

Ten Reasons to Consider Scouting and Civic Youth- Serving Agencies as a Ministry of the Local Church

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1. Outreach

The ministry of Christ revolved around the profound concept of reaching out to others. Modeling Christ's example, scouting and civic youth-serving agencies seek to touch lives with the compassion of Christ. We have found that when we reach out to others, the blessings of God are returned to us.

2. Evangelism

Statistics indicate that of all the youth who join scouting through the church, 25 percent are United Methodists, 25 percent are members of other denominations or faiths, and 50 percent come from unchurched families. Reaching out to families that do not have a church home is not a new concept. Scouting is one potential entry point for persons to join the church, which then has the opportunity to introduce, nurture, and strengthen a relationship with Jesus Christ. Scouting provides a great way for the local church to serve its local community and in the process offer new and exciting programs that the church may transform into ministry to, with, and through youth.

3. Intergenerational

Scouting and civic youth ministry offers opportunities for older adults as well as youth. So often congregational members become isolated from one another because we tend to spend time with people of similar age groups. Scouting offers older adults a chance to become merit-badge counselors, mentors, or committee members who plan activities with and for youth. In these ways, and more, older adults can become an integral part of a youth's life. The experiences are ones that will be cherished for a lifetime.

4. Coeducational

Some scouting programs exist for both girls and boys alike. Camp Fire USA (CFUSA) is coeducational for ages 1 to 21, while Boy Scouts of America's (BSA) Venturing division is for ages 14 to 20. These programs are a great complement to any church's United Methodist youth ministry and also serve to encourage older Boy Scouts to participate in scouting for a longer period of time. Conversely, girls may participate through Girl Scouts of the U.S.A. (GSUSA) in many of the high adventure activities that boys do.

BSA Venturing crews offer a high degree of flexibility for their members. Some crews elect to focus on helping others through activities like building homes for Habitat for Humanity, while other crews enjoy the benefit of camping, hiking, and high adventure. Local BSA councils offer the use of their youth protection training and leadership training in addition to low-cost liability and accident insurance for their members.

5. United Methodist Men

United Methodist Men's groups have traditionally been the "standard bearers" of scouting and civic youth ministry. United Methodist Men's units have been a source of manpower and volunteer leadership as well as a link between the church congregation and the youth agency. United Methodist

Men have assisted in fundraising events, work days, special events, and a variety of mentoring opportunities.

6. Mission

A variety of mission opportunities are made available through the four youth agencies. Camp Fire USA, through Gift of Giving, Teens in Action, and Extending Our Reach educate and nurture children in projects that encourage their participation and commitment to volunteerism in a uniquely spiritual atmosphere. Similar opportunities exist within the various programs of BSA, GSUSA, and 4-H.

7. God and Country Program

An age-appropriate study series, the God and Country program, invites youth to become better acquainted with their church and community and enhances their relationships with their pastor and congregation. The God and Country series focuses on education, spirituality, and service to others and brings recognition and increased self-esteem to the youth and teenagers who participate.

8. Develop Servant Leaders (Friends, Followers, Fishermen) Each youth organization that we work with has inherent “building blocks” that the local church can transform into effective ministry. For example, they require service projects that offer opportunities to begin to cultivate effective servant leaders. By starting as “friends” (members of a troop or club), progressing to “followers” of Christ (older youth who are setting the example), and culminating in “fishermen” (youth who do service projects to meet requirements), we can envision how this is a true beginning for servant leadership in the church, community, state, and nation.

9. Intentionality

The scouting program can be an effective, intentional outreach ministry of the local church. Through intentional planning, the church has the ability to transform these scouting programs into important youth ministries similar to other important ministries and initiatives. As a result, scouting always should be on a level with other church ministries. It has the potential to be a far-reaching, positive outreach youth ministry for the immediate community.

10. Make Disciples

By considering one or a combination of the previous reasons, a local church may develop a consistent list of prospects for the Lord. Nurturing children, teens, and families through outreach and evangelism and incorporating them into the life of the church may have tremendous, eternal results for the youth, their family, and the church.

Scouting as a New Ministry

If you, as a church or scouting leader, are interested in using these resources to establish a new ministry to the community, contact the local office of the youth-serving agency of your choice. You will find them willing and able to assist you in the mechanics of organizing a program designed to meet the specific needs of your church and community. (See the Resources at the back of this Guideline.)

If you have any questions pertaining to how civic youth-serving agencies might be used as an integral part of your church’s outreach ministry, please contact the Office of Civic Youth-Serving Agencies/Scouting (OCYSA/S). Additional resource information is also available from P R.A.Y.