

Church of God Condemns Homosexuality, Offers Boy Scouts Alternative

The Boy Scouts of America (BSA) last month approved a proposal to end a ban on openly gay Scouts, a policy that has been in place for the organization's 103-year history. The Church of God offered the following in response:

From time to time, moral or ethical questions arise from decisions made by major organizations. These situations sometimes beckon a response from Church of God international headquarters, as ministers and laypersons search for a proper response in a complicated, "politically correct" culture.

General Overseer Mark Williams and the International Executive Committee have released a statement in response to the recent decision by the Boy Scouts of America. The statement is not a resolution, which can only be issued at the General Assembly, but an affirmation of stated doctrinal beliefs:

The recent decision by the Boy Scouts of America (BSA) to admit openly homosexual young men to their membership ranks comes as a major disappointment to the leadership of the Church of God. This departure from the BSA's policy of not allowing individuals who practice homosexuality to become members contributes to the already confusing message of sexual orientation being sent to young men.

The Boy Scouts of America has served as a beacon of affirmation for generations. The May 23 decision by BSA did not include admitting homosexual Scout leaders. We applaud the BSA leadership for upholding this critical element of its policy and support future efforts to defend it from attacks by groups who will no doubt feel empowered to further advance their agenda.

According to figures released by BSA, more than 70 percent of Scout troops are supported or housed in churches across the United States. The recent action will no doubt place a heavy burden upon these churches about whether or not to continue their relationship with the local chapter.

The change in BSA's policy in no way alters the practical commitments of the Church of God, which states the following:

- Glorifying God in our body
- Our body is the temple of the Holy Ghost, and we are to glorify God in our body (Rom. 12:1, 2; 1 Cor. 6:19, 20; 10:31).
- We are to walk in the Spirit and not fulfill the lust of the flesh (Gal. 5:16).

Examples of fleshly behavior that do not glorify God are noted in several passages of Scripture (Rom. 1:24; 1 Cor. 6:9, 10; Gal. 5:19-21; Rev. 21:8). Sinful practices that are made prominent and condemned in these Scriptures include homosexuality, adultery, worldly attitudes (such as hatred, envy, jealousy), corrupt communication (such as gossip, angry outbursts, filthy words), stealing, murder, drunkenness and witchcraft.

The Church of God recognizes the dilemma some local churches and Scout leaders may face with severing a positive, long-term relationship with a Boy Scout troop, which may or may not be immediately affected. Should local churches choose to disband their relationship with BSA, the Church of God has had in place for many years a program that mirrors the standards and policies of Boy Scouts of America prior to last month's decision. It is called Royal Rangers and is available with supporting resources through the Division of Discipleship. Please visit .

While the Church of God condemns the sin of homosexuality as defined in Scripture, individuals struggling with an alternate

lifestyle will continue to be loved and disciplined. As young people are constantly bombarded with one message from the church and another from culture, the Church of God is committed to those who may fall into this path to give counsel and to teach the forgiveness of Christ with the ultimate goal of redemption and restoration.