

TO: Members of the Committee on Alcohol
FROM: Pastor
DATE: 4-26-91
SUBJECT: Next Steps

On Thursday, April 25, 1991 we met to begin our work.
Our next meeting will be on Wednesday, May 22, 1991 at 7:30.

From our discussion and your input, I took on the responsibility of shaping a guideline for review in our next meeting. This guideline can be used as a focal point of discussion and could be used to involve all members of our church. My conviction is that our church must learn how to engage in such discussion since in the world we live in, our church members will be asking for guidance in dealing with other similar hot issues. Mutual respect for each person's opinion is a part of being a "Follower of the Way". Respect as an expression of our faith will be required as we attempt to deal with these complex issues.

Churches of our denomination generally use four guidelines to develop policies of this type. They are:

1. Listening to the Scriptures as a document central to our faith and practice and also studying the history and tradition of the church. Remember, sometimes the Bible is silent on some issues. It is not a book of science.
2. Listening to the truth as understood in science and philosophy. All truth is God's truth or as one of the early Church Fathers (Origen) said "Truth is truth no matter in whose hands it is found". The Lord has given us intelligence as well as health knowledge about such things as alcohol use and abuse.
3. Praying for guidance and illumination.
4. Learning from our own human experience and listening respectfully to the experience of others.

In our next meeting, Fred will lead us in our understanding of the scriptures regarding this matter and we will discuss and review the attached statement. In the meantime, I will include some teaching from the pulpit on the subject of the relationship of the four principles to our life and work. We urge you to look at what the Bible has to say about the use of alcohol.

The issue of the use of alcohol in the church has had a long and painful history at United. We are the ones called to help our brothers and sisters to deal with it. Let us ask our Father to guide us we prayerfully search for direction.

cc: C. Rowell

DRAFT - FOR STUDY PURPOSES ONLY BY THE COMMITTEE ON ALCOHOL
OF THE UNITED EVANGELICAL UNITED CHURCH OF CHRIST

GUIDELINE FOR CHURCH MEMBERS ON THE USE OF ALCOHOL

The use and abuse of alcohol is of great concern to all Christians today. It is estimated that about 10% of our population is made up of those who could be identified as alcoholics - those for whom alcohol in any form is a poison. And there are the health hazards also associated with some uses of alcohol. Therefore, it is important that as "Followers of the Way" of Jesus, we give careful thought to the position of our church on the use of alcohol. What does the scripture have to say about its use?. What does our knowledge of health care say? What does the Lord say to us when we pray for guidance?

Alcoholic beverages are not unknown to the church. From the earliest days, the Christian Church has always used wine in celebrating the Lord's Supper. Jesus used it first in the Upper Room prior to his crucifixion and resurrection and he used wine to announce the kingdom, his New Covenant, -the Good News of the gospel, which he introduced to the whole world by changing water into wine at the wedding feast of Cana of Galilee. The early "Followers of the Way" who founded the Christian church used wine. In the Book of Acts and in the second chapter the story of Pentecost is told. These Christians were accused of being drunk but then how could it be so because it was just nine o'clock in the morning.

As "Followers of the Way" should our members feel differently about drinking alcoholic beverages at church in contrast to drinking at home, at a restaurant, or at a recreational establishment? Faith teaches us that our behavior should reflect our faith convictions regardless of where we are.

While we all recognize the abuses and dangers of alcohol, we believe that serving alcohol in moderation could be consistent with the Christian faith for some members and not consistent for others. We find few biblical guidelines regarding this matter. We know that excessive use of alcohol is not good for a person's health. All persons and especially young people need to be taught the dangers of abusing alcohol. Members are not encouraged to use alcohol in social situations but if they do, they need to use it with great care.