



DIOCESE OF AUSTIN

YOUTH, YOUNG ADULT AND CAMPUS MINISTRY OFFICE MEMORANDUM

TO:

FROM: ALISON TATE

SUBJECT: DIOCESE OF AUSTIN POSITION ON GIRL SCOUTS

DATE: 1/7/15

As scouting is a formal setting for youth ministry in the U.S., the Diocese of Austin has a working relationship with the Girl Scouts of Central Texas. This packet contains information on this working relationship from sources such as Bishop Joe S. Vásquez, our Diocesan Committee on Catholic Scouting and the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops. Coordinated by our Diocesan Committee on Catholic Scouting, and overseen by the Office of Youth, Young Adult and Campus Ministry and Bishop Vásquez, scouting offers an avenue to minister with youth that complements and supports the goals of Catholic youth ministry as put forth by the USCCB document *Renewing the Vision*. Questions regarding scouting and the Catholic Church may be directed to Alison Tate at (512) 949-2465.



Diocese of Austin

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www.austindioocese.org

Office of the Bishop

March 1, 2013

Dear Brothers and Sisters:

Greetings in the Lord, Jesus Christ!

The Church's work of ministry to and with youth today is urgent and essential. Youth ministry is not merely the work of one person or one group in the parish. Effective youth ministry requires collaboration among parents, grandparents, youth ministers, priests, and many organizations that provide retreats, catechesis, times of prayer, and other opportunities that benefit our youth.

In addition to youth ministry programs of the parish or diocese, the Church benefits by partnering with other youth organizations. One of these organizations is the Girl Scouts of the USA (GSUSA). GSUSA is an organization which promotes values, and girls that participate in scouting are taught the virtues of leadership, service to their community, and duty to God. Youth learn well when they are in an environment of fun and accomplishment – two goals that are at the center of the scouting experience.

There is a nation-wide relationship between the Girl Scouts and the Catholic Church. The National Federation for Catholic Youth Ministry (NFCYM) works closely with the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops, coordinating the youth ministry of the Catholic Church with other youth organizations, like scouting. Details of this collaboration are readily available through the Diocese of Austin Office of Youth, Young Adult and Campus Ministry and the Diocese of Austin Catholic Committee on Scouting.

Today's youth are vulnerable to many destructive influences. It is a reality that in the City of Austin only 76% of students graduate from high school. The Girl Scout program teaches values so that girls will not only overcome the dangers around them, but also become leaders for the community. The reason for this success is that scouting is not only for the girls who participate, but it also includes an active role for the parents, especially for mothers and daughters together.

Scouting is an important aspect of comprehensive parish youth ministry that intentionally reflects our faith and provides a unique experience of growth. In the Diocese of Austin, we look to scouting as a natural ally in our work to raise holy and healthy children. I deeply support the good work of scouting for our Catholic youth, and I ask you to join me in prayer for the continued growth and participation of our youth in scouting.

Sincerely in Christ,

Most Reverend Joe S. Vásquez
Bishop of Austin



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Office of the Bishop

1 de marzo del 2013

Queridos Hermanos y Hermanas:

!Saludos en el Señor, Jesucristo!

Le iglesia necesita trabajar urgentemente en el ministerio juvenil. El ministerio juvenil no es solamente el trabajo de una persona o un grupo en la parroquia. El ministerio juvenil efectivo requiere la colaboración de los padres, abuelos, ministros a los jóvenes, sacerdotes y muchas organizaciones que proporcionan retiros, catequesis, tiempos de oración y muchas otras oportunidades que benefician a nuestros jóvenes.

Además de los programas del ministerio juvenil en las parroquias o en la diócesis, la iglesia se beneficia a través de la asociación con otras organizaciones juveniles. Una de estas organizaciones es *Girl Scouts of the USA (GSUSA)*. GSUSA es una organización que promueve valores, y a las jóvenes que participan en estas actividades se les enseñan las virtudes de liderazgo, el servicio a su comunidad y el servicio a Dios. Las jóvenes aprenden bien cuando están en un medio ambiente divertido y de logros – dos metas que son el centro de la experiencia de scouting.

Existe una relación a nivel nacional entre *Girl Scouts* y la Iglesia Católica. La Federación Nacional para el Ministerio de Jóvenes Católicos (NFCYM) trabaja junto con la Conferencia Estadounidense de Obispos Católicos, coordinando el ministerio juvenil de la Iglesia Católica con otras organizaciones juveniles, como scouting. Los detalles de esta colaboración están fácilmente disponibles a través de la Oficina de la Juventud de la Diócesis de Austin, el Ministerio para Adultos Jóvenes, el Ministerio Universitario, y el Comité Católico sobre Scouting de la Diócesis de Austin.

