

## Planning Retreat Announced

“Failing to plan is planning to fail” is an old saying worth repeating. This wisdom has been attributed to many people, including Benjamin Franklin. But it is believed to have come into popular usage sometime early in the 20<sup>th</sup> Century. Like a lot of old sayings, this one no doubt is the result of experience. And that reminds of another old saying, attributed to C. S. Lewis: “Experience: that most brutal of teachers. But you learn, my God do you learn.” With these thoughts in mind it seems only reasonable and wise to devote our best efforts to effective planning.

The [Association of Baptists for Scouting](#) is committed to working within the Scouting America program to encourage young people to be modeled in Christ’s image and to grow in their physical, emotional, mental, and spiritual lives. To achieve these goals it is necessary for ABS members to come together to review, discuss, and plan the actions necessary for success.

The [First Baptist Church](#) in Pineville, Louisiana, will be the host site for the ABS planning retreat again in 2026. The dates are set for February 6-8, 2026. All ABS members are invited to

attend and join in the time of fellowship as we plan upcoming activities to encourage and support our [Duty to God in Scouting](#).

ABS members also remain active at Scouting High Adventure bases, particularly the [Philmont Scout Ranch](#) and the [2026 National Jamboree](#) at the [Summit Bechtel Reserve](#). Both sites will see tens of thousands of Scouting youth and adults experiencing the unique opportunities that these sites provide.

ABS not only supplies the manpower for the Duty to God

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**“Life is an exciting  
business, and most  
exciting when it is  
lived for others.”**

– Helen Keller

## Welcome

Welcome to the Association of Baptists for Scouting (ABS) Newsletter - a communication intended to help you remain current on activities of the ABS. Please share with other Scouters and consider supporting these efforts with your time, talents and treasure. It is only through the dedication of Baptist Scouters like you that ABS can expand efforts throughout this great land. More than ever our world needs the Good News of Jesus Christ. Our young people in Scouting deserve it.



## President's Message

By Thomas Martin

James tells us, "Every good and perfect gift is from above, coming down from the Father of the heavenly lights, who does not change like shifting shadows." (James 1:17) As we come to the end of 2025 and the beginning of 2026, this verse can remind us that ABS has many gifts that have come down from Father this year.

In 2025, our Association was able to work toward many of our goals. Thanks to the blessing of God, we were able to:

- Have a winter planning retreat
- Participate in the Philmont Scout Ranch chapel refurbishment weekend
- Celebrate with an ABS officer who received the National Duty to God Award
- Encourage Baptist Scouts to participate in the Scouts Read Sacred Text program
- Adopt a new set of bylaws and elect new officers
- Sponsor a seminarian as a chaplain at Philmont Scout Ranch for the summer
- Have five ABS members serve as Philmont Scout Ranch chaplains during the summer
- Have ABS members serving as summer camp chaplains
- Begin strengthening our committees with additional members
- Support the Virtual Religious Emblem Program
- Celebrate three ABS members who were recognized with the Council Duty to God Award
- Mail congratulatory letters to nearly 30 Baptist Eagle Scouts
- Celebrate with more than 300 Baptist Scouts earning their religious emblem

In 2026, the Association plans to continue ministering to Scouts and families just as it did in

2025. However, we are praying that God blesses our efforts as we plan to expand the list to include:

- Supporting the National Scout Jamboree with Baptist chaplains
- Having a significant Baptist presence in the Duty to God and Country area of the Jamboree
- Offering more print resources on our webpage
- Providing online conferences for specific topics
- Funding the Bible project at the national high adventure bases

For over seventy years, the Association of Baptist for Scouting has existed to help bring youth and families to Christ through a Scouting ministry. The methods may have changed (just like we plan to add new methods in 2026), but our purpose has not.

Additional methods require additional help. We invite every member to serve in some way. Email today ([tmartin@baptistscouters.org](mailto:tmartin@baptistscouters.org)) and we will connect you with the team that best fits the desire God has placed on your heart. The more members we have serving, the more people we can reach for Christ.

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**2025/2026**

### **ASSOCIATION OF BAPTISTS FOR SCOUTING COMMITTEE**

President: Thomas Martin

Immediate Past President: John Lyon

Executive Vice President: Donna Copeland

Treasurer: Tim Baker

Secretary: Eric Hood

Membership Vice President: Elrico Hurley

Chief Technology Officer: Jerry Wells

Chaplain: Jeff Thompson

Member at Large (1): Ted Spangenberg

Member at Large (2): Merri Bolen

Member at Large (3): Verne Wright

Member at Large (4): R. Chip Turner

## Planning Meeting (from page 1)

program areas at Jamborees and chaplaincy support at both high adventure bases, but also works to provide scholarships that allow more Baptist Scouts and Scouters to participate. This is only possible with significant planning and the financial support of many faithful Baptists among us. There is a saying that “we need prayers of intervention and support, plus money to operate; but your time is perhaps equally valuable and just as necessary.”

