

Report for the 2021 North Georgia Annual Conference Handbook

-- Scouting Ministry --

The mission of Scouting in the United Methodist Church continues to be spreading seeds of Christ onto the paths of boys, girls and their families through Scouting programs in our churches, even in the midst of a worldwide pandemic that started in the spring of 2020. This includes Boy Scouts, Girl Scouts and Big Brothers Big Sisters in our Conference. We do this by focusing on two key objectives: (1) starting new Scouts BSA Packs, Troops and Crews; Girl Scout Troops, and Big Brother Big Sister programs at our churches, and (2) encouraging churches and Scout leaders to include faith-oriented activities in their Scout programs such as the P.R.A.Y. Christian education program.

COVID-19 has dramatically impacted everything we do in the Church, including how we deliver Scouting and the impact we're able to make for Christ. It has not, however, stopped us. Like most other parts of society, Scouting went virtual in 2020 using Zoom to recruit, hold meetings, conduct training and teach P.R.A.Y. sessions online. Ministers and Scout leaders around the Conference got creative figuring out ways to use Zoom for all parts of their Scout program.

The Fall 2020 issue of UMM Magazine ran a feature article titled "Faith-based Scouting in a COVID World" that highlighted how Scouting in the North Georgia Conference went successfully virtual. Check it out at: https://issuu.com/gcumm/docs/ummen_fall2020_pages (pgs 20-21).

One great example of going online was the virtual Scouters Religious Academy (SRA) held in April 2020. The 2020 SRA attracted hundreds of Scout leaders and clergy from 42 states and 6 countries for a 6-hour training conference on how to make your Scouting program a ministry. We are holding it again on April 24th, 2021 and registrations are on track to equal the 2020 Academy.

The UMCOS of the North Georgia Conference also demonstrated leadership nationally by conducting an online webinar on "How to Conduct a Virtual P.R.A.Y. Program" on October 7th, 2020. The program included Chris Karabinos (UMCOS Chair) as moderator and Rev Scott Pickering (Cornerstone UMC) on the panel sharing his experience leading God & Me and God & Family courses online via zoom. We built a set of virtual tools to help ministers and Scout leaders lead online courses that P.R.A.Y. is sharing free with all its partners thereby extending the impact of this webinar.

Although limited by COVID-19, the UMCOS continues to support churches, clergy and Scout leaders with training, advisory services via phone calls and zoom meetings. We helped Johns Creek UMC organize and run the John Dorman Duty-to-God Awards Ceremony virtually on March 13th, 2021 and helped support Scout Sundays in dozens of churches around the Conference in February and March. We are making plans to safely hold in-person events as we come out lockdown. For example, we have a Bishop's Scout Lunch tentatively scheduled for Saturday, October 2nd at Peachtree Rd UMC, COVID permitting.

Yours in Christ,

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