La juventud de hoy es vulnerable a muchas influencias destructivas. Es una realidad triste que en la Ciudad de Austin sólo se gradúan el 76% de los estudiantes de la preparatoria. El programa de *Girl Scouts* enseña valores para que las jóvenes no sólo superen los peligros a su rededor, sino que también se convierten en líderes de la comunidad. La razón de este éxito es que scouting no sólo es para las jóvenes, sino que incluye una participación de los padres y madres, especialmente para las madres junto con sus hijas.

Scouting es un aspecto importante del ministerio juvenil en la parroquia que refleja nuestra fe intencionalmente y provee una experiencia única de crecimiento. En la Diócesis de Austin, miramos a scouting como un aliado natural en nuestro trabajo para criar a los hijos santos y sanos. Apoyo profundamente la buena obra de scouting en nuestra juventud católica y pido que se unan en oración para el crecimiento continuo y participación en scouting de nuestros jóvenes.

Sinceramente en Cristo,

Monseñor José S. Vásquez
Obispo de Austin



Diocese of Austin

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STATEMENT ON GIRL SCOUTS COOKIES FROM THE DIOCESAN COMMITTEE ON CATHOLIC SCOUTING

The Diocese of Austin Catholic Committee on Scouting is committed to fostering the spiritual development of the Catholic members of Boy Scouts of America, Girls Scouts of the USA, Camp Fire USA, American Heritage Girls, Junior Catholic Daughters of the Americas and any others as designated by the diocese.

The Diocesan Catholic Committee on Scouting understands that the Girl Scouts of the USA and its local leaders do not take a stand on or advocate for or against any issue regarding girls' health and sexuality. It is the committee's understanding that the Girl Scouts' policy precludes any sanctioning or funding of Planned Parenthood activities. The Diocesan Catholic Committee on Scouting understands that no revenue from the sale of Girl Scout cookies goes outside of the local Girl Scout troop and council. The committee believes engagement with the Girl Scouts is the best way to influence a secular organization that provides admirable character development for thousands of local youth, including many Catholics.

The committee encourages parents to actively ensure that Boy Scouts, Girl Scouts, Campfire Girls, American Heritage Girls and Catholic Daughters troops associated with the Catholic Church are presented with the Church's teachings, participate in Catholic religious emblems and activities offered by the committee, and that the sanctioned local activities and materials of these organizations do not undermine the Church's teachings.

More information on scouting in the Diocese of Austin can be found by contacting Alison Tate, Director of Youth, Young Adult and Campus Ministry at (512) 949-2400.



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DECLARACIÓN DE LA COMISIÓN DIOCESANA DE EXPLORADORES CATÓLICOS SOBRE LAS GALLETAS DE GIRL SCOUTS

La Comisión Católica de Exploradores de la Diócesis de Austin está comprometida a fomentar el desarrollo espiritual de los miembros católicos de Boy Scouts of America, Girls Scouts of the USA, Camp Fire USA, American Heritage Girls, Junior Catholic Daughters of the Americas y cualquier otros designados por la diócesis.

La Comisión Católica de Exploradores de la Diócesis entiende que Girl Scouts of the USA (Niñas exploradoras de Estados Unidos) y sus líderes locales no toman una posición o abogan a favor o en contra de cualquier cuestión relativa a la salud de las niñas y de su sexualidad. Es de conocimiento de la comisión que la política de Girl Scouts se opone a cualquier sanción o financiamiento de las actividades de Planned Parenthood. La Comisión Católica de Exploradores Diocesana entiende que ningún ingreso por la venta de galletas de Girl Scouts sale de la tropa local de Girl Scouts y del Consejo. El Comité considera que la participación de las Girl Scouts es la mejor manera de influir en una organización secular que proporciona el desarrollo de un carácter admirable para miles de jóvenes de la localidad, incluyendo muchas católicas.

El Comité alienta a los padres de familia a vigilar activamente que los Boy Scouts, Girl Scouts, Campfire Girls, Girls American Heritage y tropas de Catholic Daughters asociados con la Iglesia Católica sean presentados con las enseñanzas de la Iglesia, participen en emblemas religiosos y actividades católicas ofrecidas por el comité, y que las actividades autorizadas y materiales locales de estas organizaciones no vayan en detrimento de las enseñanzas de la Iglesia.

Puede obtener mas información sobre la exploración en la Diócesis de Austin llamando a Alison Tate, Directora de la Juventud, Jóvenes Adultos y Pastoral Universitaria al (512) 949-2400.

