

NRPC Alcohol Policy

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September 2015

Updated October 2015

Statement of Purpose

North Raleigh Presbyterian Church places a high-value on the healthy relationships and fellowship within the congregation and the community in which we reside. As a community of faith, we embrace inclusiveness. We demonstrate our commitment to it by intentionally creating healthy fellowship and spiritual growth opportunities with and for each other.

Recognizing that the use and abuse of alcohol is an issue for some people within our reach, we strive to provide safe sanctuary from the pain of addiction for those directly or indirectly affected by it. In addition, we admit that intoxication has the potential to impact clarity and understanding, thereby limiting our access to spiritual Truth.

We also recognize the exercise of Christian freedom to choose to drink alcoholic beverage responsibly and in moderation. The Bible provides numerous examples of the responsible use of alcohol as well as condemnation for “drunkenness”. Therefore, as stated in the PCUSA policy on alcohol use: “As Christians, we are to have the mind of Christ (*Philippians 2:5*), as we deal with life and it’s continual challenges. We act with the assurance that we are justified by God’s grace as a gift through the redemption which is in Christ Jesus (*Romans 3:24*). We are free to spend ourselves in service to our neighbors to the glory of God. This radical freedom (*Galatians 5:1, 8*) does not mean that we have the opportunity to simply do whatever we wish, but rather that we are set free and empowered to love and serve God by word and deed.”

This policy is a response to the call of the PCUSA, as well as for the care of our local church, to be intentional with regard to the use of alcohol at all church-related functions regardless of location—whether at NRPC, private homes, or restaurants. It is substantially based on the PCUSA policy, excerpts from which are provided below, and directly supports the following elements of the NRPC Vision Statement:

- *Exude a vibrant and contagious spirituality that drives the growth of our reverent reformed Presbyterian congregation.*
- *Offer a reverent worship that is focused on our love and praise of Jesus Christ.*
- *Educate and provide opportunities for all ages and abilities to nurture a rich spiritual life and deepened relationship with God and develop a dynamic education program for all ages, specifically our youth program.*
- *Identify, intentionally recruit, and develop leadership for the church by encouraging people to discover and use their spiritual gifts so that they are engaged in Christian discipleship.*
- *By loving others as ourselves, share the love of Christ’s abundance by serving and supporting others through proactive outreach/helping of others.*
- *Sustain a close community of faith.*

In general, the policy endeavors to:

- Ensure safe sanctuary to those suffering directly from addiction or as a result of it.
 - *We are deliberate in ensuring that all feel welcome at every event.*
 - *We are sensitive to inclusiveness and prioritize the building up of our community of faith.*
- Support clarity of understanding in regards to spiritual growth.
 - *We intentionally focus our thoughts and minds on our spiritual connection to the Triune God.*
- Serve as a model for children and youth to experience fun and fellowship without the use of intoxicants.
 - *We re-affirm our commitment at baptism to guide, teach, and love our children.*
- Attempts to limit the church's liability and minimize potential tragedy.
 - *Standard church insurance policies do not cover liquor liability. Any covered liability applies to the church only and not necessarily the host. Additional coverage for liquor liability can range from \$300-\$500 per event (per Church Mutual Insurance alcohol coverage).*

PCUSA Policy Statement and Recommendations on the Use of Alcohol 196th General Assembly, 1986

"A majority of Presbyterians do use alcohol in their personal lives, and the General Assembly affirms the right of individuals in conscience to make responsible choices between abstention and moderate, non-problematic use. Each governing body and agency of the church and institutions related to the church should also make conscious decisions regarding the responsible use and nonuse of alcohol at meetings and other formal and informal functions at meetings and other formal and informal functions falling within its jurisdiction."

The General Assembly of the Presbyterian Church USA does not advocate the prohibition of alcohol, a policy which would appear to attribute the entire problem to alcohol itself. Responsible and non-problematic use of alcohol has been part of human experience and the Judeo-Christian heritage since the beginning of recorded history. The considerable risks and immense suffering that follow from excessive and unwise uses of alcohol do, however, impose upon all Christians individually and corporately, the responsibility to make and encourage judicious and well-informed choices regarding personal and social uses of alcohol.

To that end, the General Assembly encourages and supports the personal decision to abstain from alcohol. For those who choose to drink and can do so without becoming dependent, the General Assembly urges a pattern of moderate and responsible drinking behavior. Finally, the General Assembly recommends and supports a comprehensive public policy approach to regulate the availability and use of alcohol in a manner consistent with its special character and potential risk to persons and society inherent in its use and it continues to recommend and support appropriate treatment of all who are affected by alcohol-related problems.

The following general principles should guide these personal and corporate choices about the use of alcohol and the formation of public policy to regulate the use of alcohol and limit its harmful consequences.

