

Press Release

Annual conferences to raise funds for Survivor Trust Fund

Pending court approval of a settlement agreement in the Boy Scouts of America (BSA) bankruptcy case, United Methodists have agreed to contribute \$30 million to a \$3 billion Survivor Trust Fund that will receive contributions from the Boy Scouts of America (BSA), insurance companies and charter organizations. Every annual conference is asked to raise funds to contribute toward the \$30 million and the Greater New Jersey Annual Conference has a goal to raise \$890,420 toward the Survivor Trust Fund.

The fund will be used to compensate persons alleged to have experienced abuse while in Scouting. The BSA filed for bankruptcy as it faces more than 80,000 claims for alleged child sexual abuse over the last 80 years. United Methodist congregations sponsor more than 6,000 Boy Scout troops and Cub packs.

United Methodists participated in the bankruptcy mediation process with five goals.

1. Healing and support for survivors
2. Releases from claims related to sexual abuse for United Methodist congregations that chartered Boy Scout troops and Cub packs
3. Releases for all charter organizations
4. Preservation of congregations' and annual conferences' insurance
5. A fair and just financial settlement

The settlement agreement meets each goal, but the cornerstone of the United Methodist settlement was the healing and support for survivors. "When people hurt, United Methodists help," said Bishop John Schol, chair of the UMC Leadership Team created to support the United Methodist chartering organizations in the bankruptcy matter. "The commitments of United Methodists, working together, are bringing healing, hope and wholeness to the survivors."

The United Methodist Church does not tolerate sexual abuse of any kind and has consistently worked to keep young people safe. Most of the 80,000 claims occurred in the 1950s through the 1970s. Since that time, new practices and policies have been put in place by the BSA and UMC, which has dramatically decreased child sexual abuse. For United Methodists, only 1 percent of all claims alleged to have taken place in and through United Methodist Scouting programs occurred in the last 20 years. While that is a dramatic reduction, even one case is too many.

In addition to a financial contribution, United Methodists are committing to the following:

1. Train leaders to meet with and hear the experience and hopes of any survivor who participated in Scouting activities connected with a United Methodist congregation.
2. Review all Safe Sanctuaries/Ministry Safe policies and update as necessary.
3. Develop a series of articles about how to ensure safe youth programming.
4. Participate in a survivors' justice and healing working group formed by survivors who filed claims.

Each annual conference is now being asked to commit to follow-through with the United Methodist commitments listed above by agreeing to the following:

1. Identify leaders who are willing to be trained and listen to survivors' experiences.
2. Review all Safe Sanctuaries/Ministry Safe policies of congregations and the conference to ensure they are up-to-date and are being followed.
3. Re-publish the series of articles about child sexual abuse.
4. Raise funds for the Survivors Trust Fund.

GNJ will be hosting an information session on January 26 at 6:30 PM to hear from Annual Conference leadership how GNJ will be following up on these commitments.

Working together, United Methodists are making a difference.