Questions and Answers About Girl Scouts of the USA (GSUSA) and About Catholic Scouting

This Q & A is based on a dialogue between staff to the bishops' Committee on Laity, Marriage, Family Life and Youth (LMFLY) and Girl Scouts of the USA (GSUSA). It contains information based on the dialogue as well as considerations offered by the LMFLY Committee. Guidance is also provided at the end of this resource in relation to strengthening all scouting programs. This resource is intended to assist Catholic leaders and parents and presupposes the authority of the diocesan bishop over Catholic scouting in his diocese. The information provided should not be taken as exhaustive but represents select points which the LMFLY Committee found important to consider. Further questions should be directed to the appropriate contacts in the diocese.

While Girl Scouts of the USA (GSUSA) is a secular organization, GSUSA has had a long cooperative relationship with the Catholic Church in the United States. In recent years, significant questions have been raised concerning Girl Scouts, which have, in turn, raised questions about Catholic participation in Girl Scouting.

The questions can be grouped around three areas: (1) GSUSA's relationship with organizations such as Planned Parenthood and GSUSA's relationship to its international affiliate the World Association of Girl Guides and Girl Scouts (WAGGGS); (2) GSUSA's policy on matters pertaining to human sexuality, contraception, and abortion; and (3) GSUSA programmatic materials and resources and questions about inappropriate content.

Given these questions, the USCCB Committee on Laity, Marriage, Family Life and Youth (LMFLY) discussed these questions in order to provide information and guidance to dioceses where possible.

Under the direction of the LMFLY Committee, USCCB staff first gathered preliminary information and then dialogued with GSUSA. The exchanges between USCCB staff and GSUSA staff were pleasant, informative and respectful. GSUSA staff was generous with their time, indicated a strong desire and willingness to work more closely with the Catholic Church in the United States, and have posted a link to this question-and-answer resource on their website [here](#).

Below are the fruits of the dialogue between USCCB staff and GSUSA.

(1) How is the Girl Scouts movement structured?

According to Girl Scouts of the USA (GSUSA), the Girl Scouting movement is a federation of interdependent entities. GSUSA is the national organization that grants charters to local councils and provides national direction to the Girl Scouts movement. Every local council operates as an individual 501(c) (3) nonprofit corporation and therefore has certain latitude in

which to deliver Girl Scout programming at the local level. Individual troops, while needing to follow particular volunteer standards and the direction of the council (including their respective service unit), are largely under the direction of the parents/volunteers. This structure allows both troops and councils to incorporate the gifts, strengths and needs of their particular communities. It also can mean that certain decisions or activities by the troops and/or councils may not represent the recommendations or direction of the national level. GSUSA therefore has a particular and limited national authority over local councils and troops.

(2) When did GSUSA program content most recently change?

According to GSUSA, in 2006, the Girl Scouts formally began a structural reorganization as well as a significant revision of programmatic materials.

Materials were revised to emphasize leadership experience and skills, and where needed, these materials have since undergone revision after content concerns were identified. Because of the publishing and circulation cycle, as of March 2014 some revised materials are still in process for complete circulation.

The LMFLY Committee recognized that emphasis on leadership development can offer opportunities for personal growth and formation. Religious recognitions programming and further initiatives at the local level could complement the focus on leadership with an additional focus on classical virtues and values grounded in a Judeo-Christian vision. Use of programming materials at the Catholic troop level would be expected to include appropriate review by Church authority and involve the discretionary judgment of parents of Catholic scouts.

(3) Does GSUSA have a policy on issues regarding human sexuality, contraception, and abortion?

The GSUSA national office articulates a non-position policy when it comes to the topics of human sexuality, contraception (or birth control), and abortion. This national policy of neutrality does not prohibit individual councils or troops from taking a position or sponsoring programming on human sexuality or other topics (either from a secular or religious platform), presuming parental consent and other necessary approvals have been provided. Also, GSUSA understands this national non-position still allows it to research and report on issues related to such topics.

The LMFLY Committee recognized that attentiveness and initiative at the local level could offer positive opportunities. For example, religious recognitions programming and other initiatives at the troop level could provide opportunities to advance healthy formation in chaste living and sound education in human sexuality, presuming appropriate parental consent and approvals. At the same time, attentiveness is needed to avoid programming and initiatives that are not in accord with Catholic teaching. In addition, the Committee shared concerns with GSUSA about

particular areas of research on the GSUSA website related to human sexuality and contraception, given the impossibility of a neutral treatment of such issues. The research remains on GSUSA's website, though a disclaimer has been added.

