



Diocese of Rockford

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Diocese of Rockford and Scouting Frequently Asked Questions

For generations the Boy Scouts of America (BSA), now Scouting USA, have served as an organization that fostered values that were highly compatible with those of our Catholic faith and tradition. The Scouts taught young men and women to be: Trustworthy, Loyal, Helpful, Friendly, Courteous, Kind, Obedient, Cheerful, Thrifty, Brave, Clean and Reverent. And often, these values were taught within a Catholic framework in a pack or troop chartered (sponsored/owned) by individual diocesan Catholic parishes and schools.

As the BSA continue to address bankruptcy court proceedings involving the organization, the Rockford Diocese has been monitoring these developments locally and nationally. In light of these and other changes, BSA is deciding how best to live out its mission. Taking these and many other factors into consideration as well, the Diocese has decided to no longer charter BSA units. Some of the Boy Scouts units have already been chartered by other entities in your area where the scout activities will continue.

This decision has not been made hastily or without seeking consultation and compromise. The Diocese of Rockford and the Blackhawk Area and Three Fires local Councils have been in contact and, following discussions with the Boy Scouts national entity over a period of many months, complex insurance issues could not be resolved. Thus, Diocesan entities will no longer recharter or sign facilities use agreements with BSA and local BSA units, effective February 1, 2023. We understand Boy Scout councils are working with non-Diocesan entities to form charter relationships so boy scouting can continue in the region.

In light of this decision, we offer some answers to our Catholic families who will continue in Scouting with a non-Catholic chartering entity the BSA offers.

1. May a parish or school sign a Charter, Affiliation, or Facilities Use Agreement offered by the BSA or the Local Council, or the Diocese's standard Facilities Use Agreement?

Because the three agreements the BSA offers no longer provide the insurance protections that were provided in the past to our parishes and schools, none of the agreements may be signed. The Diocese's Facilities Use Agreement is used typically for a parishioner's one-time rental of parish space for a baptism party, or wedding reception, or other similar event; and it should not be used with the BSA or Local Council. Boy Scout units may not hold boy scout meetings on parish premises, and only activities identified in this FAQ are permitted on parish, school, or Diocesan facility premises.

2. Will the Diocese continue to process Catholic religious emblems, such as Light of Christ, Parvuli Dei, and other religious emblems?

Yes. The information about Catholic religious emblems for Scouts is available online at: <https://nccs-bsa.org/religious-emblems/> . Individual questions on these emblems should be addressed to the Diocesan Scout Chaplain, Father Aaron Downing at adowning@rockforddiocese.org.

Many of the religious emblems are earned when the individual scout presents his completed work to the pastor. Some religious emblems, such as for older scouts, may necessitate participation by a pastor or other parish representative, an individual scout, and a Scout leader. Such meeting where all three are present may occur on parish premises.

3. Will the Diocese continue to host an annual Scout Mass?

Yes. The Diocese's annual Scout Mass is usually held in February at the Cathedral of St. Peter in Rockford and welcomes Boy Scouts, Girl Scouts, and American Heritage Girls. All Scout families are welcome and the Scouts who have earned Catholic religious emblems during the past academic year will be recognized as well as any adult recipients of Scout emblems/medals. The 2023 Scout Sunday mass is scheduled for February 5, 2023 at 2:00 p.m. at the Cathedral of St. Peter in Rockford.

4. Will the Diocesan Catholic Committee on Scouting continue to host religious retreats at various scout camps within the Rockford Diocese?

The role of the Catholic Committee on Scouting will be as a participant, and not as the sponsor of the retreats. If the Boy Scouts sponsor the retreats and they are held at the Boy Scouts' camps, the Catholic Committee may participate as a speaker or facilitator. The Diocese and its communications platforms will continue to promote the retreats but make clear they are sponsored and hosted by the Boy Scouts on Boy Scouts premises. These retreats traditionally have been held in the fall and afford Scouts the opportunity to fulfill the requirements for several emblems and engage with others who share the Catholic faith through a number of fun, faith-lifting activities.

5. How should our parish handle storage of Scout equipment?

The parish should assist in transferring to the new chartering entity any property that has been stored at the parish. We request that this transfer occur within the next two months, which provides some time for the new chartering entity to find storage space at its facility.

6. May a Scout unit chartered by a new entity fundraise in/through the parish? For example, selling Christmas wreaths, or car wash in the church lot? Popcorn sales in gathering space?

Because Boy Scout units are no longer connected to a parish or school in the Diocese, the procedures the parishes, schools, and Diocesan facilities use with other non-parish entities will be followed. First, all proposed events are subject to the approval of the individual parish pastor. The Scout unit adult volunteers who will be present at the event are required to comply with the Diocese's safe environment procedures for Child Protection Trainings, background checks, and reading and signing Diocesan policies. If the fundraising is to be

performed on parish, school, or Diocesan premises, the scout unit must complete a liability waiver as we require of all non-parish entities. The Diocese can supply this waiver to parishes, schools, and Diocesan facilities. It also must be made clear this is not fundraising that will benefit the Catholic School or parish.

7. May a Scout unit chartered by a new entity do service projects around the church?

Yes. But as always, service projects, whether initiated or performed by an individual scout, or a scouting unit or a parish youth group, must have the permission of the parish pastor; and in accordance with Diocesan Safe Environment protocols, all adult volunteers in attendance must comply with the Diocese's safe environment procedures for Child Protection Trainings, background checks, and reading and signing Diocesan policies. Further, if the service project is to be performed by a scout unit, because it is no longer connected to the parish or school, the scout unit must complete a liability waiver as required of all non-parish entities. The Diocese can make this waiver available to parishes, schools, and Diocesan facilities for scout units to complete.

8. May scouts who attend the parish school continue to wear the scout uniform instead of the school uniform on days when the scout unit has a meeting or event that afternoon or evening?

Yes.

9. Can the Scouting troop/den continue to use banking and Tax ID information of the parish to maintain a checking/savings account?

No. Boy Scout units will no longer be chartered by the parish or school so will not be entitled to use the parish's banking information. The parish or school should request a final financial accounting from the parish's Boy Scout unit, and work with the local Council and new chartering entity to close current bank accounts that are still operating and to transfer funds to the new chartering entity.

10. Are negotiations between Blackhawk Area and Three Fires Council (BSA) and the Diocese of Rockford ongoing? Is this change temporary?

Negotiations between the BSA and local Councils and the Diocese have been discontinued. Whether a relationship with the Boy Scouts is able to be resumed at some point in the future in this Diocese would depend upon resolution of the complex issues that have brought us to this point.