

May 2025 Edition

# ABS Today

A Publication of the Association of Baptists for Scouting

## QUESTION:

**If not us, then who?  
If not now, then when?**  
- John Lewis

### Matthew 28:18-20 (NKJV)

<sup>18</sup> And Jesus came and spoke to them, saying, "All authority has been given to Me in heaven and on earth. <sup>19</sup> Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, <sup>20</sup> teaching them to observe all things that I have commanded you; and lo, I am with you always, even to the end of the age." Amen.

## PTC Training Conference Announced

If you had one chance, one last opportunity to say what is most important for someone you love - to hear, understand and do - what would it be? As a young person, still living at home it was always desirable to go out with friends, to "have fun", to experience what the world offered. It was also very common for parents to offer a parting warning (or advice or direction, even command) that went something like this - "Be careful," or "Get home on time," or, more to the point, "Don't do anything stupid," and even more direct, "Remember whose you are." These final

parting instructions were for our good. Consider Christ's final admonition to us recorded in Matthew 28 and Mark 16.

(Bible quote in box above)

So, how can we best live out this "Great Commission" in our daily lives? We must work, raise families, pay bills, and all the rest. But so did the disciples in Christ's day, yet He clearly and unequivocally directed them to share the Gospel and disciple others, just as they'd been treated themselves.

Scouting provides many opportunities to "Go" and

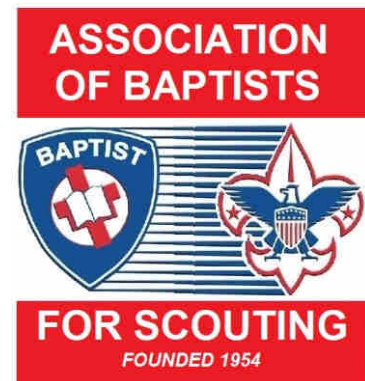
"Teach" as the Lord instructed. There will be opportunities to connect, learn, and grow during the week of July 6-12 for the Chaplaincy Conference at the Philmont Training Center. A core tenet of Scouting is Duty to God that all Scouts and Scouters should embrace and share.

A "Ministry of Presence" is an important part of Scouting events. It serves others where they are and in the moment of their needs. "Be Prepared" remains a foundational part of Scouting's teaching. This [PTC Chaplaincy Conference](#)

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## 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 John Lyon

Greetings to All - Achoo! (Excuse Me)

I hope all are doing well this Spring; forgive my sneeze as record daily pollen counts are happening throughout the South. As Spring bursts forth we see many things new!

And ABS has many things new to rejoice about. Here are just a few, our very own Donna Copeland receiving Scouting America's Silver Buffalo Award, our National Chaplain Jeff Thompson receiving Scouting America's National Duty to God Award, ABS first planning retreat in Pineville, Louisiana. You can read about each of these in this edition. I look forward to attending the National Annual Meeting with several of you and celebrating our folks.

There is an aspect of being President that is so fulfilling that words escape me - when I am asked to provide a congratulatory letter for Baptist Eagle Scouts, Baptist Venturing Summit and Baptist Sea Scout Quartermaster recipients. With the tremendous support of Pam Thompson, we respond to each request and are blessed by having the opportunity to see their amazing stories, shared with you in the Eagle Corner on the website. One astonishing Eagle who is a stalwart Chaplain Aide has her story included in this issue. You will be inspired.

I am so encouraged by the results of our planning retreat and the intensity of fulfilling our mission to Baptist youth and families through Scouting. It's more than just the highest achievers I just mentioned, the impact of having a Baptist Chaplain,

Chapel refurbishment, and Chaplain Training at PTC are all major steps forward. So is our upcoming Annual ABS Member meeting July 7, 2025 where the proposed slate of officers and the significantly revised bylaws will be presented. In the upcoming Annual meeting it is very important for each to participate as we move into new areas for the ABS mission. There will be several folks on-site at Philmont, and the Zoom will be located from one of the best meeting rooms at Philmont Training Center. I will be like many of you, who will be Zooming in, as I will be at home supporting Cathy during her treatments.

Hebrews 12 :1 *"Therefore, since we have so great a cloud of witnesses surrounding us, let us also lay aside every encumbrance and the sin which so easily entangles us, and let us run with endurance the race that is set before us."*

**2025**

### ASSOCIATION OF BAPTISTS FOR SCOUTING COMMITTEE

President: John Lyon  
 Immediate Past President: Donna Copeland  
 Exec. Vice President: Thomas Martin  
 Treasurer: Tim Baker  
 Secretary: Eric Hood  
 Vice President, Membership: Elrico Hurley  
 Historian: Merri Bolen  
 Chaplain: Jeff Thompson  
 Newsletter: Dale Copeland  
 Member at Large (1): Pam Thompson  
 Member at Large (2): Ted Spangenberg  
 Member at Large (3): Jerry Wells  
 Endowment (1): Verne Wright  
 Endowment (2): Patrick Liang  
 Endowment (3): R. Chip Turner

## PTC Planning (from page 1)

is a terrific way to get prepared to meet spiritual needs at every opportunity. Like the quotation says, "If not us, then who? If not now, then when?"

