

C@C's Alcohol Use Policy

C@C has always had an alcohol policy. In light of recent changes in our facilities and the Elder Board's lengthy, prayerful deliberations, we are now updating it.

The *Use of Alcohol Policy* passed recently by the Elder Board begins:

“The use of alcohol in our society has long been a source of controversy. Church at Carbondale has never taken a position that forbids the use of alcoholic beverages by its members. We all realize however, that alcoholic beverages can easily be abused, leading to potential suffering because of the effects of dangerous addiction and the serious damage that can be done under its influence.

In developing a policy on the serving of alcoholic beverages in the context of church sponsored and community events in our facilities, these values and these dangers must be carefully balanced.

We know that alcohol in, and of itself, is not evil. Christ's first miracle was transforming water into wine and the use of alcohol is not prohibited in Scripture. However, because of the damage caused by the abuse of alcohol in our present society, there is a pressing need to deal with it with special caution for the Church to set an example of using it responsibly. In addition, while the social use of alcohol in moderation is acceptable, C@C also recognizes that some Christians choose to abstain from the use of alcoholic beverages.

In light of this, the following policies will govern the use of alcoholic beverages at Church at Carbondale functions or functions that occur at Church at Carbondale not specifically sponsored or endorsed by C@C. “

You may wonder, “why would a church even be considering a policy regarding alcohol use on its premises?” Good question. In our society, Christians and churches have generally been regarded as being totally opposed to alcohol use in any form, in any situation. However, that's not been the stance of C@C which recognizes that while the Bible prohibits drunkenness, it doesn't prohibit the use of alcohol. While some Christians may totally abstain, others may drink in moderation without violating Scripture.

Following completion of the Gathering Center and now that we are allowing its use by community groups, we began getting requests for events that would include the serving of alcohol. In anticipation and prior to this, the Elder Board began praying, discussing and researching a policy on alcohol usage on our property. This discussion and prayer continued over many months, with no clear direction from God. Under the Chairman's leadership, at each meeting, we would listen to, discuss and debate the pros and cons of the situation, always in a respectful manner. The issue was thoroughly discussed from every possible view point; the Bible, church tradition, society, the financial effect on Gathering Center income, ‘what will other Christians think?’, ‘what will people in the community think?’, ‘what will be the effect on people in our community upon hearing that alcohol usage is allowed by and in a church building?’ Every conceivable factor was considered, some Elders expressed strong reservations based on personal experience of a loved one's disastrous experience of alcohol abuse. The question, “Would

the church be encouraging alcohol abuse by allowing alcohol usage in our facilities,” was discussed as well as, “Since many C@C members (including most of the Elders) drink in moderation, are we being hypocritical to prohibit the use of alcohol in our buildings?”

This is just to give you an idea of how thoroughly, thoughtfully and prayerfully the decision was reached by the Elders. Finally, with requests for rentals including the serving of alcohol increasing and already having invested almost a year in the discussion, our Chairman called for a vote. Before the vote, an Elder called on us to pray once more and to ask God for His specific leading on this issue. In quiet prayer we each listened with our hearts to hear from God. After some time in prayer, several Elders reported hearing an affirmative answer, ‘Yes.’ A vote was taken and the motion passed to adopt the Alcohol Policy. The Elders were and are in unity on this decision. You can read the policy at our website. Scott Robinson, our Gathering Center Director, is working closely with church sponsored events and with community renters to make sure that the policy is followed to the letter. The Elder Board is maintaining a vigilant stance on the implementation of the policy and will make alterations as needed.

There is no single reason why the policy was passed by the Elder Board except as an answer in response to seeking God’s will. The pros and cons weighed evenly in the discussions, sometimes leaning one way or the other. It was recognized, however, that churches are generally regarded with resentment by outsiders as judgmental and ‘holier than thou,’ condemning outsiders for particular sins while being guilty of those same or other sins at the same time – hypocritical. It is our prayer that making a controversial, yet biblically based policy, will help melt away people’s resentment toward the church as intolerant, mean-spirited and hypocritical. However, as described, the final decision came down to a season of crying out to God because of our lack of clarity and listening to His Spirit. May God be praised!

The Church at Carbondale Elder Board