

Q&A About Student Fundraising Request

Andrews responds to questions about decision

[Agenda](#) | Posted on March 10, 2015

The below statement was sent to Andrews faculty, staff and students on March 10, 2015 from President Andreasen.

Dear Friends,

In the last 48 hours, there has been a significant amount of social media commentary and coverage regarding a decision by Andrews University to deny a fundraising request by an unofficial student club to raise funds for a Chicago agency that is focused on aiding homeless LGBT youth.

That reporting has included some information that is not correct.

As a result, I want to share, as best I can, some questions and answers that will seek to provide you with some accurate information and context.

I trust it will be helpful as you encounter opinions and reporting on this topic on the web and elsewhere.

Cordially,

Niels-Erik Andreasen, President

Q: Is Andrews University opposed to helping, or fundraising for, LGBT homeless youth?

A: *Absolutely not.*

It is within the University and Church mission to seek to provide care and compassion wherever and for whoever needs it.

The problem of LGBT homeless youth in particular is a heartbreaking national problem—perhaps as many as 40 percent of the homeless teens on the street at any one time are LGBT. Many of these teens were in Christian families who rejected their child's orientation and, in the process, their child. A safe place and genuine care must be provided for these homeless LGBT youth.

Q: Did Andrews University offer approval for AULL4One, an unofficial campus club, to raise funds for this purpose and then later retract it?

A: No.

When campus administrators were approached with the idea of having a fundraiser to benefit LGBT homeless youth, those administrators expressed openness to the idea and encouraged the students to explore options, emphasizing to the students that any official fundraising effort would have to be aligned with the University's mission. So, originally, the University neither "approved" nor "rejected" the proposal. The University merely said: Let's explore the options. Subsequent to that, a number of conversations happened between students, Campus Ministries and Student Life.

At question in those conversations was not the cause itself, but the perceived mission and advocacy of a proposed agency that was to receive funds from the fundraising activities. In particular, the Church's religious and moral views do not allow for the pursuit of intimate LGBT relationships, including marriage, and as a result Andrews University's policies do not permit the raising of funds to support the work of agencies that advocate behaviors contrary to Adventist beliefs. This is true even though many unapproved agencies do valuable and important work that is within the University's mission.

As the University was saying "no" to the specific, proposed agency, an administrator suggested an alternative support agency in Chicago that also deals with homeless LGBT teens. That suggestion does not appear to have been pursued by the student who instead proposed an additional unacceptable agency. Shortly thereafter, the student stopped his conversations with administrators, asked for a "written" clarification of the decision not to support his recommended agency, and went to the press/social media.

Q: Why would Andrews University say "no" to helping homeless kids? Isn't that "unchristian"?

A: *Again, Andrews University has no objection to helping LGBT homeless youth. As an Adventist university operated by the Seventh-day Adventist Church, Andrews is called and committed to absolute compassion for those with an LGBT orientation.*

Andrews University believes that it is possible to both show Christian care and compassion for all people while also pursuing a life that lifts up biblical values.

As has been true with the national debate on these issues, the Seventh-day Adventist Church and Andrews University believe that there is room for respect of differing viewpoints within this discussion and within society.

Unfortunately, Andrews University does not believe that its sincerely held beliefs have been afforded such respect. To "disagree" with another person's view is seen as callous, uncaring and unchristian. It does not have to be this way. For example, recent proposed legislation in Utah seems to protect the rights of the LGBT community while also respecting and allowing the Mormon Church to operate and practice within its own religious and moral beliefs as it relates to LGBT relationships.

Q: So, how can Andrews University students officially help homeless LGBT youth or engage in fundraising for other worthy causes?

A: *Students should engage in serious-minded dialogue about fundraising options with club sponsors or University administrators. Together, students and faculty/staff should explore whether a particular recipient of funds is largely and primarily aligned in support of the University's mission and its faith commitment. The University recognizes that every single activity of an agency may not be in "alignment"—to expect perfect alignment might never permit any outside fundraising. But it is reasonable for the University to expect primary alignment between its mission and an agency's activities.*

In reference to the specific matter that brought about this attention, the "problem" as the University sees it is that once a decision was made that a student did not like, he stopped conversation about it and went to the press/social media to portray the University in a light that was neither fair nor accurate. What happened to the specific suggestion of an alternative Chicago-based agency that works with homeless LGBT youth and why was that option not explored more fully? These kinds of misunderstandings can be avoided when students and faculty/staff work together in good faith.

Q: What information or statements have you shared with media about this topic?

A: *To date, four different online blogs/newspapers have asked for information on this decision, and the following statement has been shared in return:*

Andrews University recognizes the special challenges facing LGBT youth and believes that efforts to help them are worthy.

Providing care to LGBT homeless youth is compatible with our institutional mission to demonstrate God's love to all people, and reflects our denomination's specific call to exhibit compassion for LGBT persons.

At the same time, Andrews University has declined a student request to officially endorse a fundraising effort to raise money for an organization that may have a perceived LGBT advocacy role.

This decision was made in the context of our student fundraising policy in the Student Handbook, which states that funds may be raised for non-profit organizations "whose mission and practices do not conflict with those of the University."

So, our objection was not to the worthy goal of serving LGBT homeless youth and their transitional housing needs but to the perceived advocacy stance of the proposed organization.

As a result, we can and will support LGBT homeless youth through organizations whose mission and purpose clearly align with the religious mission and purpose of our University

and its sponsoring church. We invite our student clubs to find the appropriate organizations and opportunities to do just that.

Click on the following links for more information on the Seventh-day Adventist Church's positions on [homosexuality](#) and [same sex unions](#).

Beyond this statement, Andrews University will have no additional comment at this time.