(4) Does GSUSA have an official relationship with Planned Parenthood?

GSUSA has stated that it has no official relationship with Planned Parenthood. It has also acknowledged that, due to the structure of GSUSA and the Girl Scouting movement, the national office (GSUSA) does not have the authority to prohibit local councils or troops from collaborating with or forming their own local relationships with Planned Parenthood (or other organizations) as long as parental consent and other necessary approvals have been provided.

The LMFLY Committee considered the possibility of local councils or troops collaborating with or forming a relationship with Planned Parenthood to be an area of serious concern deserving close attention at the local level. As noted below, conversations between dioceses and Girl Scouts councils, and the establishment of a memorandum of understanding, may be helpful toward clarifying local practices and ensuring that Catholic troops are free from any programming or activities contrary to Catholic teaching.

(5) What about GSUSA's membership position with regard to youth who identify as "transgender"?

Regarding the situation of youth who identify as "transgender," GSUSA has provided an FAQ on its website noting its case-by-case approach to this issue. The answer to the FAQ reads as follows: "Girl Scouts is an inclusive organization and is proud to be the premiere leadership organization for girls in the country. Placement of transgender youth is handled on a case-by-case basis, with the welfare and best interests of the child and the members of the troop/group in question a top priority. That said, if the child is recognized by the family and school/community as a girl and lives culturally as a girl, then Girl Scouts is an organization that can serve her in a setting that is both emotionally and physically safe."

The LMFLY Committee affirmed the intention to reach out with care and support for vulnerable youth as noble and commendable. However, the general use of terms such as "sexual orientation" and "transgender youth" often does not include the important distinction between the person as a whole, the inclinations of a person, and a person's actions. A concern is that any further development of guidance in these areas may not be informed by an adequate anthropology or understanding of the human person. Concerns about the use of the term "transgender youth" and the problematic anthropology undergirding such use have been communicated to GSUSA.

Catholic troops, with the support of the local council, must be able to fully abide by Catholic teaching, particularly as it relates to the intrinsic dignity of every human person, to the gift and dignity of human sexuality, male and female, and to the distinction between person, inclination,

and action. The USCCB's [Ministry to Persons with a Homosexual Inclination: Guidelines for Pastoral Care](#) (2006) is an important reference.

(6) What is the World Association of Girl Guides and Girl Scouts (WAGGGS)?

WAGGGS is an international association of scouting organizations dedicated to girls and young women. Member organizations represent themselves (and sometimes their nation) in WAGGGS. The relationship between WAGGGS and its member organizations is similar to GSUSA's relationship to local Girl Scout councils.

As an international association, WAGGGS partners with many national, regional and international organizations, such as the United Nations.

(7) Does WAGGGS promote so-called “sexual and reproductive health/rights”?

According to information shared by WAGGGS with GSUSA, WAGGGS has acknowledged that, through particular member organizations, delegates, or WAGGGS' own communications, it promotes and advocates for the education of girls and young women in the area of so-called “sexual and reproductive health/rights.” WAGGGS has indicated that its general emphasis is to advocate for the well-being of the world’s most marginalized girls and to promote education on a variety of matters. WAGGGS has also indicated that it does not have a position on abortion.

WAGGGS’ website includes various references to topics related to “sexual and reproductive health/rights,” some in specific reference to positions taken by member organizations or WAGGGS delegates. Similarly to GSUSA, WAGGGS has indicated it has a particular and limited authority over member organizations and the personal positions of delegates.

While the LMFLY Committee affirmed the vital importance and value of proper education and formation in love, chastity, and human sexuality for all young people, including those who are poor or marginalized, the Committee recognized to be morally objectionable any type of promotion, advocacy, or education on “sexual and reproductive health/rights” as this phrase is commonly understood, especially since the phrase often includes abortion. For example, while WAGGGS has indicated that it does not have a position on abortion, the very use of the term “sexual and reproductive health/rights” often includes problematic positions and agendas at odds with the respect for the gift of human life and the dignity of human sexuality (e.g., positions that do not support abstinence-only education and that advocate for contraception/sterilization as well as abortion). WAGGGS’ delegates from member organizations have taken problematic positions on other issues as well—positions that WAGGGS has not explicitly distanced itself from. These concerns have been communicated to GSUSA.

(8) What is the relationship between GSUSA and WAGGGS?

GSUSA is an active and supportive member of WAGGGS which GSUSA describes as a convener of the global sisterhood of Girl Guides/Girl Scouts. According to GSUSA, WAGGGS creates opportunities for girls to come together and learn about their peers around the world and the value of global citizenship. Further, GSUSA indicates that girls also access global leadership and service opportunities through WAGGGS.

