

Statement for "Religion News"

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Association of Baptists for Scouting

The moral decay in our country is heartbreaking. The litigation and legal landscape continues to have undue influence on organizations and their policies. Hence, the cry for evangelical Christians, including Baptists, to be "salt and light" continues to take on a greater and greater sense of urgency and importance – that cry is deafening.

The events of our world, the eroding concepts of morality of our society, the very legal landscape that has led to this recent decision by the BSA, and even the decision itself, are all incredibly clear indicators that Christians need to be utilizing every available outreach and missions venue, avenue, and opportunity to reach youth and families with the Gospel of Jesus Christ.

I pray for the success of programs like the Southern Baptist Royal Ambassadors (as youth I was both an RA and a Boy Scout – and have been both an adult RA leader and a Scout leader) and Trail Life. These can be effective in helping churches and their families disciple the youth in their congregations. But, the truth is, these organizations just don't have the brand awareness and breadth of program and appeal that the Boy Scouts still has with the "un-churched" of America. More and more families in our country have no concept of or engagement with "church," much less "Baptist" or "Royal Ambassadors" or "Trail Life." But they do of "Boy Scouts" and are still much more likely to seek out that program to assist them, as a family, in the struggle of spiritual, character and leadership development of their children.

Evangelical Christian congregations, particularly Baptist churches, therefore, continue to have a uniquely effective opportunity to reach out to their communities by chartering Cub Scout Packs, Boy Scout Troops, and Venture Crews and having them led by adults whose testimony and lifestyle are consistent with the Biblical tenets of our faith and our norms of morality. They are truly being "salt and light." And, these churches have the ability to decide whether youth (and their parents) struggling with issues of sexuality and its various temptations, can be effectively ministered to while participating in the church's Scouting unit, or whether the entire ministry of the unit to all its youth and families will be more effective if the ministry to such a struggling youth takes place outside that Scouting unit.

I ask all denominational leaders, pastors, other local church leaders, and lay persons to pray that the over 2,000 BSA units chartered to Baptist churches, the over 21,000 adult volunteers in these units, and the approximately 100,000 Baptist adult leaders volunteering in Scout units chartered to some entity other than a Baptist church, will be effective in their ministries as they help youth and families and have opportunities to share the Gospel – while they constantly live the Gospel. The almost 60,000 youth in our Baptist-chartered Scout units, and the estimated 150,000 youth whose families identify as "Baptist" who are in units chartered to other church or community organizations, still urgently desire and deserve the support and prayers of Baptists and other followers of Christ.

May we all remember the example of Christ, Himself, when he refused to pick up the stones to condemn that particular woman, but certainly gave her the message to "go and sin no more." May we all be busier bandaging wounds and reaching out to the hurting and "hungry" than throwing stones. As Satan and his minions continue the onslaught against us and the standards of our faith, let us not cower, but all resolve to stand as the beacon of Hope and let us charge ahead with the banner of Christ into the battle. "For such a time as this" I believe that God still calls Christians to be Scout leaders.