

**ABOUT THE FELLOWSHIP RECOMMENDATIONS OF THE AD HOC
COMMITTEE REPORT TO CONFERENCE OF DELEGATES OF LHS CONCERNING
LHS STUDENTS WHO ARE NOT IN DOCTRINAL FELLOWSHIP WITH THE WELS**

We are agreed with the doctrinal position on fellowship as stated in This We Believe and the Theses on Church Fellowship. The disagreements arise in the application of these principles.

We would offer these 9.5 Theses concerning this discussion on fellowship.

1. Concerning the Luther High choir taking part in the Christmas concert program at Viterbo College. We have no objections to this activity, since it does not involve joint prayer and joint singing of choirs, and agree with the Ad Hoc Committee conclusions.

2. We do not agree with the restriction of a non WELS student being elected as student council president. If a non-WELS student would be elected, the principal, according to his office and direction, would open the meeting with prayer for that year or appoint someone else to do so. Opening the meetings with prayer is not one of the duties of the student council president. Concerning class speaker at graduation, we clearly distinguish, rightly or wrongly, that this part of the program is not a worship service and often have a female student as class speaker. Also, the class speaker is chosen by members of the faculty who certainly are aware of the sensitivity of this issue and will use good judgment in making the selection. Thus we see no need to establish a policy here that may cause misunderstanding and offense.

3. Membership in Luther High Choirs and band programs. This seems to be the main issue. As we understand the Ad Hoc committee report, non WELS students would not be permitted to sing, play, or accompany as part of a band or choir in sacred concerts and worship services. In asking the typical Lutheran question, "*What does this mean?*" we were informed that non WELS students may be members of the choir and band and participate in practices but not at sacred concerts and worship services. Our next question, also Lutheran, is "*Where is this written?*" If singing in sacred concerts and worship services is a compromise of our fellowship principles, is not also participation at practices also a compromise of our fellowship principles? When does singing, playing, or accompanying become fellowship and when does it not?

4. When the choirs or band give a sacred concert or take part in a worship service, the choir members who are not in fellowship with us are singing **not as members of another church body**, but **THEY ARE SINGING AS STUDENTS OF LUTHER HIGH SCHOOL**. This is our main point in this paper. And it is upon this principle that our arguments are based. These non WELS students attend all of our religion classes, our chapel services, and other religious activities where they receive instructions concerning the doctrines of the Lutheran Church. One of these doctrines is the doctrine of Church fellowship. Let us teach this in an evangelical way, trusting that the Lord through His Word will lead them to a correct understanding of the Scriptures. Let us not make policies that will cause confusion

and are not consistent with the practices of all our churches and schools. Again let us not say more than what the Scriptures and our doctrinal statement teach.

5. We believe that it is not a compromise of our fellowship principles when students who are not in doctrinal fellowship are permitted to join our choirs and band and sing for sacred concerts and church services. Perhaps the director can use some discernment in selecting soloists when the choir sings for a church service of a member congregation. Permitting students not in doctrinal fellowship to join and participate in all of the activities of Luther High choirs and band is not a compromise of the fellowship principles of the Synod; it is an application of these principles that follows an evangelical approach. To deny Luther High students who are not in doctrinal fellowship with us participation in the music programs of Luther High choirs is a legalistic approach to the fellowship issue. It tries to tie the fellowship knot too tightly, goes too far to the right. Church history teaches us that when we begin to add to the Bible, it is not too long before we also start to take also away from the Scriptures. Pietism (which added to the Bible) prepared the way for rationalism (which took away from the Bible.) We must learn this lesson from history, and neither add nor take away from Scripture, or else we will be forced to repeat history.
6. A matter of consistency. Not all area Lutheran high schools have the same policy on this matter of singing in a choir. If an area high school does not permit a non WELS student to sing in the choir at a sacred concert, but then that same student attends Wisconsin Lutheran College or Bethany Lutheran College and now is permitted to participate, what message does this give to our own students?
7. Why do we lose students, our own WELS students? Why do many of these students join other church bodies? Why are we so concerned and go through all types of studies to find out why we are losing members? The answer is very simple. We must give our students, and all of our people, honest answers to honest questions. Are we doing this?

