

September 2025 Edition



ABS Today

A Publication of the Association of Baptists for Scouting

Annual Meeting Report & Results

This past July many ABS members traveled to the Philmont Training Center for a week of fellowship and learning while attending the Scouting Chaplaincy Conference. In addition to making new friends and reconnecting with old Scouting acquaintances, a great deal of information was shared to better equip us for ministry. On Monday evening, July 7th, the ABS Annual Meeting took place (in person and via Zoom) with updates of happenings in the past year plus two important votes. First, a vote was held to select leadership for the various roles needed in

the next two year term to keep the Association of Baptists for Scouting active and vibrant.

Past Executive Vice President Thomas Martin was elected President with a past president, Donna Copeland, elected to serve as Executive Vice President for the July, 2025 to 2027 period. All the details for the annual meeting are available on our website, <https://www.BaptistScouters.org>, under the News tab. Other officers selected include Chaplain Jeff Thompson, Treasurer Tim Baker, Membership Vice President

Elrico Hurley, Secretary Eric Hood, and Chief Technology Officer Jerry Wells.

In other action there was discussion and action to update the ABS bylaws, which was approved. This update is the result of countless hours in review, research and extended discussions on how best to prepare and equip our group in years ahead as a corporate entity. Some updates were simple edits – like spelling and formatting along with layout corrections, changing mentions of Boy Scouts of America over to Scouting

continued on page 3

“You can’t go back and change the beginning, but you can start where you are and change the ending.”

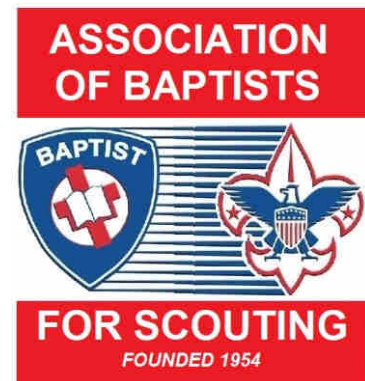
– C. S. Lewis

Matthew 28:18-20 (NKJV)

¹⁸ And Jesus came and spoke to them, saying, “**All authority has been given to Me in heaven and on earth.** ¹⁹ 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, ²⁰ 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.

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

One of my favorite verses comes from the book of Proverbs. Solomon writes, *"The horse is made ready for the day of battle, but victory rests with the Lord."* (Proverbs 21:31) This verse reminds me that I am to work, but when I have accomplishments, it is because the Lord has been good to me.

I have no doubt that the people who trained horses for war took great pride in the fact that they could take a wild animal and teach it to be calm in the chaos of war. This was an accomplishment in which they should have been proud. To take something skittish around humans and turn into a calm and functioning animal while wearing armor and hearing the clanging of swords would have been a feat. However, to have that kind of success, it took time, patience, skill, and commitment. It took work!

Even though those trainers did something few others could do, Solomon reminds them that all their accomplishments that led to victory on the battlefield are not just because of their own efforts. Ultimately, there was victory because the Lord provided victory.

This verse reminds me of where we have been and are as an Association. Over the last couple of years, we have been doing a lot of behind the scenes things (like reworking bylaws) and we have plans to continue doing things (like serving at the National Scout Jamboree) but we must remember that the fruit we see comes from the Lord. Yes, work is hard, but God calls us to participate and He provides the

harvest.

Our mission as an Association has always been bigger than the board can do by ourselves. We exist to help bring youth and families to Christ through a Scouting ministry. In my mind, that sounds very similar to the Great Commission. I think it is something we should all want to accomplish by participating ourselves.

Our new bylaws call for teams (committees) of our membership to work together to accomplish this mission. In the coming weeks, we will be hearing more about our seven standing committees (Nominating, Baptist Religious Emblems and Awards, Chaplaincy, Endowment, Communications, and Membership). Hearing, however, is merely the first step. Each member will then be asked to serve on a team of their choice to help with the work. Join us in being used by God as He brings the victory!

2025 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

Annual Meeting (from page 1)

America and editing references to include boys and girls in all programs. Other improvements seek to improve processes and duty assignments to make things work smoothly. For instance, technology can make significant changes in how we communicate, collect data, and handle finances. This was the first update to the bylaws in years and it is hoped it will serve well for many years to come. The new bylaws are available upon request

The Lord has blessed us and we are thankful.

