STATEMENT ON LOCAL CHURCH SCOUTING ACTIVITIES
DURING THE COVID-19 PANDEMIC

The Missouri Annual Conference is aware that several local churches charter boy scout troops. The Conference is also aware of questions with respect to scouting activities and camps during the COVID-19 pandemic.

When a local church serves as the chartering organization for a boy scout troop, the troop together with all its assets and liabilities is owned by and part of the local church. For this reason, we recommend treating the troop exactly as the church would any other ministry of the local church. This means that leaders should have some connection to the local church and be certified via Safe Sanctuaries or Safe Gatherings as all adult leaders serving children and youth ministries. It also means applying the same guidelines developed for meetings and activities of the local church to the troop’s meetings and activities.

The decisions with respect to meeting or participating in boy scout camps is a local church decision. The Annual Conference strongly recommends the same sorts of conversations and engagement previously recommended for restarting worship and holding other activities. Local churches should seek out the guidance of local health officials and become well-versed in guidelines issued by the Centers for Disease Control and other healthcare organizations. As scouting activities resume, the first priority should be the safety of all participants. Churches should require that all participants be free from COVID-19 symptoms and maintain a temperature below 100.4 degrees Fahrenheit before participating in activities, and that organizers and participants engage in proper social distancing.

Unfortunately, COVID-19 remains highly contagious and in-person activities carry some risk. Issues of liability related to holding activities and events during the current situation remain unclear. Regardless, any liability arising out of a charter troop will be the responsibility of the local church. Because of that, local churches should discuss any decisions with respect to local church activities, including boy scout troops, with their insurers. If deciding to go forward with boy scout ministries, the church should also consider obtaining liability waivers from the parents of those children served.

If church members or attendees participate in a troop that is not chartered by the local church, church leaders should make clear the nature of the church’s relationship to the troop to parents of participants. In such event, the church will lack control over decisions by the troop leaders except to the extent the troop is utilizing the church’s building, and decisions as to participation in the troop’s activities will be the sole responsibility of the parents and troop leaders.

For examples of camp waivers, please contact Christa Edwards in the Office of Finance & Administrative Ministries at cedwards@moumethodist.org.