Matthew 28:18-20 declares a fundamental Christian principal for the early church to go forth and serve. This is known as the Great Commission. Throughout the New Testament we see His disciples actively engaged in meeting folks where they were and sharing the Good News of Christ’s sinless birth, life, death and glorious resurrection. A “Ministry of Presence” at Scouting events serves others and puts feet under our prayers.

Scouting’s founder, Lord Baden-Powell, established the Scouting program to equip and grow youth to develop character and become leaders. When asked where religion came into Scouting and Guiding, Baden-Powell replied, “It does not come in at all. It is already there. It is a fundamental factor underlying Scouting and Guiding.” Baptists must be devoted to training and equipping the next generation of

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## 2026 Jamboree Planning Update

The Association of Baptists for Scouting (ABS) continues work to engage staff and have a strong presence at the 2026 Scouting America National Jamboree in the Duty to God and Country Exhibit Area. Plans call for more than 20,000 scouts to attend the Jamboree, plus hundreds of staff. This is a wonderful opportunity for ABS to practice our mission to “BRING YOUTH TO CHRIST THROUGH A SCOUTING MINISTRY” by sharing the Gospel with every scout who spends time in our exhibit space. The Duty to God and Country Exhibit Area will encourage Scouts to spend time at several if not all exhibits in the area. And, since it is a Scouting event, there will be bracelets and patches for those visiting.

It comes as no surprise that our youth staff play a major role. Jamboree scouts really listen to our youth staff and our staff who do a great job interacting with the scouts. Our exhibit has five stations; Religious Emblems Program, What Baptist Believe, make your own Salvation bracelet, prayer corner and the ABS Ministry. Typically one of our adult staff members will talk to the scouters about the ABS Ministry while the youth staff will take a group of scouts through the other four stations. You can learn more about each of these stations on our website at: <https://baptistscouters.org/jamboree>

The camaraderie with other Christian Scouts and Scouters make this Jamboree a great place to enjoy and serve. What better place and time to encounter thousands of young people and share our message of grace, joy and peace. We are looking for both youth (18-20) and adult staff for our Jamboree Exhibit. ABS is offering to pay the Jamboree staff registration fee for our Youth staff. Contact Jerry Wells [\[jerry.wells@me.com\]](mailto:jerry.wells@me.com) for information. The Jamboree dates are Wednesday, July 22 to Friday, July 31, 2026 at Summit Bechtel Reserve, Glen Jean, West Virginia. <https://jamboree.scouting.org>  
Staff dates are July 19-31, 2026.



## Scouter Religious Awards

As one might expect, our focus in Scouting at all levels is on the development of youth in all facets of their lives – physical, emotional, mental and spiritual. Recognition is an important part of that planned development that has proven successful in Scouting for many decades. Would you be surprised to learn that adults also thrive and grow with similar support and recognition?

Sadly, all too often, you will hear a common refrain – that goes something like this:

“I wonder why they never got their religious recognition? *Somebody* ought to do something.”

Well, this challenge has an easy solution because *you* (and I, and all of us) can nominate deserving Baptist Scouters for the Baptist Good Shepherd Award.

The ABS website, [www.BaptistScouters.org](http://www.BaptistScouters.org), has a wealth of information about Baptist religious recognitions for youth, adults, and Scouting units - just select the “Religious Awards” tab at the top of the page.



The Scouting program holds Duty to God as a core tenet and our Baptist Scouting leaders and families can tap into these terrific resources to enhance their family's spiritual growth along the Scouting trail.

From the youngest Cub Scout and each year after there is a planned learning module to support and grow their spiritual understanding and development. This is certainly just as important as the other life skills experienced and learned in their formative years.

Likewise, deserving adults can be honored for their selfless and God honoring service with the Good Shepherd Award.

Who will you nominate ?

Every year, during the Duty to God Breakfast at the National Annual Meeting, Scouting America honors select Scouters with a prestigious recognition in honor of their long time service to Scouting and their commitment to God and His Word.

### National Duty to God Award



It should be no surprise that some of our ABS brothers and sisters have been so recognized in past years.

A listing of past ABS honorees includes:

- Jeff Thompson, 2025
- Ted Spangenberg, 2022
- Thomas Martin, 2021
- Merri Bolen, 2020
- Dr. Sam Houston, 2018
- Donna Copeland, 2018
- Chip Turner, 2016

The nominations for 2026 are available and must be submitted before February 27, 2026. As stated on the nomination, “The National Duty to God Award created in 2016 recognizes adult individuals who have demonstrated an exemplary history of transformational leadership in supporting and promoting the spiritual foundation of Scouting. It acknowledges the unswerving dedication to faith, fellowship, and national service of those whose character embodies the moral principles and shared ideals of Scouting America. The award distinguishes persons who selflessly work to prepare youth for life by perpetuating the merit and legacy of a Scout's duty to their Creator. Nominations are open to candidates from all faiths and religious groups chartered by Scouting America.”