Baptists must be devoted to training and equipping the next generation of leaders.

Any questions about the upcoming conference may be directed to Ted Spangenberg via email at [TSpangenberg@baptistscouters.org](mailto:TSpangenberg@baptistscouters.org) or, for course offerings info, visit <https://www.philmontscoutranch.org>.



## Photos from the February 2025 ABS Planning Retreat



## ABS Planning Retreat a Success

The recent (February 21-23) ABS planning retreat had a strong attendance with thirteen ABS members attending. It was a time of great fellowship, extended discussions, and worship. Arrivals on Friday began with fellowship and catching up on happenings since our last gathering at Philmont Training Center last July. Saturday morning was spent wrapping up unfinished business, mainly the updating of requirements for the Baptist Good Shepherd Award and details for the upcoming summer chaplaincy at Philmont.

It was reported that a generous gift was received recently by Philmont that is earmarked for the sorely needed replacement of old, wooden benches in the outdoor Protestant Chapel with metal benches. These will not only look better and be easier to maintain, but will last longer and match the benches in all the other (Catholic, Jewish, and PTC) chapels. Another ABS action provides funding for a Baptist seminarian to serve with the Philmont chaplaincy corps in the 2025 summer season, providing spiritual support for staff and campers while gaining valuable, real world experience in ministry. We look forward to this opportunity and hope to be able to repeat it in years to come.

After a great lunch and fellowship (it was a Baptist gathering after all), the remainder of time was utilized for a deep dive into the proposed update of our ABS governing bylaws. This is perhaps the first bylaws update since the inception of ABS decades ago. Recent BSA changes (including the branding change to Scouting America) were considered along with a host of details, both major and minor. The goal is a set of bylaws to guide our association for years, even decades, to come. These would be considered and possibly acted upon by the ABS membership at a future annual meeting.

The rainy Saturday evening was spent at the home of Chip and Sandy Turner with some wonderful gumbo and king cake. This was followed with a tour of the simply amazing "collection" of Scouting memorabilia that Chip has acquired over his decades of Scouting – words will not do it justice. Spirits were not dampened by the rains and all departed full of good food and memories.

Those able to remain a bit longer gathered Sunday morning with Pineville First Baptist Church for worship with the warm and welcoming congregation before heading in all directions for home. It was a productive and enjoyable weekend.



# Silver Buffalo Award



The Silver Buffalo recipients for 2024 were announced recently. As is customary, several very deserving individuals were chosen for this special recognition. According to the Scouting America website "The Silver Buffalo Award, created in 1925, is bestowed upon those who give truly noteworthy and extraordinary service to youth. This award, Scouting's highest commendation, recognizes the invaluable contributions that outstanding American men and women render to youth. The service must be national or international in character and may or may not be directly connected with the BSA."

One of the recipients this year is ABS member, and past ABS President, Donna Copeland of Bartlesville, OK. Donna is active with her local council - Cherokee Area Council 469 - currently serving on their executive board. She has been a member of the National Religious Relationships Committee since 2006. She has participated in every Philmont Chapel Refurbishment since its inception in 2019. She led the Baptist Faith and Beliefs area for the 2017 National Jamboree and was the Coordinator for the Faith and Beliefs program area at the 24th World Jamboree in 2019 and again for the 2023 National Jamboree. In addition to being a Wood Badge Course Director (SR749 in 2006) she was a NAYLE Course Director in 2011 at Philmont. She traveled to Japan in 2009 for an international youth conference with the Scout Association of Japan. Donna is an important member of our Association of Baptists for Scouting having guided us as President during the Covid pandemic and concurrent BSA bankruptcy. She was honored with the Silver Beaver award in 2000 and the National Duty to God award and the Silver Antelope awards in 2018. She is a Vigil member of the OA.

Donna and her husband, Dale (also an active Scouter), are the parents of two Eagle Scout sons, Jon and Nathan, and Two Eagle Scout grandsons, Nick and Lukas. All of them have completed Philmont treks. Nick will be the Chief Ranger at Philmont this coming summer and Lukas will experience his first season as a Philmont ranger. Dale is working with the Philmont Chaplaincy efforts again in 2025. You could say that Scouting runs in their family.

She is active in her church, Trinity Baptist, playing piano and teaching as needed. In addition she leads weekly Bible studies with area women, hosted by a local independent retirement facility.

As she demonstrates in her life, she believes that Duty to God and serving are not something you do, they are something that you are. Our hearty congratulations to Donna for this wonderful, and well deserved Silver Buffalo award.





