

Assemblies of God Response to the Boy Scouts of America's Resolution May 23, 2013

Assemblies of God leadership regrets that the Boy Scouts of America (BSA) has voted to change its policy regarding inclusion of homosexual youth members. We believe – as do a majority of Boy Scout volunteer leaders and parents – that this is not the best policy for BSA, nor for the young men it serves.

As the landmark 2000 Supreme Court decision stated, BSA is a private organization with freedom of association to determine its own membership standards, upholding BSA's policy not to allow homosexual leaders or members. BSA stated at the time that a departure from that longstanding policy would undermine its purpose of guiding boys to keep themselves "morally straight," which is part of the Boy Scout Oath.

While we are disappointed by BSA's recent membership decision, we are pleased that the organization will retain its policy regarding adult leaders, and applaud the organization for standing firm on that issue. However, today's vote to allow homosexual youth members negates BSA's ability to legally defend its position regarding leadership and opens the door to more efforts by lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender (LGBT) lobbies to make further policy changes.

A majority of scout groups are sponsored by churches or other religious entities, which have as their foundation a belief in biblical teachings that identify homosexual behavior as outside of God's plan for sexuality. While we agree that youths who experience confusion or same-sex attraction need to be welcomed, in our churches they are confronted with this biblical teaching and will be counseled and prayed with that God will help them to align their lives in conformity to that teaching. We agree with the BSA that we need to demonstrate compassion and welcome those who are struggling with sexuality issues, but not in a way that condones such behavior, which is what the new BSA policy does.

Though the BSA shares a common mission with the Church, "to prepare young people to make ethical and moral choices over their lifetimes," the Church answers to a higher Authority in providing a value-added spiritual dimension. As such, based on Scripture, we provide a loving, welcoming environment to young people in their search for purpose, meaning and God's best for their lives. Until this decision today BSA agreed in teaching that "homosexual conduct is not morally straight" and in not wanting to "promote homosexual conduct as a legitimate form of behavior." BSA had been well-served by holding to that position.

We believe that the BSA policy change will lead to a mass exodus from the Boy Scout program, as Assemblies of God and many other churches can no longer support groups that are part of an organization allowing members who are openly homosexual. However, as a positive alternative, we offer a program – the Royal Rangers – that operates with values consistent to that of the BSA prior to today's change.

In the fractured family and culture today, we recognize that many youth are struggling with sexual identity and behavior. Our Assemblies of God churches seek to help these young people experience sexual purity in their lives, and remain virgins until married to a person of the opposite sex. Love, counseling and prayer is given for those who fail in this regard so that young people who engage in sexual relations outside marriage can reset their moral compass toward God's will through repentance, forgiveness and restoration.