<[click here](#)> for Duty to God Award Nomination info





## ABS Eagle Scout Corner



The Association of Baptist for Scouting recognizes Eagle Scout **Jonah Givens** of Troop 646 in the Swamp Fox District of Coastal Carolina Council in South Carolina. He is the son of Denise and Joe Givens.

Jonah chose to construct an outdoor gathering and fellowship area for his home church, as his Eagle Project. This created an area where people can gather to visit and reflect.

Jonah joined Scouts as a Tiger Cub and completed all the Cub Scout ranks, earning the Arrow of Light award before bridging to Boy Scouts. His favorite part of Scouting has been summer camps. He loved the hands-on and outdoor merit badges, earning the Complete Angler Award as well as the National Outdoor Award for Camping. Jonah enjoyed Scouting as a family event. His older brother, Noah, earned Eagle in 2020 and his younger brothers,

Life Scouts Micah and Ezra, are working towards their own Eagle with Jonah's support and assistance.



The Association of Baptist for Scouting recognizes Eagle Scout **Wyatt Moncla**. Wyatt is a member of Troop 511 in Sam Houston Area Council. He is the son of Amber and Brandon Moncla and a member of First Baptist Church in Houston, TX.

Wyatt's Eagle Project involved leading a group of volunteers to relocate and replant a memorial rose garden at the Pioneer Memorial Log House in Houston, Texas. This project benefited the Daughters of the Republic of Texas.

Wyatt joined Scouting as a Tiger Cub and advanced through Cub Scouts and Scouting BSA. While in Scouting he led his troop as a Chaplain Aid and Senior Patrol Leader. He completed a Philmont Trek in 2022, traveled to Kanderstag Switzerland in 2023, and attended Sea Base in 2025. This fall, Wyatt will study engineering at the University of Houston.



### Planning Retreat (cont. from page 3)

Godly leaders. <sup>34</sup> Jesus said to them, "My food is to do the will of Him who sent Me, and to finish His work. <sup>35</sup> Do you not say, 'There are still four months and then comes the harvest'? Behold, I say to you, lift up your eyes and look at the fields, for they are already white for harvest! <sup>36</sup> And he who reaps receives wages, and gathers fruit for eternal life, that both he who sows and he who reaps may rejoice together."

- [John 4:34-36](#) (NKJV)

We are to be the hands and feet spreading the Good News as we minister to a lost and dying world. Scouting's Duty to God program is a wonderful way to do that.



We encourage you to join us in Pineville at First Baptist Church on February 6-8, 2026 to learn more, do more, and reach more with this vehicle for service to others.

## ABS Membership

This maxim is as true as ever, *"Together We Can!"* There is much to do and we can always accomplish more working together than alone. The Association of Baptists for Scouting (ABS) has been committed for decades to cooperate in efforts of supporting Scouting to encourage youth to actively pursue their "Duty to God" and a personal walk with our Lord throughout their lives. Your membership and active participation is a key element of our mission.

We encourage you to share this newsletter with your Baptist brothers and sisters and encourage them to join the Association of Baptists for Scouting to come alongside us and work together in support of Scouting for the benefits it can provide our youth (and adults).

There are several options for membership - annual individual or joint, organization and lifetime membership. The application and dues information can be found on the ABS website at:

<https://baptistscouters.org/membership>

Complete the short form and submit with your annual dues payment:

- \$35 Individual
- \$50 Joint (husband & wife)
- \$100 Corporate, business, church

Or you may elect to become an ABS lifetime member with your payment (per person) of \$500 and above - Joe C. Carrington Society Lifetime Membership.

Who can know, this side of heaven, how many people may be impacted with eternal benefits from our service in Scouting to youth in obedience to the Word and our Lord?

## New ABS Members

Welcome to our newest ABS members:

- Donna Carr, Woodstock, GA
- Stephen Hill, Paragould, AR
- Jon & Kim Copeland, Bartlesville, OK
- Nathaniel Johnson, Peshtigo, WI
- Mark Larson, Richmond, VA
- Van East, Amory, MS
- Anna M. Tucker, Springville, AL

## New Testaments

All High Adventure bases (Philmont, Summit, Sea Base and Northern Tier) are supplied New Testaments w/Psalms for all their program participants attending chapel services. These are made possible by generous donations from religious groups, local churches and individuals who desire that each Scout and Scouter have their own copy of a New Testament. This project continued in 2025 with several Baptists groups and churches participating through funding gifts. Thousands of these backpack sized books are handed out during chapel services each summer. We encourage more church's participation and financial support to spread the Gospel.



### Important Dates

- February 6 - 8, 2026  
Winter 2026 Retreat  
1<sup>st</sup> Baptist, Pineville, LA
- May 6 - 10, 2026  
Refurb Chapels @ Philmont
- May 11 - 16, 2025  
National Annual Meeting  
Irving, Texas
- July 22 - 31, 2026  
National Jamboree  
Summit Bechtel Reserve

Contact Us:

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Website:

<https://www.BaptistScouters.org>

