

The Reverent Scout

BY DEANA NALL



"On my honor, I will do my best to do my duty to God and my country..."

– from the Boy Scout Promise

"On my honor, I will try to serve God and my country..."

– from the Girl Scout Promise

"Worship God, seek beauty, give service..."

– from the Campfire Law

Imagine a group of Boy Scouts and their leaders setting out to climb a mountain. Starting out in balmy lower-level farmlands, they wind their way up through a rainforest and onto a vast alpine meadow during the grueling five-day climb. Altitude sickness and fatigue cut the trip short for some, but the rest plug on to their goal. Finally, they reach it – the snow-covered peak of Kilimanjaro, Africa's highest point.

This once-in-a-lifetime experience is a typical outing for Troop 137 in Franklin, Tenn. The troop, chartered by Fourth Avenue Church of Christ, is more than 100 members strong. The troop's adventures also have included hiking New York's Adirondack Mountains and Big Bend National Park in Texas.

"We've been literally from Canada to Mexico and coast to coast and now to the continent of Africa," said Billy Walker, Troop 137 assistant scoutmaster.

Walker is board chairman of the Members of Churches of Christ for Scouting. He is one of a growing number of people who believe Scouting and churches can accomplish powerful things together.

MCCS, headquartered at the J.W. Roberts Scout Hut on the ACU campus, offers servant

leadership training and recognition to boys and girls in Scouts and Camp Fire. Since MCCS began in 1986, Scout troops chartered by Churches of Christ have blossomed all over the country. In 1999, Churches of Christ Scouting units had the most significant growth of any Scouting religious organization.

Roberts Scout Hut is also where Kent Barnett ('82), MCCS executive director and Scoutmaster of Troop 201, reports to work every day he is in town.

"I'm not their maid," Barnett jokes, excusing clutter left on a table by members of the troop the night before.

The Scouts and their leaders are proud of their achievements. Names of Eagle Scouts from the troop hang on the wall, alongside names of troop members who have earned the Joyful Servant and Good Servant awards offered to Scouts through MCCS.

But MCCS didn't just happen. It had to start somewhere, and it started with a man who had an idea.

In 1985, Dr. Don McClaugherty, chemistry department chair at the University of Texas at Tyler, had gone through Wood Badge, the top training program for Scout leaders. As part of the program's requirements, McClaugherty had to write a "ticket," or service project proposal to benefit Scouting. He proposed to gather a group of people to start an organization that would encourage use of Scouting among members of Churches of Christ, and provide recognition for boys, girls and leaders in Scouting.

McClaugherty identified a group of men to help him get the group started. Dr. Lawrence

Ray Smith ('58), Dr. Lowell Johnson ('49), Ralph Wallace, James Swafford ('63), John Clardy ('48), Dr. Charlie Marler ('55) and Gayle Reams began meeting and working intensively over the next year-and-a-half. They eventually became the Board of Trustees for MCCS.

Details began to fall into place, which further proved to the trustees that MCCS was a God-driven organization.

Dr. William J. Teague ('52), president of ACU at the time, agreed to provide MCCS headquarters with mail and telephone support as well as an on-campus location.

Marler, with the help of staff and student workers, began running MCCS out of the Department of Journalism and Mass Communication at ACU, the department of which he was chair at the time.

Smith, now the chair of the BSA National Religious Relationships Committee, provided an MCCS logo, which is four hearts joined together to form a cross between them. The hearts represent service to God and His church, service to one's own family, service to the nation, and service to Scouting.

Clardy was a retired BSA executive, and his connections were invaluable. The men appointed a treasurer, Bobbie Lee Wolfe ('59), who still serves in this capacity today. Over the next few years, the group worked to develop servant leadership curricula for Scouts to be offered through the Religious Recognition Program.

Independent of BSA and Girl Scouts of the USA but recognized by both organizations, the Religious Recognition Program is a faith-by-faith, denomination-by-denomination program in which each faith group or denomination owns

its own curriculum of recognition. Before the existence of MCCS, almost every faith group and religion – including Methodists, Mormons and Buddhists – had its own recognition program, except for Churches of Christ. The only program available to Churches of Christ Scouts was a general Protestant program called “God and Country,” Marler said.

“That was frustrating,” he said. “The curriculum didn’t fit our biblical understanding, traditions and needs. We wanted something specifically for our kids. And we wanted a program that was solely biblical and not patriotic.”

