperation which was approved between BSA and the Bishops' Committee on Scouting, the predecessor of the NCCS. The USCCB has assigned a bishop to serve as Liaison to the NCCS. At the present time our national chairman, Mr. George Sparks and our national chaplain, Fr. Kevin Smith consult with our USCCB bishop liaison, Bishop Robert Guglielmone of the Diocese of Charleston, SC before any statement is issued.

George S. Sparks  
National Chairman

Rev. Kevin M. Smith  
National Chaplain



BOY SCOUTS OF AMERICA®  
NATIONAL COUNCIL

February 2, 2017

Dear Chartered Organization Representative:

The Boy Scouts of America (BSA) receives occasional inquiries regarding the BSA's defense and indemnification of religious chartered organizations in connection with their limiting acceptance of youth and selection of leaders based upon their religious beliefs. We know this is an important issue to your organization and want you to be assured that the protection of chartered organizations religious freedom is as important to the Boy Scouts of America as the foundational principal of Duty to God.

In October of 2013 and again in 2015, the National Executive Committee and Executive Board adopted and ratified resolutions reinforcing the BSA's longstanding position in support of chartered organizations which state "That in addition to maintaining and providing the aforesaid liability insurance, the Corporation shall defend and indemnify Chartered Organizations, and their employees, directors, officers, members and volunteers, who act in good faith and against whom claims are asserted." ("Bona fide" was used to prevent an expansion of "religious organization" to the point of meaninglessness; clearly your church qualifies as a "bona fide religious chartered organization." Legal research conducted for the BSA opined that the constitutional rights of our religious chartered organizations would not be abrogated or impaired by their continuation of the Scouting program, including those organizations that use Scouting as an extension of their youth ministry. By using the Scouting program, religious chartered organizations do not waive any of their rights as religious organizations under state or federal law.

The Boy Scouts of America believes that in any claim of discrimination based upon BSA's membership standards, the Boy Scouts of America would be an indispensable party to the litigation and that there would be no conflict of interest necessitating separate counsel for a chartered organization. Even if the Boy Scouts of America were not named, the agreement to defend and indemnify would provide a defense to any bona fide chartered organization as stated in the resolution.

I trust that this letter will allay any concerns your organization may have regarding the willingness of the Boy Scouts of America to defend the right of its religious chartered organizations to accept youth and select leaders based upon religious principles. We want to reassure you that religious partners will continue to have the right to make decisions based on religious beliefs. If a religious organization makes a membership or leadership decision based on their religious beliefs, we ask that they notify the council so that a unit open to accepting the individual can be offered as an option. If you have any other questions or concerns, please feel free to call me at 972-580-7847. Thank you for your continued support of Scouting.

Very truly yours,

Steven P. McGowan  
General Counsel  
Boy Scouts of America

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