Photos from the 2023 National Jamboree



2026 Jamboree Planning Begins

The Association of Baptist for Scouting (ABS) will have a strong presence at the Scouting America National Jamboree in the Duty to God and Country Exhibit Area. We are expecting 20,000 scouts at the Jamboree, plus 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. Last Jamboree they did this with an Escape Room and a Patch for those who completed a set of requirements.

Our ABS exhibit’s biggest draw was our youth staff. Jamboree scouts really listened to our youth staff and our staff did 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>

If you’ve never experienced a National Jamboree, this is the one to attend. What better place and time to encounter thousands of young people and share our message of grace, joy and peace. We need you on our staff. 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 for details and approval. 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.



Philmont ABS Seminarian

The summer of 2025 at Philmont was another successful season, including Chaplaincy. A core part of Scouting is Duty to God and the Philmont chaplains work every day supporting and encouraging the campers and staff to regularly live out Duty to God in their daily lives.

One terrific way to connect and engage with Philmont campers and staff is the Chaplaincy seminarian. Seminarians are typically younger Scouters still in the process of completing their training – scholastic and practical – for ministry. The chaplain ministry at Philmont provides them with a lot of “boots on the ground” experience that isn’t duplicated in more formal environs. A typical day starts early and can involve visiting with folks at the Infirmary or the Ranger Department for their morning staff meeting, trips into the backcountry to pick up or return campers and staff from or to remote locations, delivering materials to support ranch programs and, of course, providing chapel services every day at 7:00 pm in base camp plus weekly chapel services at three backcountry camp locations.

This past summer our chaplains had the privilege of working with Patrick Bradley. Patrick is currently working to complete his studies at Southern Baptist Theological Seminary in Louisville, KY. Patrick also serves on staff with the Shandon Baptist Church in Columbia, SC. He participated in last summer’s ABS training at the Philmont Training Center, so this was his second trip HOME (Heaven On Earth). Like all the chaplains Patrick was able to serve in counseling, conflict resolution, worship leadership, building relationships with Scouts, Scouters, and staff. Plus the excitement from enjoying his weeks of living in a fine Philmont tent along with more than 800 other Philmont seasonal staff members.

A typical week for Patrick varied, depending on his assignment. Every day at 7:00 pm (and Sunday morning at 9:00 am) was chapel duty. One week he might be assigned to CHQ working with all the departments at base camp – Rangers, Security, Welcome Center, Ranching Headquarters, Outfitting and the Silver Sage Staff Activity Center (commonly referred to as S³AC.) Another week’s would be Infirmary duty attending daily rounds

meetings, visiting patients in the Infirmary and Infirmary Tent City (for those who are mobile, but require care) and trips to visit those campers in nearby hospitals (Raton or Trinidad). One week would be the assignment as a Backcountry chaplain (A or B) to support transport of



people and materials to and from the multitude of backcountry camps scattered over the approximately 150,000 acres of the ranch, plus two camps north of Philmont on National Forestry lands in the area of the Valle Vidal. And yet another week’s assignment would be Logistics (A & B) working with all departments, but especially Logistics and Infirmary to deliver messages from home concerning news of loss and illness, plus (more often) to provide counseling for what is called “Conflict Resolution” resulting from the sometimes intense (emotional and physical) demands and the stress from a combination of altitude problems, physical exertion, diet changes, and crew dynamics.

By the end of his summer it is certain he was able to engage in a broad range of “hands on” chaplaincy experiences with thousands of staff, Scouts, and Scouters from across the nation while they were at Philmont. One of the primary goals for everyone at Philmont is expressed as “Change Lives” and Patrick surely did just that for untold people this summer. It is also certain that Patrick himself had his life changed in his time of excellent ministry to others.

This opportunity for Patrick was made possible by the generous grant from our ABS to fund the Protestant Seminarian position for the 2025 summer season. Thank you ABS!

ABS Eagle Scout Corner



The Association of Baptists for Scouting proudly recognizes Eagle Scout Connor Michael Stanton. Connor earned the rank of Eagle on June 23, 2025. He is a member of Troop 3, of the Virginia Headwaters Council in Louisiana. He is the son of Brandi and Mark T. Stanton.