Between 1950 and the founding of MCCS, there were several attempts to form a Churches of Christ God and Country award, but there was no effort to form an organization to support it, Marler said. A connection between the Churches of Christ and Scouting has been discouraged in the past because of the historical attitude that the two should be kept separate, he said.

“It was seen by some as an entangling alliance,” Marler said. “But if a congregation charters a troop, then it owns that troop, which is very much like our understanding of an independent congregation.”

In June 1989, the MCCS curricula became available to Scouts.

The **Joyful Servant** curriculum was written for Churches of Christ youth in Cub and Webelos Scouts, Brownie and Junior Girl Scouts, and Camp Fire Starflight and Adventure. The older Scouts in Boy Scouts, Venturing Crews, Cadette and Senior Girl Scouts, and Camp Fire Discovery and Horizon could begin earning the **Good Servant**.

To earn these awards, Scouts must complete a list of requirements including scripture memorization, service projects, and taking leadership in worship.

And MCCS began offering the **Faithful Servant** award to recognize Scout leaders in the Churches of Christ with 10 or more years of service.

“If you look at the list of those who have received the Faithful Servant award, it is full of people who have served for years as leaders in Scouting,” Charlie said. “In many places, they had not received an appropriate ‘thank you.’”

Sandra Ford, Cubmaster of a pack chartered by Atlanta Road Church of Christ in Gainesville, Ga.; and her husband, Dr. J.H. Ford, are both Faithful Servant recipients.

“It was rather humbling,” Sandra said. “It’s one of those things of which you are silently proud.”

The Ford’s children – Chris, John, David and Jennifer – have been active in Scouting.

The boys are Eagle Scouts, and all four of them have earned MCCS awards.

The awards are not the only significant contribution MCCS has helped bring to Scouts in Churches of Christ. Marler remembers the National Boy Scout Jamboree he attended in Fort A.P. Hill, Va., in 1985.

“The event covers two Sundays, and chaplains there organize and direct worship services for Jamboree attendees,” Charlie said. “There were chaplains of every variety you can imagine there, except from the Churches of Christ.”

He chose another faith group’s service to attend that year, but decided that by the next Jamboree four years later, a chaplain should be there to represent Churches of Christ.

Through MCCS, Dr. Lawrence Ray Smith – a Churches of Christ chaplain – attended the 1989

Jamboree, and every one since then.

At the last Jamboree in 1997, between 1,500 and 1,800 people attended the Churches of Christ services, Marler said.

Dr. Carroll Osburn, the Art Carmichael Professor for Biblical Studies at ACU, has served not only as a Jamboree chaplain, but as director of all chaplains at the World Jamboree, which Marler described as “a monster job.”