1. Abstinence in all situations should be supported and encouraged.
2. Moderate drinking in low-risk situations should not be opposed.
3. Heavy drinking in any situation should be vigorously discouraged.
4. Any drinking in high-risk situations (e.g. during pregnancy or before driving an automobile) should be vigorously discouraged as should all illegal drinking.
5. Actions to protect the general public from the effects of alcohol-related problems (e.g., alternative transportation) should be supported and encouraged.
6. Effective public policy measures designed to make alcohol less readily available and less attractive, particularly to vulnerable groups or in high-risk situations, should be encouraged and supported.
7. A combination of prevention and control measures with a variety of treatment approaches should be encouraged and supported to deal with alcohol-related problems and treat alcohol abusers and addicts.
8. All Christians, and hopefully all citizens, should model responsible choice in their own use or nonuse of alcohol, in their behavior as hosts or participants in social and business functions, and in their support of public policies that regulate the use of alcohol and limit its harmful consequences.

Policy on the Use of Alcohol at NRPC Functions and Events

1. Abstention in all situations should be supported and encouraged.
2. Moderate drinking in low-risk situations should not be opposed.
3. Heavy drinking in any situation should be vigorously discouraged.
4. The principal purpose for any church event is to further our commitment to Jesus Christ.
5. Alcohol use is not permitted on church property, except for use in the Lord's Supper.
6. Alcohol use is not permitted at any youth event.
7. Alcohol is not to be purchased at church expense, except when authorized by a governing body for use in the Lord's Supper. Whenever wine is used in the Lord's Supper, unfermented grape juice should always be clearly identified and served also as an alternative for those who prefer it.
8. If alcoholic beverages are to be available at church related meetings and functions at personal expense, the sponsoring body or group will endeavor to:
 - a. Make an honest effort to accommodate any person attending the event that may suffer, directly or indirectly, from alcohol abuse—even if it means serving no alcohol at the event.
 - b. Serve beverages containing alcohol in a manner and quantity that promote intentional and responsible choices regarding personal use.
 - c. Ensure that nonalcoholic alternative beverages are served in an attractive manner and available in ample quantities to encourage their use and that food is available as an accompaniment.
 - d. Provide water and possibly coffee near the end of an event.
 - e. No person under legal age is given access to alcohol.
 - f. Encourage options for transportation following the event, such as designated drivers or taxi service, that provide an alternative to driving personal vehicles if an excess of alcohol is consumed.
 - g. Encourage persons that become visibly impaired from an excess of alcohol, as compared to their typical behavior, to use alternative transportation following the event.
 - h. Acknowledge that this section is not to be construed as encouraging the availability of alcoholic beverages at church related meetings and functions.
9. Alcohol consumption should not be the explicit or implicit purpose for any gathering, including informal private gatherings of those attending the meeting or function. All church functions must demonstrate the same spirit of wholeness, peace, and safety as are present at events on church property.

APPENDIX

Recommendations for Action by Individual Presbyterians

Individual Presbyterians are urged to make for themselves and to encourage in others conscious responsible choices regarding the use and nonuse of alcohol. Abstention from the use of alcohol is a healthful and responsible choice to be encouraged and supported. For those who choose to drink, moderate responsible choice means refraining from the consumption of alcohol in amounts or situations where such use would incur harm or risk of harm to the health and wholeness of themselves or others. Responsible choice requires care that one's practices and influence do not facilitate or encourage irresponsible use in others. It also requires encouragement and support for public policy efforts to regulate the use of alcohol and address alcohol-related problems. At minimum, responsible choice means:

1. To refrain from driving after alcohol consumption in any amount that would leave alcohol in the bloodstream.
2. To provide a personal model of responsible choices regarding the use and nonuse of alcohol, refraining from excessive consumption of alcohol in all situations and from any drinking in all situations where even modest consumption of alcohol is hazardous (including during pregnancy).
3. To avoid enabling hazardous drinking in others by adopting hosting practices that encourages responsible choices in the use and nonuse of alcohol.
4. To express concern about practices and attitudes that glamorize alcohol or promote alcohol abuse in the workplace, the church, social settings, media programming, and advertising, and to speak out in concern against intoxication in others.
5. To be informed about signs of emerging alcohol problems and alert to their appearance in the lives of others, and to have the courage to express concern and take action when such signs are noted.
6. To provide for young people, by teaching and example, clear and specific guidelines regarding responsible choices in the use and nonuse of alcohol.
7. To help develop and support effective public policy to prevent and address alcohol abuse, including communication with appropriate elected representatives at every level of government about social policy issues regarding alcohol.
8. To join in continuing community efforts designed to counteract alcohol abuse through organizations dedicated to the prevention and treatment of alcohol problems.
9. To be aware that drinking for the purpose of achieving alcohol's drug effects can lead to abuse and dependency.