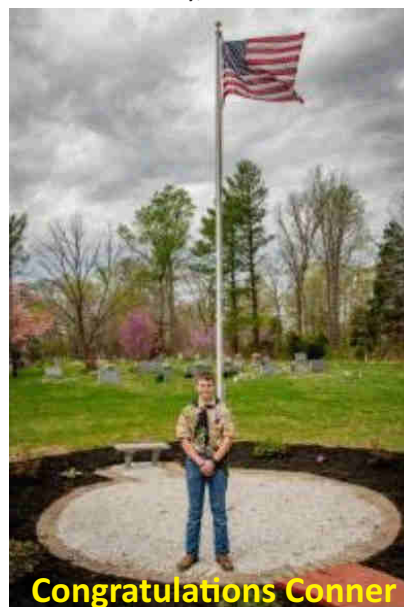
May God continue to guide you as you strive to “embody the scout oath by doing my best to do my duty to God and my country and to obey the Scout Law, to help other people at all times, to keep myself physically strong, mentally awake and morally straight”. **WOW!**

An incredible story, an incredible Scout!



Connor’s Eagle Project involved creating a prayer garden with an area for displaying the United States flag at his church cemetery, Berea Baptist Church. Connor has been a part of scouting since the age of 5. During this time, he has earned many belt loops, merit badges, and learned life skills. In his own words, “Scouting has allowed me the opportunity to lead and find my voice while being a den chief, assistant senior patrol leader, and a patrol leader. It has given me the core values and principles that I will forever carry with me through life.”

Connor is presently enrolled in advanced English and Science courses in high school. Upon high school graduation, Connor wants to join the military to pursue a dream of either being a ParaJumper or a K9 handler. His ultimate vision for life is to help others and give back to the community. Although plans change as one matures, he wants to ensure the “values and perspective gained through scouting will forever remain in my mind and heart.”



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 2025, due to extreme weather and muddy and/or snow packed roads, work was done at just two backcountry camps (one required a four mile hike, one way, to access.) But extensive work was accomplished at the headquarters chapels. During the summer season two new chapel sites were established at Apache Springs and Dan Beard camps.

May 6-10 are the dates for the 2026 event and the assignment is even more aggressive than last year. Work is planned for every current chapel. The 2026 work team is almost full, but you are encouraged to contact Donna Copeland dcopeland@baptistscouters.org who will again coordinate the ABS team if you are interested in future opportunities. A completed medical form is required plus the ability to carry tools and work at altitudes to 10,000 feet. The size of the entire group is limited by accommodation and logistical considerations, so act soon if you are interested.

2026 Jamboree Chaplains

This 2025 year will soon come to a close and 2026 will begin. Even though it is many months away the planning for the 2026 National Jamboree scheduled for late July 2026 is already well underway. More than 20,000 Scouts and Scouters are expected to attend this major Scouting event at the Summit Bechtel Reserve near Glen Jean, WV. Scouts from across the nation (and around the world) will come together for ten days of adventure and fun — for many it will be the highlight of their Scouting experience.

When this many people come together the need for chaplains is crucial for providing emotional and spiritual care during everything from minor injuries to hospital trips, homesickness, conflict resolution, or (sadly) learning of some loss at home. In each of these circumstances the chaplaincy team is available to provide support, encouragement, prayer, and a ministry of presence. In addition, there will be many chapel services provided throughout the Jamboree. These chapel services in the past have seen thousands in attendance for worship and celebration. Duty to God remains a crucial part of Scouting and nowhere is this as obvious as it is with the ministry of chaplaincy.

Chaplains come from many faith groups — 40 chaplains, representing a dozen or so different faith groups — reflecting the diversity of beliefs and practices of those attending the Jamboree. As has been typical in the past, several Association of Baptists for Scouting members are represented among this group of chaplains. Ted Spangenberg, Jeff Thompson, and Thomas Martin will be onsite at the Jamboree to labor in chaplaincy ministry throughout the event. There are spots for more, particularly for Chaplain Assistants who are studying for vocational ministry or otherwise.

If you are able, please consider going to the Jamboree to serve in whatever capacity possible. If you can't go, pray that our Lord will be honored and worshiped. Or give that others might go in your place. The ABS ministry is made possible as we commit ourselves to dutifully serve as commanded in the Great Commission.

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 5 - 7, 2026
Winter 2026 Retreat
1st 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:

Contact@BaptistScouters.org



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