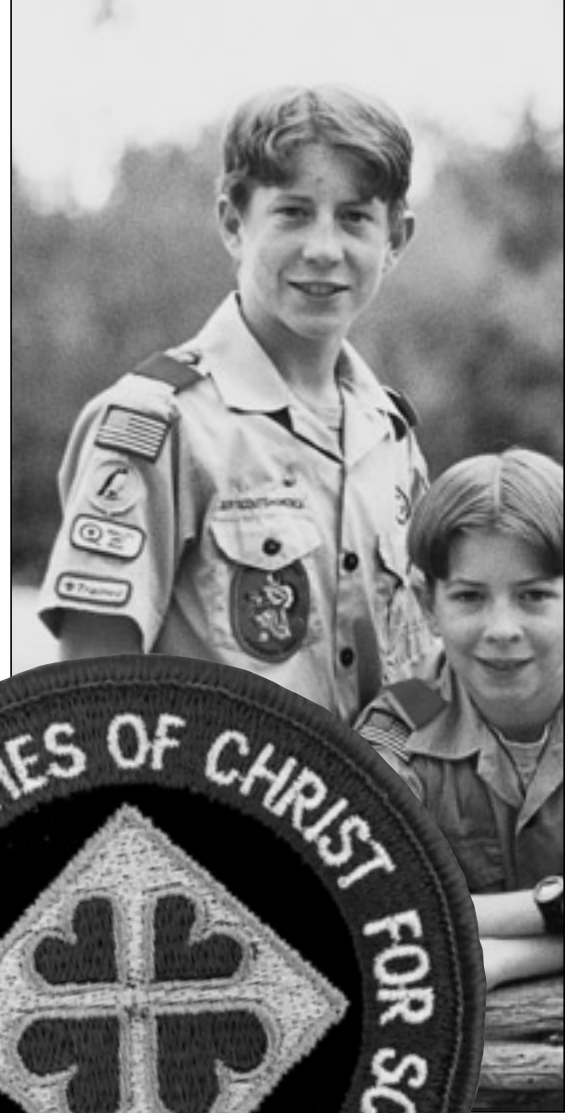
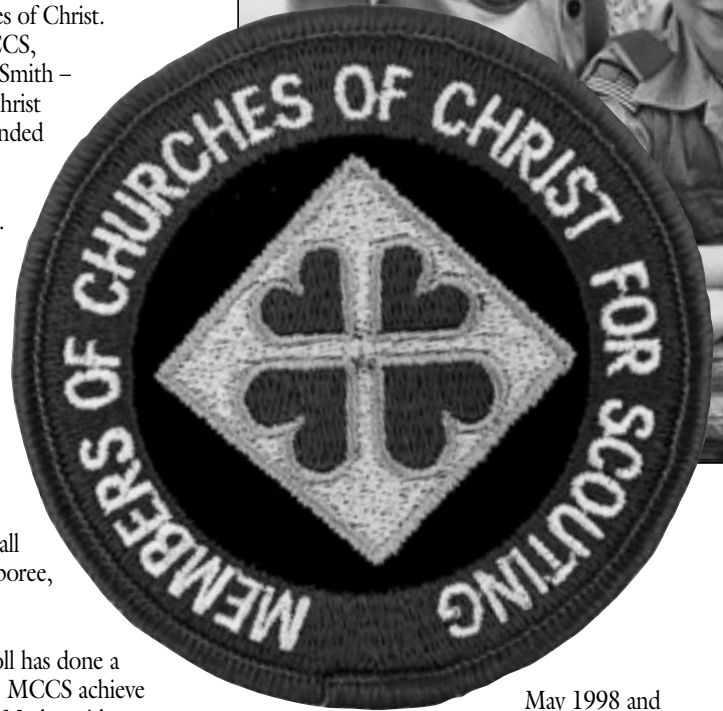
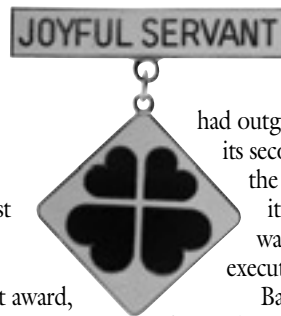
“Carroll has done a lot to help MCCS achieve its goals,” Marler said.

By the late 1990s, MCCS had outgrown the JMC department and its second location in Osburn’s office in the Biblical Studies Building. And it had grown large enough to warrant a position of a full-time executive director.

Barnett, who had been working for Marler as advertising director of ACU’s student newspaper, *The Optimist*, felt this position would be coming open. He had grown up as a Scout in Troop 201, with his dad, Wayne Barnett (’49), Marler and Gene Linder (’60) as the troop’s leaders.

“I really believed strongly in Scouting. I honestly believe I wouldn’t be as faithful in the church if it hadn’t been for these mentors,” Barnett said. “I had always wanted to do this full time. I had been praying for this job since September 1997.”

Barnett left his job at *The Optimist* in



May 1998 and was appointed the first executive director of MCCS, and the headquarters moved to the Roberts Scout Hut.

Now Barnett, supported by donations and memberships to MCCS, has the job of his dreams.

“It’s so wonderful to meet all these Christian Scouters from all over the country who believe in our youth,” he said.

When he’s not answering phone calls and emails at MCCS headquarters, Barnett is traveling to churches and youth ministry conferences to tell the MCCS story.

“I get calls every week from people saying, ‘I wish we had this when our kids were going through Scouting,’” he said.

Churches are realizing how powerful a Scouting ministry can be. In 1999, Boy Scout units chartered by Churches of Christ experienced a nine-percent growth – the highest of any religious Scouting group. Baptist churches were next with a two-percent growth.



“It’s obviously working,” Barnett said. “More congregations are now seeing this can be a tool for enhancing their existing ministries – as well as for outreach,” he said.

Sandra Ford has witnessed this with her own Cub Scout pack. The predominantly Latino pack meets at the church building twice a week while parents of the members are taking English classes. Ford and the other leaders have been able to minister to the parents while serving their children through Scouting.

“This way we can say, ‘We care about your kids, they have potential, we love them,’” Barnett said. “We are very passionate about this ministry – and it *is* a ministry.”

Scouting also gives young people a sense of belonging and opportunities to participate with their families in Scouting activities.

“Scouting is an excellent opportunity for parents to spend time with their kids,” Barnett said. “By having a congregation owning a unit, you know who your leaders are.”