Recommendations for Action by Congregations, Governing Bodies, Agencies, and Church-related Institutions

Governing bodies and institutions related to the church have a corporate responsibility and a unique opportunity to act as advocates and catalysts for healthy choices regarding alcohol use and nonuse within the life of the church and the lives of its members. Each governing body and church-related institution should adopt a clear and coherent policy regarding alcohol use and should develop specific strategies for preventing and addressing alcohol abuse through opportunities afforded in worship, educational resources and programming, public policy advocacy, and the functions and activities particular to its own mission and role.

Recognizing the congregation and its members as the fundamental resource for Presbyterian mission and witness, the General Assembly:

1. Requests that each congregation of the Presbyterian Church USA to consider implementing, preferably in the 1987-1988 program year, the program strategy model prepared for the Program Agency and the General assembly Mission Board by a church-wide staff team. The model involves the pastor, session and congregation in a congregation-wide address to alcohol-related problems as they affect persons and the community.
2. Further requests congregations, governing bodies, agencies, and church-related institutions, as appropriate,
 - a. To organize and provide educational opportunities, using study resources provided by governing bodies, denominational agencies, and others.
 - b. To adopt clear policies regarding responsible beverage choices at church-related functions, including worship, meetings, and social gatherings on or off church property and adopt a clear policy regarding use and nonuse of alcohol on church property by outside groups.
 - c. To develop and implement a specific educational strategy to promote conscious choice about the use or nonuse of alcohol and develop guidelines for responsible practice for those who choose to drink or serve alcoholic beverages.
 - d. To adopt and implement employee assistance policies and practices to deal with alcohol-related problems among clergy and other salaried staff, and to provide adequate health care provisions to enable effective care of employees suffering from alcohol abuse or addiction.
 - e. To support and collaborate in national, regional, and ecumenical efforts to prevent and address alcohol problems.
 - f. To participate in the development and advocacy of public policy addressing issues of alcohol promotion, availability, and pricing as appropriate to the various jurisdictions of local, regional, state, or federal governments.
 - g. To participate in ministries to victims of alcohol problems by helping them to obtain appropriate community services and by providing a larger context of support for more responsible future choices in the use and nonuse of alcohol, assisting them in seeking employment, family harmony, spiritual growth, and physical and psychological health.

- h. To designate to a particular person or committee the responsibility and accountability for policy and strategies address alcohol use and problems.
- i. To utilize opportunities for education and interpretation concerning responsible choice and dealing with the health and social effects of alcohol in organizations, meetings, and special events.
- j. To develop specific strategies for leadership training and development for pastors and lay leaders in alcohol problem prevention and intervention efforts.
- k. To communicate and coordinate efforts with other governing bodies and agencies of the church concerned with alcohol use and problems.
- l. To encourage candidates in training for ministry to seek specific preparation and experience to deal with alcohol-related problems.
- m. To commit sufficient financial resources and staff services to develop program and strategies to address alcohol-related issues and problems in the church and the community.

Recommendations Regarding Policy on the Use of Alcoholic Beverages at Church-Related Functions

A majority of Presbyterians do use alcohol in their personal lives, and the General Assembly affirms the right of individuals in the conscience to make responsible choices between abstention and moderate non-problematic use. Each governing body and agency of the church and institutions related to the church should also make conscious decisions regarding the responsible use and nonuse of alcohol at meetings and other formal and informal functions falling within its jurisdiction.

The General Assembly recommends the following policy guidelines:

1. Alcohol should not be purchased at church expense, except when authorized by a governing body for use in the Lord's Supper. Whenever wine is used in the Lord's Supper, unfermented grape juice should always be clearly identified and served also as an alternative for those who prefer it.
2. If alcoholic beverages are to be available at church related meetings and functions at personal expense, the sponsoring body or group should ensure that:
 - a. The beverages containing alcohol are served in a manner and quantity that promote intentional and responsible choices regarding personal use.
 - b. Attractive nonalcoholic alternative beverages are available in ample quantities to encourage their use and that food is available as an accompaniment.
 - c. No person under legal age is given access to alcohol.
 - d. Transportation following the event does not depend upon the operation of private vehicles by individuals who have consumed alcohol.
 - e. Persons who are visibly impaired or intoxicated from alcohol and are constrained from driving.
 - f. This section is not to be construed as encouraging the availability of alcoholic beverages at church related meetings and functions.

3. Alcohol consumption should not be the explicit or implicit purpose for any gathering, including informal private gatherings of those attending the meeting or function.