

THE USE OF INTOXICANTS

Nebraska District Resolutions Committee, Mid-Atlantic District Resolutions
Committee, and Reference Committee
Manual 29.5, 29.6, 903.15

RESOLVED that *Manual* paragraph 29.5 be amended as follows:

29.5. The use of intoxicating liquors as a beverage[, or trafficking therein; giving influence to, or voting for, the licensing of places for the sale of the same; using illicit drugs or trafficking therein; using of tobacco in any of its forms, or trafficking therein.

In light of the Holy Scriptures and human experience concerning the ruinous consequences of the use of alcohol as a beverage, and in light of the findings of medical science regarding the detrimental effect of both alcohol and tobacco to the body and mind, as a community of faith committed to the pursuit of a holy life, our position and practice is abstinence rather than moderation. Holy Scripture teaches that our body is the temple of the Holy Spirit. With loving regard for ourselves and others, we call our people to total abstinence from all intoxicants.

Furthermore, our Christian social responsibility calls us to use any legitimate and legal means to minimize the availability of both beverage alcohol and tobacco to others. The widespread incidence of alcohol abuse in our world demands that we embody a position that stands as a witness to others. (903.14–903.16)]

Acknowledging that consumption of alcohol in moderation is, in itself, not inherently sinful, we recognize the pain and trauma suffered by individuals and families as a result of alcohol abuse and addiction. Society often prefers to minimize or hide these problems.

From its earliest days, the Church of the Nazarene has had a special calling to the poor, lost, and forgotten. Because of this calling, we ask our members to refrain from alcohol and other intoxicating substances as an expression of solidarity with those who suffer.

We acknowledge this is not God’s calling for all people and that abstinence from alcohol cannot be considered an essential of the Christian faith. Nor is it the only way to faithfully respond to addiction. We make the choice to abstain in response to the biblical mandate of self-giving love for our brothers and sisters. Our position must be embodied with grace and without judgment. For that reason, we do not hold adherence to this position as required for fellowship, either in the body of Christ or the Church of the Nazarene.

Further, we seek to minimize the irresponsible use of alcohol and glorification of the same in society and culture. Attention must be paid to the consequences of irresponsible alcohol use and its effect on people for whom Christ died. The prevalence of alcohol abuse in our world demands we embody a position that stands as a witness to others.

(Proverbs 20:1; 23:29–24:2; Hosea 4:10–11; Habakkuk 2:5; Romans 13:8; 14:15–21; 15:1–2; 1 Corinthians 3:16–17; 6:9–12, 19–20; 10:31–33; Galatians 5:13–14, 21; Ephesians 5:18)

(In light of this stance, [O]nly unfermented wine should be used in celebration of the Lord’s Supper.) (514.9, 530.7, 531.2, 532.1, 802)

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FURTHER RESOLVED that *Manual* paragraph 29.6 be amended as follows:

29.6. [The unprescribed use of hallucinogenics, stimulants, and depressants, and the misuse and abuse of regularly prescribed medicines. Only on competent medical advice and under medical supervision should such drugs be used.]

In light of medical evidence outlining the addictive and enslaving properties of mind-altering substances, along with scriptural admonitions to remain in responsible control of mind and body, we choose to abstain from their use outside proper medical care and guidance regardless of their legality and availability.

(Matthew 22:37–39; 27:34; Romans 12:1–2; 1 Corinthians 6:19–20; 9:24–27)

FURTHER RESOLVED that *Manual* paragraph 903.15 be amended as follows:

903.15. Use of Alcohol [Desocialization].

The recommended social practice of the Church of the Nazarene is driven by an ethic of love for God and neighbor. As regards the use of alcohol as a beverage, we practice a radical discipleship that chooses to abstain from the use of alcohol. In love for God, this is in part an attempt to live our lives for the glory and pleasure of God. In love for neighbor, we believe that by abstaining from alcohol we stand in solidarity with those whose lives, health, and relationships have been damaged by the undisciplined consumption of alcohol, whether by themselves or by those whose actions were detrimental to them in some way. We would not want our consumption of alcohol to be a cause for offense to these.

While Nazarenes choose to abstain from the use of alcohol as a social beverage, we covenant to do so in a manner that is non-judgmental toward fellow believers who choose to drink alcoholic beverages responsibly while belonging to the family of God. To abstain in a prideful or selfish manner would be inconsistent with our ethic of love. We seek the good of our neighbor, and believe with the Apostle Paul that, while certain products may be lawful or permissible, not all things are beneficial or constructive (1 Corinthians 10:23-24). We believe this choice to be one of grace extended to those who have suffered because of alcohol.

The Church of the Nazarene publicly supports [the desocialization of alcohol consumption. We encourage civic, labor, business, professional, social, voluntary, and private agencies and organizations to assist in such desocialization] efforts to counteract the advertising and media promotion of the [social] acceptability of the “alcohol culture.” (2013)

REASONS:

1. Our statement should reflect all-inclusive terminology and a broader directive on the use of mind-altering substances that will guide us regardless of the rapid change of available substances as well as medical, scientific, and legal developments.

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2. The suggested text reminds Nazarenes of our responsibility to be people of grace who seek the transformation of lives through the building of relationships characterized by holy love rather than judgment.

3. The Church of the Nazarene has always taken a stance in support of those affected by social ills, and the encouragement of a lifestyle that counteracts the commercialization of products that can adversely affect the well-being of individuals and societies as a whole. Alcohol has been, and continues to be, one such product. The language suggested in this resolution strongly affirms our historical stance, but communicates it in a way that gives priority to the concern for the person, while still suggesting activism for change in the social perception of the product.

4. Our statement on alcohol should not simply be a condemnation of alcohol, but an understanding of our Christian responsibility to those who suffer from its abuse.

5. In light of the unfortunate judgmentalism that has accompanied our interpretation of understanding of alcohol in the past, our statement should reflect grace strongly, in imitation of our Savior, Jesus Christ.