

# FREEDOM FROM RELIGION *foundation*

P. O. BOX 750 · MADISON, WI 53701 · (608) 256-8900 · WWW.FFRF.ORG

February 25, 2011

**SENT VIA FAX & U.S. MAIL**  
**(740) 820-4484**

Mr. Mark Wilcheck  
Superintendent  
Minford Local School District  
491 Bond Rd  
Minford, OH 45653

Re: Prayer at Minford High School Assembly and Graduation

Dear Mr. Wilcheck:

I am writing on behalf of a concerned student and other Ohio members of the Freedom From Religion Foundation (FFRF) regarding prayers given during assemblies and graduation ceremonies for Minford High School. FFRF is a nationwide nonprofit organization that works to protect the constitutional principle of separation of church and state. FFRF represents over 16,000 supporters across the country, including over 400 members in Ohio.

It is our information and understanding that a prayer was given by a student at the National Honor Society assembly on February 11, 2011. We understand this prayer was a scheduled part of the program and was approved by NHS advisor Michelle McCleese and Principal Barb Dever. A copy of the program for this assembly is attached for your reference. It is also our information and understanding that a prayer has been a scheduled part of Minford High School's graduation ceremonies in the past. We are unaware of any recent change in this prayer practice and are concerned that invocations may continue to be part of Minford High School's graduation ceremonies.

As you are aware, the Supreme Court has continually struck down prayers at school-sponsored events, including public school assemblies and graduations. *See Lee v. Weisman*, 505 U.S. 577 (1992)(declaring unconstitutional clergy-delivered prayers at a public school graduation). Even if student-initiated, school officials may not invite a student, teacher, faculty member, or clergy to give any type of prayer, invocation, or benediction at a public high school-sponsored event. *See Santa Fe Indep. Sch. Dist. v. Doe*, 530 U.S. 290 (2000)(holding that student-delivered prayers at high school football games violate the Establishment Clause). The Supreme Court has settled this matter—

high school assemblies and graduations must be secular to protect the freedom of conscience of all students.

Therefore, we request written assurances that Minford Local School District is taking the appropriate steps to ensure that the high school is not scheduling religious practices as part of its graduation ceremony or any other school-sponsored event.

Thank you in advance for your time and attention to this matter. We look forward to your reply.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'RSM', is written over the typed name.

Rebecca S. Markert  
Staff Attorney

Enclosures

cc: Ms. Barb Dever, Minford High School Principal

National Honor Society Inductees

Seniors

*Alexis Blackburn*  
*Brendly Martin*  
*Sam Williams*

*Seth Floyd*  
*Jamanda Runyon*

Juniors

*Kara Bennington*  
*Kenada Bentley*  
*Jake Blackburn*  
*Rebecca Bryan*  
*Tyler Gamp*  
*Kari Griffith*  
*Robbie Rose*  
*Tyler Smith*  
*Jaclyn Thornberry*

*Jindy Bentley*  
*Facy Biggs*  
*Jake Bloomfield*  
*Laura Coriell*  
*Jindy Goetting*  
*Ashley Oesch*  
*Courtney Sexton*  
*Noah Thiel*  
*Nicholas Wise*

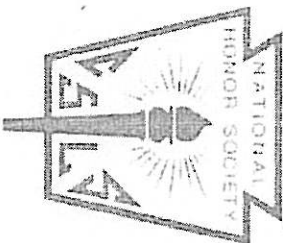


*National Flower - Yellow Rose*

**Pledge**

*I pledge myself to uphold the high purposes of the National Honor Society to which I have been elected; I will be true to the principles for which it stands; I will be loyal to school and will maintain and encourage high standards of scholarship, service, leadership, and character.*

**Butcher-Coriell Chapter  
National Honor Society  
Induction Ceremony**



**Character  
Scholarship  
Leadership  
Service**

**Minford High School  
February 11, 2011  
9:00 a.m. MHS Gymnasium**

Honor Society Officers

- President.....Chris Dolan  
 Vice-President.....Jonas Smith  
 Secretary.....Taylor Huff  
 Treasurer.....Amber Roffe

Members

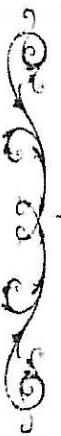
- |                 |                    |
|-----------------|--------------------|
| Chris Dolan     | Jeri Mann          |
| Abby Donahoe    | Amber Roffe        |
| Lora Fithman    | Halley Scott       |
| Kaitan Gambill  | Allison Shepherd   |
| Haley Hickerson | Emma Shoemaker     |
| Amber Holbrook  | Allison Singer     |
| Taylor Huff     | Jonas Smith        |
| Madrey Johnson  | Tiffany Traugler   |
| Kendra Justice  | Autumn Ward        |
| Lauren Kelly    | Mackenzie Williams |
- Advisor: Michelle McClesse

National Honor Society Motto:  
 "To whom much is given, much is expected."



Program

- Welcome.....Chris Dolan  
 Opening Prayer.....Abby Donahoe  
 Pledge of Allegiance.....Allison Singer  
 National Honor Requirements.....Autumn Ward  
 Scholarship.....Jonas Smith  
 Service.....Taylor Huff  
 Leadership.....Mackenzie Williams  
 Character.....Amber Roffe  
 Tapping Ceremony.....Chris Dolan  
 Oath.....All Members  
 Speaker.....Mr. Bernard Tilley



Following the program, there will be a reception honoring the new members in the auditoria for parents, faculty, guests, and honor society members.