With regard to concerns that have been raised over the last few years, GSUSA has worked with WAGGGS to review particular materials, programming, and events that would involve Girl Scouts, and GSUSA has also indicated that it only participates in select WAGGGS programming. GSUSA has noted, however, that it does not have the ability or purview to criticize, explicitly distance itself from, or change particular advocacy positions within WAGGGS.

Each year, GSUSA contributes over one million unrestricted dollars in membership dues to WAGGGS. The amount is based on the number of members in GSUSA and comes from investment income. GSUSA does not use its own membership dues or other contributions to pay for WAGGGS dues. It has also noted that revenue from cookie sales remains within councils and troops. In response to questions raised about the fact that WAGGGS dues are unrestricted, GSUSA has responded that it cannot change its yearly WAGGGS membership dues into restricted monies or receive a financial report from WAGGGS indicating where such monies have been applied. WAGGGS has indicated to GSUSA that less than 3% of its budget is allocated towards advocacy efforts which cover a number of topics, including basic education and health care.

The LMFLY Committee recognized that both GSUSA and WAGGGS have been responsive to particular concerns. However, GSUSA's limited purview to address particular positions within WAGGGS that are objectionable based on Catholic teaching and the natural moral law (e.g., "sexual and reproductive health/rights") is a concern. In addition, with regard to the unrestricted membership dues, any monetary amount applied to advocacy or educational efforts deemed problematic is still a concern.

In sum, GSUSA's relationship with WAGGGS over the years is understandable given the history and purpose of the organizations; however, the current relationship remains a concern due to WAGGGS' problematic promotion of "sexual and reproductive health/rights" and other matters.

(9) What options can troops and individuals consider in response to concerns with WAGGGS?

Various options exist for troops and individuals. Participation in WAGGGS events and in specific fundraising for WAGGGS can be discouraged. Further, as GSUSA notes, girls can choose not to wear the WAGGGS pin. Currently, the Committee on Laity, Marriage, Family Life and Youth is

recommending both of the above options for consideration by dioceses and Catholic troops. In place of wearing the pin or participating in WAGGGS activities and events, troops might encourage prayer for girls and young women around the world, foster awareness of authentic channels of outreach and service, propose concrete initiatives and projects of service and solidarity, and in general promote alternative activities and service in accord with the authentic dignity and vocation of women. As noted above, the Committee recognizes that the broader question of the Girl Scouts' relationship with WAGGGS, in view of particular WAGGGS' positions and the matter of unrestricted membership dues, remains an area of concern. For further questions or guidance, please contact your local diocese.

(10) What guidance can be considered at the local level to promote, foster and safeguard Catholic scouting for boys and girls?

There are various ways that Catholic scouting and scouting in general can be fostered. The following are some considerations. Again, for every diocese, the diocesan bishop has authority and discretion when it comes to supporting and directing Catholic scouting within the diocese.

- **Strengthen the connections between scouting and youth ministry and religious education programs.** This can include utilizing religious recognition patches and programs and advancing initiatives such as age-appropriate chastity formation, as well as a stronger collaboration with parish and diocesan youth ministry offices. For example, the National Federation for Catholic Youth Ministry (NFCYM), through its National Catholic Committee for Girl Scouts and Camp Fire (NCCGSCF), provides scouting with Catholic religious recognition programs, which allow young people in elementary and high school to explore and become more involved in their faith. Programs are designed to support and complement the catechetical and sacramental preparation efforts of Catholic parishes and schools. Similarly, the National Catholic Committee on Scouting (NCCS) provides boy scouting with Catholic religious emblem programs and activities.
- **Provide guidance and formation for priests and seminarians.** Opportunities for continuing education and formation of priests and seminarians on Catholic scouting's relationship to the pastoral life and Catholic identity of the parish or school, particularly to youth ministry, would be valuable.
- **Foster clear communication and understanding at the local level.**
 - Ensure communication and foster understanding between appropriate diocesan contacts and the local scouting council.
 - For example, some dioceses have found that a memorandum of understanding (MOU) with the local council is a helpful way to establish mutual understanding and expectations so that every Catholic troop is free from any programming or activities contrary to the Church's teaching.