We are not giving honest answers when we keep changing policies; this is done when we make a policy that is not based on sound clear passages of Scripture and then later on change it. Examples;

1. At one time it was wrong and sinful for students to dance at LHS, now it is not. What changed? – The Bible, our doctrine, our pious opinions, we are now more liberal, we were wrong when dancing was forbidden.
2. At one time it was wrong or not right to take AAL money or grants, now we do. What changed? – The Bible, our doctrine, our pious opinions, we are now more liberal, we were wrong when receiving AAL grants were forbidden.
3. At one time rummage sales were not permitted, now we have a good steward shop and accept their donations. What changed? – The Bible, our doctrine, our pious opinions, we are now more liberal, we were wrong when rummage sales were forbidden.

8. We could go on and on with such examples, but the three listed above should prove the point we are trying to make here. However, we could also go further back in history to positions and policies that at one time were viewed as accepted doctrinal positions, but now no longer are. Such examples are women wearing hats to church; women and men sitting on opposite sides in church; women now permitted to attend congregational meetings and speak; church services only in German; the King James Bible as the only accepted translation, etc. etc.

Let us learn from history and be very careful on how we set policies. There is a great grey area, and as one becomes older the grey area increases -- and it is not only on our heads. The Bible warns about adding to the Scriptures and taking away from the Scriptures. Both are wrong. We must always be careful of not saying more than what the Bible teaches.

We believe that to establish a policy that would forbid students not in our fellowship to participate when the choir or band sings or plays for a sacred concert or worship service is an area where we would be saying more than what the Bible teaches and what our Fellowship documents say.

If the Ad Hoc Committee recommendations are accepted, I would move that, in order to be consistent, we also pass the policy that only WELS or ELS students may attend LHS. I don't think we want to do this, but that is exactly what we are doing by establishing such policies that restricts membership in LHS choirs and band.

- 8.5 When questions arise concerning non WELS students participating in activities such as playing for a chapel service, leading a chapel devotion, or other roles that would seem to compromise our fellowship principles, we would ask that the principal, according to his office, does not select non WELS students for these activities. Since such activities are rare and the number of non WELS students very small, we see no need at this time to establish policies that will cause confusion, misunderstanding, endless debates or offense to members of our LHS association and student body. The Bible tells us: "But avoid foolish disputes, genealogies, contentions, and strivings about the law; for they are unprofitable and useless." (Titus 3:9)

*Pastor M.F. Bartling
August, 2010*

ADDENDA

It should be kept in mind that the non-WELS Luther High students are joining together with us when they sing in the choir and participate in the band programs. We should keep in mind the distinction between two choirs, Luther and Faith Baptist, joining together in a sacred concert, which would certainly be a compromising of our fellowship principles; and an individual person not in doctrinal fellowship with us attending our school and joining with us in a concert.

We should also keep in mind the distinction between a weak Christian and an errorist, as the Theses on Fellowship remind us to do. It is not always easy to determine this. But we would ask the question, can a non-WELS Christian student who has decided to attend our high school, take all of our religion class, attend our chapel services, etc. be considered an errorist? Is he or she not open to instructions in the truths of our doctrines and practices? I believe we should look

upon these non-WELS students as weak Christians, certainly lacking in knowledge of our Lutheran doctrines. Our Theses on Fellowship instruct us to:

Weakness of faith is in itself not a reason for terminating church fellowship, but rather an inducement for practicing it vigorously to help one another in overcoming our individual weaknesses. In precept and example, Scripture abounds with exhortations to pay our full debt of love toward the weak. (B.4.)

Conscientious recognition of both principles (love and avoid) will lead to an evangelical practice also in facing many difficult situations that confront us, situation which properly lie in the field of casuistry. (B conclusion)

CONSIDERATION REGARDING LUTHER LIGHT AWARD

We believe that non-WELS students should not be excluded from receiving this award. It does not involve any prayers or worship. Awarding this to a student who is not in doctrinal fellowship with our Synod is not a compromise of the WELS fellowship principles. These fellowship principles allow for broad applications. Example - the Seminary took part and had a member of the faculty on the translation committee for the NIV. Although the fellowship principle stated that we do not do joint church work with those not in doctrinal fellowship, such an activity as translation of the Bible, which is certainly churchly, was not viewed as a violation of the fellowship principles. So also in this case of the Luther Light award and participation in athletic activities and receiving athletic awards, all Luther High students should be considered for receiving these awards.