

Scout Sunday Talk:

St. John's Presbyterian Church : February 9th, 2013

Good morning,

It's the beginning of another great year for Boy Scout Troop 6 @ St. John's. This is the 84th such year in nearly a century long partnership together.

But... this year... there is a particularly large elephant in the living room... This year the Boy Scouts of America, or BSA for short, finally finds itself at a very important crossroads... and if there ever was a time for good orienteering skills... this is it.

There's been much discussion of late about the "Fiscal Cliff" and the same kind of cliff metaphor could apply to what the BSA is facing right now with its wrongheaded stance towards discrimination against gay kids and against gay and lesbian adult volunteers.

The Boy Scouts in general and Troop 6 in particular have always made a point of teaching scouts to find the right way both in the wilderness and in life itself and the time has finally come for the Scouting Community to stand up for what's truly right... that there's no room for discrimination of any type in the Program.

We were almost there this past Wednesday.

The writing was on the wall for National BSA to allow the decision of inclusion to be by local charter representatives... but, at the last moment, weak minds prevailed and decided to... not decide... To put off the decision for 3 more months so that instead of a vote of 14 members of an executive Board, the decision could be made by a larger more representative group of 1400 members this coming May.

The old saying seems appropriate here, that when you've dug a hole for your self that is too deep to climb out of... the 1st thing to do... is to stop shoveling...

There was a lot of disappointment last week w/ National BSA's decision to not make a decision.... But we are much closer than we were at the end of January... It doesn't feel like it, but we really do have a lot to celebrate.

- National BSA has stated that they want to change the policy.
- The President of the United States has announced that he supports the movement for change.
- Last Tuesday members of this Council were on the CBS Nightly News.
- This Council is at the forefront of the movement for promoting change from within and Troop 6 is an active participant in this forward thrust.

St. John's and Troop 6 are partners in this movement and we are very hopeful that in May this long nightmare for many of us will come to an end. I say nightmare because the situation has not only been wrong on a moral and ethical level. It has been wrong because it gets in the way of what we in Scouting are all about: Teaching young boys how to become more self reliant, not only in nature, but in their own lives. Despite the enormous amounts of extra time we volunteers have been taking on to change this wrong policy, Troop 6's program is continuing full force with camping and backpacking and community service projects. Outings have been going on monthly from Beach Camping in Pescadero to camping and hiking through National Parks... from one of the nation's oldest: Yosemite... to its newest: Pinnacles. And scouts learn to handle all weather from rain camping to Snow Camping @ Alpine Lake and Cross Country Skiing and Snowshoeing in the Sierras.

Troop 6 is coming up on its 55th year of its Annual boy-led Summer Camp @ Utica near Bear Valley living Leave No Trace principles daily, living very lightly on the land, while building pioneering projects and cooking and cleaning all of their own meals.

And this past summer we took a group of the scouts on a 50 mile backpack trip in Philmont Scout Ranch in Cimarron, New Mexico... This experience was, in a word... Awesome!

And.. We're now starting our planning for the Troop's "Big Trip" which occurs every 6 years... 2014 is the "Big Year" and the scouts are now trying to decide between a variety of places like:

Denali National Park in Alaska, a river trip down the Colorado, or a full exploration of the Lost Coast of Northern California.

Yes, being a Troop 6 scout is for these boys an all-encompassing journey to wonders, both local and distant, and the experience continues to be life altering for everyone who participates, both young and old.

In Closing:

As you all know, Discrimination is a tough, long, hard battle to fight. And, In this, we feel particularly close to St. John's.

This Church was once in a similar position that Troop 6 finds itself in now. During the fight over ordination of gay and lesbian clergy and elders, St. John's disagreed with the national organization but... You didn't leave. You stuck it out, You believed in the underlying spirit and vision of this church, You fought the hard fight and.. You won!

It is our fervent hope that the boys in this troop learn from our example to always stand up for what is right in their gut and in their heart and...when met w/ obstacles and pushback... to not give up or leave... but to redouble the effort and move forward till the ethical path is navigated clearly.

St. John's continues to be a partner with Troop 6 along this bumpy trail and we wholeheartedly thank You, the St. John's congregation, for being a part of that journey w/ us.

On Behalf of Troop 6, Thank you