- NFCYM has indicated that it has examples of MOUs that can be shared with interested leaders. NFCYM has also noted that it has developed a document of “Principles for Cooperative Partnerships” that might be of assistance to dioceses when considering relationships between parish, school, and diocesan leadership and the various scouting, sports, and community programs that are commonly hosted in Catholic settings.
- Issues to be considered in relation to a local council should include the following: whether the council affirms Catholic troops’ right to fully abide by the Church’s teaching; whether the council has a formal relationship with an organization whose mission is at odds with Catholic teaching; whether the council takes a position on matters related to human sexuality, contraception and abortion; with regard to Girl Scouting but applicable to any analogous situations, whether and how the council is involved with WAGGGS and whether the council will respect Catholic troops that distance Catholic scouts formally from involvement with WAGGGS; and whether the council will strive to avoid referring scouts to morally objectionable website links and other materials within local programming, activities and events.
- Find ways to foster communication between diocesan leaders, parishes and schools, and parents of Catholic scouts.
- Establish a key contact/structure within the diocese to facilitate the reception and communication of any concerns and questions with the local council and the pertinent national scouting committee as necessary.
- **Strong and active parental involvement is important.** For parents of scouts, whether in Catholic troops/units or not, involvement with the troop and knowledge of the leadership at the troop and council levels are encouraged. Parents can become informed, get to know troop leaders and volunteers, and volunteer themselves. Parents and other leaders and volunteers can also learn about the leadership of the local council and be aware of those who serve on the council’s board of directors.
- **Support for various scouting arrangements is possible.** As various complementary or alternative scouting arrangements for girls or for boys become available and as parents and families participate in these options or consider them, dioceses are free to find ways of formalizing support for such arrangements.
- **For further questions or guidance, please contact your local diocese and/or the pertinent national Catholic scouting committee.**

Background on GSUSA + USCCB Conversations

What is the online resource entitled “Questions and Answers About Girl Scouts of the USA and About Catholic Scouting”?

The USCCB Committee on Laity, Marriage, Family Life and Youth (LMFLY) through USCCB staff has been in dialogue with the Girl Scouts of the USA (GSUSA) over the last year. A resource produced from that conversation is online at www.usccb.org/beliefs-and-teachings/who-we-teach/youth/catholic-scouting-questions.cfm. It includes information for Catholic leaders and parents and was developed and reviewed with GSUSA to ensure transparency and accuracy.

What is the purpose?

The purpose of the dialogue is to provide information and further mutual understanding in order to offer guidance to bishops, leaders and parents.

What prompted this dialogue?

In recent years, key questions were raised by parents and Catholic leaders concerning GSUSA, which led to questions about Catholic participation in Girl Scouts.

What questions were raised?

The questions can be grouped around three areas: (1) GSUSA’s relationship with organizations such as Planned Parenthood and GSUSA’s relationship to its international affiliate, the World Association of Girl Guides and Girl Scouts (WAGGGS); (2) GSUSA’s policy on matters pertaining to human sexuality, contraception, and abortion; and (3) GSUSA programmatic materials and resources, and questions about inappropriate content.

How did the dialogue take place?

Under the USCCB Committee on Laity, Marriage Family Life and Youth, USCCB staff gathered preliminary information for discussion and then had conversations with GSUSA leadership. The exchanges were pleasant, informative and respectful. GSUSA staff was generous with their time and indicated a desire and willingness to work closely with the Church. The Committee compiled the information from the dialogue and developed the resource to guide the bishops, as well as pastors, youth leaders, and parents. GSUSA reviewed the resource.

Why has the Committee’s work taken more than two years’ time?

Information gathering marked the first phase, followed by the dialogue which was a deliberate, mutual and positive process. Time was important in order to respect the integrity of the dialogue.

Do the bishops endorse the Girl Scouts? Are the bishops supportive or unsupportive of GSUSA?

The Committee did not take up this question. It aimed to gather information for bishops and dioceses, recognizing a local bishop’s authority over Catholic scouting locally. The Committee never sought to make decisions or set out national norms but rather to share information and guidance. It also recognized the history of significant work and relationships between Girl Scouts and the Church and the service Girl Scout councils and troops have provided dioceses, parishes and local communities.

What will happen as a result of this dialogue?

Diocesan bishops may use the information as they wish. The resource offers information from the dialogue with points to consider about remaining concerns and opportunities, especially related to how dioceses can promote, foster and safeguard Catholic scouting for boys and girls. The resource does not intend to be exhaustive.

Should the Church collaborate with or host the Girl Scouts?

This question must be answered at the local level. As noted above, diocesan bishops have the final authority over what is appropriate for Catholic scouting in their dioceses.

Where do I go if I have further questions?

Media may contact media-relations@usccb.org. Others with questions can contact their local diocese.

