



Dear Colleagues,

Hello to each of you from our Virginia Conference Ministry of Scouting team. We are as sorry as sure you are that we are not all in Roanoke for Conference this year. The Outdoor Code states "Leave No Trace". We ask for each of us to leave a trace of ourselves, our church and our faith with all we encounter. We in Scouting Ministry pray we do this for all the youth we have come into our church. The following is a letter from Reverend Brian Sixbey, a fellow pastor in the Virginia Annual Conference and an Eagle Scout. We hope Brian's words speak to you as you serve your ministry in your home church.

Pastor, you are busy. Why would you be interested in Community Youth-Serving Agencies such as Scouts BSA, Girl Scouts, Big Sisters, and the like? I'm with you. As a pastor of 24 years, I do not spend much time looking for new ideas or new ministries since maintaining what we have is a significant challenge these days. However, the Bible overflows with examples of how important it is for children to be loved, included, instructed, and allowed to grow, such as "Train children in the right way, and when old, they will not stray." (Prov. 22:6 NRSV) We cannot do everything, but we can do some things, so allow me to suggest three ways these ministries may overlap with and enhance your congregation's ministries, not to mention how they can help your church fulfill the mission of making disciples of Jesus Christ for the transformation of the world.

First, not only because of the pandemic but also because of our aging churches, many of the ministries we once hosted or led have had to be changed or eliminated. If your congregation was reasonably busy before, your people may be looking for opportunities now, and your building may have space now. Second, if you choose not only to host, but bring leadership, youth-serving ministries will bring your people more interaction with young people, which can lead to reaching younger people. Third, exploring a partnership with a new ministry can not only grow your church but can be a way to equip your people for ministry: Instead of doing the work alone, invite some of your lay people to do the research and have conversations about new ministries. Whether you host a youth organization, give money as part of your mission giving, recruit volunteers for the one-on-one Big Brothers/Big Sisters, or offer a "God and Country" class through PRAY publications, be aware that youth in your community can discover their place in God's world through your ministries, leading to a greater fulfillment of Christ's commission to make disciples of all nations (Matthew 28:18).

Nonetheless, if the only thing you can imagine doing right now is to pray, I pray with you. God will open a door, spark a conversation, or initiate a connection when the time is right. As an Eagle Scout, with two young adults whose values have been shaped by the church and scouting ministries, I thank you for your work on behalf of your community's children. We, as the body of Christ, have opportunities to meet the needs of youth through many means. Thank you for being open to consider some of those means today. I invite you to respond if you want more information or support.

I want to deeply thank Brian for crafting this message to you. Brian is pastor of First United Methodist Church, Fox Hill, in Hampton. His church is actively involved in our ministry. I knew the best to speak to you would be someone who wears the same shoes as you. I pray you reflect on Brian's words and thoughtfully and prayerfully complete the attached survey. We look forward to serving with you in bring a fuller appreciation and understanding of Christ to all youth in and around your church. God bless you!

Serving HIM through Scouting Ministry,

*Bill Chaffin
Conference Ministry of Scouting Coordinator*

Virginia Conference Ministry of Scouting
A mission of the General Commission on United Methodist Men

