

## Report for the 2022 North Georgia Annual Conference Handbook

### -- Scouting Ministry --

The mission of Scouting in the United Methodist Church is to spread seeds of Christ onto the paths of boys, girls and their families through Scouting programs in our churches. This includes Boy Scouts, Girl Scouts and Big Brothers Big Sisters at programs at churches in the conference. The UMCOS (United Methodist Committee on Scouting) does this by focusing on two primary objectives: (1) starting and maintaining 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-based programs in their Scout programs, such as the P.R.A.Y. Christian education program.

Churches and Scout programs in the North Georgia Conference had two major challenges in 2021. First, was the ongoing impact of COVID-19 which has continued to dramatically impact Scouting. There have been many Cub Scout packs and a few Boy Scout troops and Girl Scout troops which have unfortunately folded over the past 2 years during Covid. And many units that didn't fold suffered recruitment challenges since they couldn't meet in person in the first year of the pandemic. The second major challenge of 2021 was the BSA Bankruptcy process that emerged mid-year in full public view. The UMCOS continued promoting Boy Scouts and Girl Scouts addressing both of these challenges head on.

Regarding the impact of COVID-19, we had several successes to share:

- o Scout leaders learned how to utilize Zoom for meetings, training and P.R.A.Y. courses in 2020. Starting in early 2021, most Scout programs starting meeting in person and going on campouts again. Membership stabilized and starting growing again in a lot of programs.
- o We conducted our 5<sup>th</sup> annual Scouters Religious Academy (SRA) on April 24<sup>th</sup>, 2021; this was our second virtual Academy attracting over 300 Scout leaders and clergy from 40 states and 6 countries for a 6-hour training conference on how to make their Scouting program a ministry.
- o The North Georgia UMCOS continued to demonstrate leadership nationally as we led the national United Methodist Scout training week at Philmont on July 11-17, 2021. We had 10 attendees from the North Georgia Conference leading all UM conferences and had 7 leaders on staff, including Chris Karabinos (Course Director) and Rev Scott Pickering (Course Chaplain).

Regarding the BSA Bankruptcy, the UMCOS worked closely with Bishop Sue, Rev Terry Walton and Sybil Davidson in the Conference office to keep on top of the rapidly changing situation, coordinate messaging and share key information with clergy and Scout leaders throughout the fall and winter. We held multiple Zoom conferences, maintained an FAQ page on the conference website, responded to hundreds of emails and phone calls, and participated in dozens of church conference and district calls/ meetings and Boy Scout Roundtable/ Commissioner and other calls/ meetings. The UMCOS continues to work closely with the National Dept of Scouting Ministries, the North Georgia conference and local Boy Scout councils as we have transitioned into 2022. As of this writing in late March 2022, the bankruptcy judge is close to finishing its hearing and is

expected to render a decision on the BSA's bankruptcy plan. We are hopeful that a plan will be approved soon and we can get back to growing the Scouting ministry in the conference.

Yours in Christ,

**Chris Karabinos**

North Georgia Conference Scout Coordinator

The United Methodist Committee on Scouting (UMCOS)

770-490-4940 / [chriskarabinos1@gmail.com](mailto:chriskarabinos1@gmail.com)