MEMORANDUM OF UNDERSTANDING

**Girl Scouts of Central Texas
Diocese of Austin
Office of Youth, Young Adult and Campus Ministry**

This memorandum of understanding provides an agreement between the Diocese of Austin and the Girl Scouts of Central Texas for the purpose of confirming a framework for a cooperative relationship detailed below.

Girl Scouting is proud of its long-standing and mutually supportive relationship with the Catholic Church, which dates back to 1914. It is understood that the motivating force in Girl Scouting is spiritual (see below) and that through a relationship with Girl Scouts, each girl is encouraged to become a stronger member of her own religious community.

We, the members of Girl Scouts of the United States of America (are) united by a belief in God...*Preamble, Constitution of Girl Scouts of the United States of America*

Grounded in the Girl Scout Promise and Law, Girl Scouting is a non-formal, experiential, and cooperative education program that promotes girls' personal growth and leadership development. *Constitution, Article III, Girl Scouts of the United States of America*

On my honor, I will try: To serve God and my country, To help other people at all times, And to live by the Girl Scout Law. *The Girl Scout Promise*

The diocese of Austin acknowledges the long history of mutual support and close cooperation with Girl Scouting. Girl Scout troops have been a consistent presence in many of our parishes and schools, working in close cooperation with Catholic pastors, principals, and other Church leaders to nurture the healthy development of young women, and building faith through Catholic religious awards programs. Moreover, in its Catholic Committee on Girl Scouting, the diocese has benefited from the extraordinary volunteer service by Catholic women and men who have found in the Girl Scout program a means to help Catholic girls develop into capable and confident Catholic women who take great pride in their faith.

Based on mutual respect and shared values, the partners agree to the following:

Girl Scouts of Central Texas agrees to:

- Respect the teachings of the Roman Catholic Church and the policies, objectives, aims and practices of the diocese and individual parishes and schools;
- Assist in meeting those objectives through its programming for girls ages 5-17 and through support of religious awards;
- Provide year-round support to the Girl Scout troops/groups and volunteers located in Catholic parishes and schools;
- Maintain regular, ongoing communication with the Diocese of Austin through the Office of Youth, Young Adult and Campus Ministry;
- Communicate regularly through and support the designated parish liaison;
- Provide policies, procedures, and assistance to ensure the selection of quality Girl Scout leaders and other volunteers;

- Screen and approve Girl Scout leaders and other volunteers in accord with Girl Scout policies and procedures and the policies and procedures of the diocese and the parish or school in which the Girl Scout troop is located;
- Operate its troops and volunteers that are located in Catholic institutions in compliance with Catholic teaching and diocesan policy, especially its Ethics and Integrity in Ministry policies;
- Promote and provide support for the achievement of religious recognition awards;
- Provide general liability insurance to cover the volunteers currently registered with Girl Scouts of the USA; (Note: coverage is provided with respect to claims arising out of an official Girl Scout activity, and is in effect when claims exceed the volunteer's insurance regarding losses arising from the ownership, maintenance, or use of a motor vehicle or watercraft.)
- Provide the volunteer training and supports necessary to carry out the Girl Scout program;
- Provide and adhere to due process described in the Girl Scout grievance procedures, in cooperation with representatives of the diocese and the host parish or school;
- Participate in good faith in resolving any and all grievances, whether initiated by the Girl Scouts, the diocese, or the host parish or school;
- Establish regular, clear, and ongoing communication with parish or school leadership;
- Recognize and honor the principle that religious instruction is the responsibility of parents and religious leaders.

The Diocese of Austin agrees to:

- Provide ongoing support for religious recognitions awards programs through its diocesan Catholic Committee on Scouting and the Office of Youth, Young Adult and Campus Ministry;
- Provide guidance and support to the Girl Scouts of Central Texas and individual Girl Scout troops/groups operating in Catholic facilities (parishes, schools, etc.) in matters related to Catholic teaching and/or diocesan policy;
- Participate in grievance proceedings related to matters of Catholic teaching and/or diocesan policy.
- In conjunction with the Girl Scouts of Central Texas and the diocesan Catholic Committee on Scouting, establish standards of quality for Girl Scout troops and volunteers, including but not limited to special provisions for orientation and training for Girl Scout leaders operating in Catholic settings.

The Parishes and Schools in the Diocese of Austin who host Girl Scout troops agree to:

- Approve the adult leadership selections of the Girl Scout program operating on the premise of the parish or school, in accord with the policies and procedures of the diocese and the host parish or school, in cooperation with the screening and approval of the Girl Scouts;
- Include Girl Scouting as part of its overall program for youth and families.
- Provide adequate facilities for the Girl Scout troops and service team to meet on a regular basis with time and place reserved.
- Agree to encourage attendance of girls to weekly meetings.
- Ensure that its adult Girl Scout leaders and volunteers are in compliance with the diocesan Child Protection policies, and any other applicable policies, and have received the necessary Girl Scout and church ministry training and preparation in accord with their roles;
- Ensure that at least two adult volunteers are present at each meeting in which girls are present and that the health and safety of girls is of utmost importance.