## ABS Eagle Scout Corner



Congratulations to JennaLeigh Grace Huff of the Longhorn Council in Central Texas who recently earned her Eagle rank. She penned a wonderful essay about her Scouting journey, portions of her essay follows:

*"My name is JennaLeigh Grace Huff, and I am proud to be a member of Troop 308G. As a 15-year-old ninth-grader, my journey in Scouting has been filled with adventure, growth, and incredible memories. I have had to overcome many challenges in my life—being deaf, legally blind, and living with cerebral palsy, epilepsy, eosinophilic esophagitis, autism, and ADHD. My parents call me a "spicy enchilada," and they're right. I've learned to embrace my spice because it's helped me not only survive but thrive.*

*"I joined Scouting in August 2019 as a Webelos, inspired by the fun and adventure I saw my brother have in the program. I wanted those same opportunities, and from the beginning, I've given it my all. My first den leader, Mick Willis, helped me take my first steps on this journey and continues to support me, including assisting with my Eagle Scout project.*

*. . . "nothing compares to my time at Philmont Family Adventure Camp in 2023. I hiked Lover's Leap and Hart Peak, fly-fished after trekking to Waite Phillips'*

*hunting cabin, rode horseback at Ponil, and enjoyed dutch oven cobbler by the campfire.*

*"Each experience deepened my love for the outdoors and strengthened my confidence in my abilities.*

*"One of my proudest roles in Scouting is serving as Chaplain Aide. I've worked hard to highlight the 12th point of the Scout Law: A Scout is reverent. I've organized meaningful worship services on campouts, and at the Longhorn Council Women in the Woods Camp-O-Ree in 2023 and 2024, I led interfaith services for the entire camp. Mr. Al Vokle, the Camp-O-Ree Chairman, called these services the most impactful he's seen in his 30 years in Scouting.*

*"Earning my Eagle Scout rank is a dream come true. . . "Scouting isn't just something I've done; it's become part of who I am."*

WOW! An incredible story, an incredible Scout.

## Chapel Refurbishment Projects Now Part of the Philmont Annual Calendar

Thanks to the hard work of a number of volunteers over the past few years, the Chapel Refurbishment Week has become part of the annual calendar at Philmont Scout Ranch. The largest representation each year has come from the Association of Baptists for Scouting team led by Donna Copeland. In 2024, work was done at every backcountry and headquarters chapel with the exception of Black Mountain and Sawmill which were unreachable because of accumulated snow from the winter. In addition, a new chapel site was established adjacent to the Baldy Town Cemetery.

May 7-11 are the dates for the 2025 event and the assignment is even more aggressive than last year. Work is scheduled for every current chapel with two additional locations in the planning. The 2025 work team is full, but you are encouraged to contact Donna Copeland [dcopeland@baptistscouters.org](mailto:dcopeland@baptistscouters.org) who will again coordinate the ABS team if you are interested in future opportunities. The size of the entire group is limited by accommodation and logistical considerations, so act soon if you are interested.

## 2024 Duty to God Award

The recipients of the 2024 National BSA Duty to God Award were announced recently. One of those was our own Jeff Thompson. The National Duty to God Award recognizes individuals who have demonstrated a history of exemplary and noteworthy service and leadership to faith, and a steadfast commitment in promoting religious duty in Scouting as essential for guiding the moral, spiritual, and social development of youth. Jeff is a former president of Association of Baptists for Scouting. He has also served on the Religious Relations Committee at the local and national level.

Jeff was in Boy Scouts as a youth in Bremen, Georgia, when he attended the 1965 BSA National Jamboree in Valley Forge, PA. He is a member of the Order of the Arrow. As an adult Jeff has been involved in Scouting since 1988, variously serving as a Scoutmaster, Exploring leader, and Cubmaster. He has been on staff at every National Jamboree since 1993 and one World Jamboree where he served in the staff dining area and for the remaining Jamborees as the hospital chaplain, visiting Scouting adults and youth who find themselves far from home and in the hospital. He continues to serve at Philmont in chaplaincy, training, and the annual chapel refurbishments.

A graduate of Southern Baptist Theological Seminary, he served in several church roles before turning full time to his passion for hospital chaplaincy.

Jeff and his wife, Pam, have a son, Eagle Scout Josh Thompson, plus six grandchildren. It's obvious that Scouting and service to others is a constant in their lives. He is the recipient of the Silver Beaver award and the Baptist Good Shepherd award. Congratulations Jeff on a great honor!



### Duty to God



## 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 2024 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

May 7-11, 2025  
Refurb Chapels @ Philmont

May 12-16, 2025  
National Annual Meeting  
Orlando, Florida

July 6-12, 2025  
PTC Chaplaincy Training  
7/7 ABS Annual Meeting

Contact Us:

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Website: <https://www.BaptistScouters.org>