And it’s hard not to notice what Scouts in Churches of Christ are doing.

Troop 5 Boy Scouts at Chadbourne North Church of Christ in San Angelo, Texas, have converted two rooms in the church building into a clothing and food distribution center. Two Girl Scout troops chartered by Westside Church of Christ in Ames, Iowa,

host an annual appreciation dinner for older members of the congregation. Boy Scouts in many congregations are completing church-building repair projects – in addition to their Eagle Scout projects. Throughout these projects, the Scouts are closely guided by their troop leaders, who also are their brothers and sisters in Christ.

“Why not have this umbrella of Christian mentors?” Barnett asks.

And MCCS is even benefiting non-Scouts. Andrea Bowen, member of Hagerstown Church of Christ in Hagerstown, Md., began the Joyful Servant curriculum as a Brownie, but decided to cut down on her activities and dropped Scouts in favor of ballet lessons.

“We continued with the materials anyway,” said Andrea’s father, Greg Bowen, Tiger Cub coach and den leader of Pack 36 in Halfway, Md. “The related studies led her to become a Christian in 1995 – a far more valuable ‘prize’ than the medal!”

Andrea’s sister, Rebecca, was never in Scouting, but the Servant Leadership Series impacted her nonetheless.

“Even though Rebecca never was interested in Brownies, we reused some of her sister’s Joyful Servant notes in her studies,” Greg said. “She became a Christian in 1997.”

For the future, Kent would like to see more

Girl Scouts and Camp Fire participants active in the MCCS Servant Leadership series.

“This isn’t just a Boy Scout program,” he said, adding that the National Interfaith Committee for Girl Scouting has recently begun to emphasize the Girl Scouts’ religious emblem program.

Another priority for the future is to improve MCCS’s endowment, Marler said.

“Perpetuation of services is really important to us – through selection of trustees from across the country who can and will give the amount of time required to keep this kind of work afloat,” he said.

Throughout the United States, Scouts in Churches of Christ are conquering Kilimanjaros of their own – whether climbing mountains, starting new ministries in their congregations, or making repairs to church buildings. All of these tasks – equal in purpose – are equipping young people with the confidence to become servant leaders.

“When they get this confidence,” Barnett said, “they are ready to take on the world.”▲

For more information on Members of Churches of Christ for Scouting, contact Kent Barnett at 915-674-3739, or visit the organization’s Web site at www.acu.edu/mccs-scouting.

Objectives of MCCA

Members of Churches of Christ for Scouting is independent of but recognized by the Boy Scouts of America and the Girl Scouts of the USA. It was founded (1) to interpret Scouting to members of Churches of Christ, (2) to encourage the use of Scouting by members of Churches of Christ, and (3) to promote spiritual growth by encouraging the use of the Servant Leadership series.

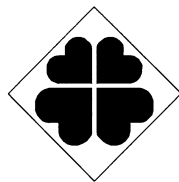
The focus of MCCA has been a three-tier training-recognition program: (1) *Joyful Servant*, a four-month curriculum for Cub Scouts, Webelos Scouts, Brownie Girl Scouts, Junior Girl Scouts, Camp Fire Star-flight and Camp Fire Adventure; (2) *Good Servant*, a six-month curriculum for Boy Scouts, Venturers, Cadette Girl Scouts, Senior Girl Scouts, Camp Fire Discovery and Camp Fire Horizon; (3) *Faithful Servant*, designed to recognize adult leaders who have at least ten years as registered leaders of one or more of these youth groups and are servants in their churches and communities.

MCCA members encourage younger boys and girls to enroll in the *Joyful Servant* program, and older boys and girls to enroll in the *Good Servant* program. Many MCCA members also serve as counselors for these programs and preside at presentation ceremonies.

MCCA is represented on the National BSA Religious Relationships Committee and advises the National Council and local councils in matters related to Churches of Christ. MCCA supports chaplaincy ministries in units, council events, summer camps, and sponsors chaplains at National Boy Scout Jamborees and Philmont Scout Ranch.

The MCCA logo is the Heart of the Servant, which symbolizes the four spheres in the life of a servant leader: (1) service to God and His church, (2) service to one's own family, (3) service to the nation, and (4) service to Scouting.

Adult members of Churches of Christ who are interested in Scouting should become a part of MCCA. Membership in MCCA provides a network of support for members of Churches of Christ interested in serving Scouting.



Members of Churches of Christ for Scouting
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