



Episcopal Diocese of Massachusetts

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Church Relationships with the Boy Scouts of America

In response to several questions regarding churches serving as Boy Scouts of America (BSA) Chartered Organizations or providing space for BSA activities, diocesan chancellor Ned Notis-McConarty and canon to the ordinary Bill Parnell have consulted with legal counsel for The Episcopal Church and other diocesan chancellors regarding such agreements. As you consider your relationships with the BSA, these factors should be taken into consideration:

- Our bishops continue to express support for the BSA as an organization and for our churches to be affiliated with or provide space to BSA troops.
- If a church determines to be a BSA Chartered Organization, it should be understood that their affiliation with BSA is a part of their local mission, i.e. more than an agreement for use of space. There should be a conversation between the clergy and church wardens and local BSA leaders to ensure that all parties have a common understanding of the Chartered Organization agreement and the responsibilities of the church and BSA. The vestry should hold a vote to accept or reject the Chartered Organization agreement. A sample agreement provided by a local BSA Council is available [here](#).
- Any Chartered Organization agreement should include insurance and indemnification provided by BSA and a statement of the responsibilities of the Chartered Organization. The church should consult with the Church Insurance Company (or other insurance provider) to make sure the church's own policy covers the Chartered Organization agreement.
- If the church is simply providing space to the BSA troop, and does not plan to exercise any further oversight or involvement, a space-use agreement is more appropriate. Such an agreement should include insurance and indemnification provided by BSA. The church should contact the Church Insurance Company (or other insurance provider) to make sure the church's own policy covers the space-use agreement.
- BSA provides Youth Protection Training to all unit leaders. Our diocesan Safe Church guidelines note that it is *suggested* that leaders of regular guest organizations should complete certain modules of Safeguarding Online and participate in the local conversations that are part of the annual Safe Church Audit. It is not necessary that persons unaffiliated with the church who have completed BSA Youth Protection Training also complete Safeguarding Online modules; however, any clergy, church staff or church volunteers engaging with a BSA troop must complete Safeguarding Online training regardless of whether they have completed BSA Youth Protection Training. We strongly recommend that BSA leaders and participants of all regular guest organizations be engaged in the annual Safe Church Audit. If the church is a BSA Chartered Organization, a review of the BSA relationship is to be included in the annual Safe Church Audit.

Please contact Canon Bill Parnell (bparnell@diomass.org or 617-482-4826, ext. 205) with any questions.

March 2022