

Unprinted Memorial (2015-05)

Subject: *Scouting*

Floor Committee #22

- WHEREAS 1) The various organizations and activities of scouting continue to draw the interest of WELS children and their parents because of its perceived benefits; and
- WHEREAS 2) some members of WELS congregations are unaware of WELS' position regarding scout membership and involvement, do not understand that position, or are in disagreement with it; and
- WHEREAS 3) many changes have taken place within both the Boy Scouts and the Girl Scouts in recent decades, as evidenced by new policies regarding homosexuality, their oaths and objectives, and public statements and materials seeming to downplay the religious elements of scouting; and
- WHEREAS 4) WELS has not undertaken a formal or detailed study of scouting since these changes have occurred; and
- WHEREAS 5) many earlier materials on scouting produced by WELS do not take into account the differences between the Boy Scouts and the Girl Scouts, nor the perceived differences in participation from one level, e.g. Cub Scouts or Brownies, to the next, e.g. Scouts, nor the possibility of differences in practice and significance from one location ("troop", "den", etc.) to another; and
- WHEREAS 6) the lack of up-to-date and currently accurate materials has left congregations and individuals seeking guidance regarding scouting struggling to determine if previous evaluations and judgments are still accurate and make it difficult for parents and children to match our historical criticisms of scouting to the organizations, troops, dens, etc. that are actually presented as options for their children; and
- WHEREAS 7) detailed discussions about scouting are sometimes absent from catechism instruction and Bible information classes, leaving many children and adults unaware of the spiritual issues associated with scouting; and
- WHEREAS 8) though WELS still rejects unionism, work-righteousness, and religious pluralism as unscriptural and incompatible with faithfulness to Christ and our callings, both scouting and our culture's perception of scouting's principles have changed since WELS last undertook a study of scouting; and
- WHEREAS 9) a lack of uniformity in practice and policy in addressing scouting among the congregations of our synod is undesirable and injurious to our fellowship; and
- WHEREAS 10) the wider Church, especially confessional Lutherans but also other Christians looking into the issues regarding scouting, would benefit from a detailed, Scripture-based and evangelical study with published documentation; and
- WHEREAS 11) the Lutheran Pioneers and Lutheran Girl Pioneers have for many years faithfully

provided a scripturally sound and beneficial alternative to scouting, but many WELS congregations find themselves too small and/or too isolated for sponsoring Pioneer programs to be feasible; therefore be it

- Resolved, a) that the Conference of Presidents appoint a committee to do fresh research into the Boy Scouts and Girl Scouts and their affiliated activities and organizations, e.g. Venturing, to determine the current spiritual implications and results of membership and involvement with those groups; and be it further
- Resolved, b) that said committee and/or the Conference of Presidents produce a variety of resources and documents that provide and widely publish guidance that can easily and profitably be used by congregations wishing to study scouting and by individuals needing a concise yet complete explanation of WELS' position regarding Boy Scout or Girl Scout membership and involvement; and be it further
- Resolved, c) that if it is determined by said committee and/or the Conference of Presidents that either or both the Boy Scouts and the Girl Scouts have changed sufficiently that our WELS position on scouting should be changed, that study documents and recommendations be prepared and submitted for consideration by the 2016 district conventions of WELS and for adoption at the 2017 synod convention; and be it further
- Resolved, d) that our brethren in the Evangelical Lutheran Synod be consulted in the course of the committee's work and advised of any recommendations resulting from that work; and be it finally
- Resolved, e) that any new recommendations regarding scouting still support and encourage membership in Lutheran Pioneers and Lutheran Girl Pioneers.

Christ, Clarksville, Md.