- Oversee the Girl Scout program to ensure its quality and its alignment with Catholic teachings and diocesan policies and procedures and the mission of the Girl Scouts of Central Texas.
- Agree that all money earned in troop activities including cookie and fall products go only to the troop.

This memorandum of understanding will be in effect for three years, renewable, and may be terminated by any one of the above parties at any time.

Girl Scouts of Central Texas

Signed:

Lynelle Murray
CEO

Title:

Date:

May 4, 2018

Office of Youth, Young Adult and Campus Ministry

Signed:

Allison Tate
Director of Youth, Young Adult & Campus Ministry

Title:

Date:

May 4, 2018



CONTACT:

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Girl Scouts of Central Texas and Diocese of Austin Announce Partnership

Two long-standing organizations join forces in an effort to build girls of courage, confidence and character

Austin, TX August 5, 2014 – Girl Scouts of Central Texas (GSCTX) and the Diocese of Austin are proud to announce a partnership that will strengthen the values both organizations stand for as they join forces to build girls of courage, confidence and character who make the world a better place.

Girl Scouts and the Catholic Church have a longstanding relationship, which has existed since 1914, with a history of mutual support and close cooperation in fostering the healthy development of young women. Seeking to honor this tradition, GSCTX is proud to partner with the Diocese of Austin in promoting honorable actions and pursuits that empower girls to become outstanding community members while honoring their faith.

“Girl Scouts of Central Texas has long believed in creating strong partnerships with community institutions in order to increase our outreach and offer the benefits Girl Scouting brings to girls and communities alike,” said Lynelle McKay, GSCTX CEO. “We are honored to share our mission with the Diocese of Austin, as they also seek to build exemplary young women who make the world a better place.”

Based on mutual respect of each organization’s goals and values, GSCTX has agreed to cooperate with the Diocese of Austin in providing year-round support to the Girl Scout troops, groups and volunteers located in Catholic parishes and schools. The foundation of the agreement comes from a Memo of Understanding that allows Catholic units to retain their Catholic identity, nature and certifies that all Catholic units will operate in full alignment with the teachings of the Catholic Church. Girl Scouts will also continue to provide support for the achievement of religious recognition awards that Girl Scouts of the Catholic faith may pursue.

“In addition to ministering to and with youth in our parishes, the Diocese of Austin benefits by partnering with other youth organizations such as Girl Scouts of Central Texas,” says Alison Tate, Director of Youth, Young Adult and Campus Ministry for the diocese. “Scouting is an important aspect of comprehensive youth ministry and through this partnership, our parishes and schools are able to offer a Girl Scout experience that teaches leadership and service, as well as provides faith formation opportunities and celebrates Catholic identity.”

This cooperative relationship seeks to enforce the spiritual motivating force in Girl Scouting so that each Girl Scout of the Catholic faith is encouraged to become a stronger member of her own religious community. Within the last year, the Austin Diocese and Girls Scouts launched a multi age troop of nearly 70 girls in Sacred Heart parish. This troop has been well supported by the parish community and is actively involved in traditional Girl Scout activities.

About the Girl Scouts of Central Texas:

Girl Scouts of Central Texas is the premier leadership organization serving 17,500 girls in grades K-12 with a partnership base of over 13,000 adult volunteers in 46 Central Texas counties. Headquartered in Austin, Girl Scouts of Central Texas has service centers in Brownwood, Bryan/College Station, Killeen, San Angelo, Stephenville, Temple and Waco. Through outcomes-based leadership opportunities, girls discover their own potential, connect with others and take action to improve their communities. Girl Scouting offers an array of fun, educational programs focusing on fine arts, science and technology, math, the environment, community service, leadership, and life skills. Girl Scouts lead with courage, confidence and character, to make the world a better place. For more information, visit www.gsctx.org.

About the Diocese of Austin:

The Roman Catholic Diocese of Austin includes 127 parishes, or faith communities, in 25 counties in Central Texas. The diocese stretches over 21,000 square miles from West, Texas, (just north of Waco) in the north to San Marcos in the south to the Bryan/College Station area in the east to Mason in the west. More than 109,000 Catholic families live in the diocese, approximately 536,000 Catholics.

www.austindiocese.org

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