

Frequently Asked Questions

What is the history of the BSA Survivor Trust Fund?

The Boy Scouts of America (BSA) filed for bankruptcy relief in 2020, overwhelmed by lawsuits that grew to involve more than 84,000 allegations of child sexual abuse related to the Boy Scout program as far back as the 1960s. The United Methodist Church became involved because of our long-standing relationship with Scouting troops in our churches. Our denomination committed \$30 million to the Survivor Trust Fund. The amount allocated to Northern Illinois is \$754,348.

What is the nature of the UMC commitment to the survivors?

United Methodists and the Northern Illinois Conference are committing to the following:

- 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.
- Review all Safe Sanctuaries/Ministry Safe policies and update as necessary.
- Develop a series of articles about how to ensure safe youth programming.
- Participate in a survivors' justice and healing working group formed by survivors who filed claims.

How was the amount of \$754,348 assigned to NIC? Aren't insurance companies involved?

All claims related to actions that happened between 1974 and today are covered by BSA insurance policies insuring the troop and the chartering local church. The UMC contribution addresses claims from events prior to 1974 before insurance was in place. The amount is proportionate to the number of these claims made by participants of troops chartered by congregations in our annual conference.

Who in the local church can make a pledge? How do we make the pledge?

We recommend that the church administrative councils discuss their pledge decision with input from the finance committee and/or the church's Scouting liaisons. Churches may also ask their local BSA troops for a contribution. A church, troop, or an individual can make a pledge at UMCNIC.org/RepairtheHarm. Those making pledges have up to three years to fulfill it.

What is a reasonable pledge amount for our church?

All pledges are welcome and meaningful to the healing of victims of sexual abuse. We are grateful for whatever you are able to do to meet this financial challenge. We know of about 187 Boy Scout troops that have been chartered in 150 local NIC churches. If those churches pledged \$1350 per year (\$4050 total) per troop they chartered, we would meet our goal.

You may wish to make a pledge relative to the church's budget. For example, a church may pledge one percent of its current budget. The church may pay that amount over three years' time. If every conference church made that pledge, the conference commitment would be fully met. Likewise, if every member of the Northern Illinois Conference pledged \$10, payable at \$3.33 per year, the conference's pledge can be fulfilled.

These numbers are not meant to stifle or burden your congregation. Rather, they are suggestions to help your church begin a conversation on how to faithfully contribute to the Survivor Trust Fund--for the sake of those who were hurt and as a sign of commitment to future generations.



How do we pay on our pledge?

Payments can be made online at UMCNIC.org/RepairtheHarm or via check. Please make payments by checks payable to Northern Illinois Conference mailed to 303 E. Wacker Drive, Suite 2020, Chicago, IL 60601. Please include a note or indicate on the check that it is for the BSA or Repair the Harm.

My church does not host a Boy Scout troop, nor is it associated with any of the abuse. Why should my church or I make a gift?

Christians respond with compassion whenever we learn of the suffering of others. Childhood sexual trauma is confusing to the child and has lasting effects. We have heard of the pain for these individuals and seek to respond. We are a connectional organization, so we share the responsibility to do right by others. And some churches that do not have Boy Scout troops now may have chartered troops in the past. The denomination's representation in the settlement releases liabilities for the whole connection, thereby avoiding having to litigate each case individually. This settlement will protect our church's liability and set the course for a more defined relationship with the BSA.

We also invite your congregation to pause and reflect on the Word of God from Isaiah 58:9a-12 as you discuss your role in restoring faith in a safe children's ministry at your church.

*If you remove the yoke from among you, the pointing of the finger, the speaking of evil,
if you offer your food to the hungry and satisfy the needs of the afflicted,
then your light shall rise in the darkness and your gloom be like the noonday.
The LORD will guide you continually and satisfy your needs in parched places
and make your bones strong, and you shall be like a watered garden,
like a spring of water whose waters never fail.*

*Your ancient ruins shall be rebuilt; you shall raise up the foundations of many generations;
you shall be called the repairer of the breach, the restorer of streets to live in.*

How do churches move forward with Boy Scout troops?

United Methodist leaders and the BSA have agreed to a new Affiliation Agreement that replaces former charters. The agreement clarifies the congregation's role and increases the congregation's liability insurance. Find more information, the Affiliation Agreement, and Facilities Use & Indemnity Agreement at UMCNIC.org/RepairtheHarm.

Where can I find more information about the lawsuit and its connection to United Methodist churches in Northern Illinois? How can I help my congregation learn more?

Visit the Conference website at UMCNIC.org/RepairtheHarm or email RepairtheHarm@umcnic.org with questions or requests for someone to come and talk to your organization.