



## THE UNITED METHODIST CHURCH

VIRGINIA CONFERENCE

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### **An Update on the UMC and the Boy Scouts**

September 8, 2021

Dear Virginia Annual Conference:

As you may have heard, on August 19, 2021, U.S. Bankruptcy Judge Laurie Selber Silverstein approved an \$850 million settlement involving the Boy Scouts of America (BSA) and its local councils regarding approximately 84,000 child sex abuse claims. This would be the largest settlement in a child sexual abuse case in U.S. history.

I call upon all of us to pray for the survivors and their families. This tragedy is a reminder to be vigilant, update your Safe Sanctuary Policy, and continue to review your policy to ensure the congregation is following the policy.

As The United Methodist Church has been a chartering organization for the Boy Scouts, there are many important issues that we will need to address in the coming months. These were discussed in an August 25 news release from church leadership, [BSA Bankruptcy Affects United Methodist Congregations](#).

As the news release says, “The denomination continues to maintain a relationship with the BSA and churches may continue to support scout troops. However, the ad hoc committee is disappointed and very concerned that the BSA did not include its sponsoring organizations, charter groups, in the agreement with the claimants. This leaves as many as 5,000 United Methodist U.S. congregations—or more than 15 percent of U.S. congregations—exposed to potential lawsuits by the survivor claimants.”

As Virginia United Methodist congregations are now exposed to potential lawsuits without access to the insurance coverage the BSA had promised, I ask that churches do the following:

Whether or not the charter is coming up for renewal, advise the Local Boy Scouts Council that the local church wishes to immediately terminate the charter at least until the conclusion of the bankruptcy, or that the charter must be converted to a Facilities Use Agreement which will only extend through December 31, 2021.

The Facilities Use Agreement is recommended by the General Commission on United Methodist Men. A form for such agreements can be provided upon request.

This will allow time to see how the bankruptcy will impact United Methodist congregations. Our hope is to find an appropriate resolution so that we may continue scouting ministries.

This is a very sad and tragic matter that has occurred within our nation and the Church. We are committed to working towards repairing harm and reaching a fair and just resolution on these matters. I urge you again to pray for the survivors of child sex abuse and their families.

There will be additional and extensive information about this provided in the coming weeks. Thank you for your leadership during this challenging time and your attention to these issues.

Peace and Blessings,

A handwritten signature in black ink, reading "Sharma D. Lewis". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Bishop Sharma D. Lewis