

## **Blue Church Substance Abuse Policy**

### **1. Purpose**

The purpose of this document is to explain the Blue Church policy on the use of alcohol and the taking of illicit drugs while in the church, on church related business or leading/taking part in any church related activity. This policy applies while on the church property or visiting another location as a representative of the church.

The Blue Church and its leadership is committed to the most beneficial treatment of those found to be under the influence of drugs or alcohol, while also abiding by local and federal laws (Romans 13: 1-5). This applies to:

- Pastoral and other church staff
- Church elders, trustees, ministry leaders, ministry team members and visiting speakers
- Church members, regular attendees and visitors
- Other users of the church and attendees of church functions

### **2. Biblical Principles**

The Bible states that drunkenness should be avoided (Proverbs 20:1, Ephesians 5:18, Isaiah 5:11) and only gives some indication about the moderate use of alcohol (1 Timothy 5:23, Ecclesiastes 9:7, Psalm 104:14-15, 1 Corinthians 6:12). There is no direct biblical teaching about tobacco or any other drug except alcohol. General principles that apply to excessive alcohol use and all drug use, legal or illegal, include:

- The need to acknowledge that our bodies are temples of the Holy Spirit. (1 Corinthians 3: 15-17)
- The need to be wise with our resources. (Proverbs 23: 20-21)
- The need for clarity of mind. (2 Timothy 4:5, 1 Peter 4:7)
- The need to care for others and help those who are hurting. (Philippians 2:4, Hebrews 13:16)
- The need to obey the law of the land. (Romans 13: 1-5)
- The need to be in the world, but not of it. (1 John 2:15, Romans 12:2)
- The need for leaders to hold to high standards of moral character and conduct (1 Timothy 3:1-10)

### **3. Alcohol Policy**

The Blue Church does not call for abstinence from alcohol consistent with scripture. The Blue Church respects a legal adult's right to drink alcohol in a sociable and restrained manner congruous with biblical teaching. Consistent and excessive alcohol use can have a detrimental impact on an individual's relationship with God, their health, ministry, work, finances and relationships that is warned about in the scriptures.

Agreeing with the instruction given in Romans 14:21 and being mindful that many in our midst may be in recovery from substance-abuse, the following conditions will be observed:

- Alcoholic drinks will not be served or consumed at any church event on or off property.
- We will continue to use non-alcoholic juice for communion.

Offsite events carry the following stipulations:

- If anyone representing the Blue Church at functions or conferences opts to partake in the consumption of alcoholic beverages, he/she is expected to be controlled and within the legal limits if they are driving themselves or others.
- Church events held in people's homes (i.e. Bible studies and growth groups advertised in church publications or emails) should adhere to the same principles as holding events in the church.
- Anyone serving in ministry to children and youth as a representative of the Blue Church must not drink alcohol during ministry activities, transport minors to establishments where only alcohol is sold, purchase alcohol for minors, or encourage minors to drink.
- Christian legal adults should be good role models of discipleship within the "freedom" given to us. (1 Corinthians 10:23).

#### **4. Drug Policy**

The Blue Church sternly objects to the use of illegal substances in light of the standards outlined in the Biblical Principles section of this policy. The use of illegal substances, the misuse of inhalants/solvents and the misuse/abuse of prescription medications is both illegal and not permitted. This includes any church elders, trustees, ministry leaders or their team members, church members or regular attenders...

- Ingesting or supplying illegal substances while at church or on one's own time.
- Providing advice, instruction or encouragement to anyone (especially youth) in the acquiring or use of illicit substances. Illicit substances not only refers to illegal drugs, but also includes the use of any substance ingested outside of the acceptable parameters dictated in a legal prescription or in the directions provided on a product label.
- Consuming prescription substances through the use of a vaping device (eg. THC) in the presence of others on church grounds constituting "second hand" contact.

#### **5. Tobacco and Vaping**

Tobacco and vaping products are readily available for legal adults and generally do not constitute concerns for altered mental status and impairment. However, the health concerns associated with these products are recognized and well documented including vascular disease, pulmonary disease and other health risks. Vaping products are more questionable in that they may contain chemicals that are unregulated and unknown to the consumer. Furthermore, vaping is often the method through which substances other than nicotine are administered (eg. THC).

- The use of tobacco (smoke and smokeless) and vaping products is strictly prohibited while inside any church building.
- The use of these products is strictly prohibited on and off church grounds while working with children and youth.
- The use of vaping devices to administer substances other than nicotine is prohibited while on church property consistent with Section 4. Drug Policy.

#### **6. Action**

For Staff

Violating any of the conditions outlined in the Alcohol Policy or Drug Policy sections of this document will be deemed a disciplinary offense for church employees and will be dealt with in

accordance with the Blue Church's disciplinary procedure. This will take into account the seriousness of events with consequences ranging up to and including dismissal.

Wherever possible, staff members will be afforded conditions of continued employment agreed upon by the staff member and leadership to include the completion of substance-abuse treatment and a demonstration of fitness for duty.

For non-staff

For any in church leadership, church members, volunteers or regular attenders (non-church staff) found to be in violation of the aforementioned sections of this document, his or her actions will be considered as grounds for discipline by leadership up to and including dismissal from ministry, revocation of church membership or stipulation not to return to Blue Church property.

Upon anyone discovering or suspecting someone to be under the influence on Church property or at a church related event...

He or she **MUST** inform a ministry leader or one of the elders or trustees as soon as possible. Children are encouraged, but not required, to report any such suspected incidents. Parents of children making such reports are strongly encouraged to forward this information to ministry leaders and leadership.

Furthermore, a report should be made as soon as possible to a ministry leader or one of the elders or trustees if anyone is found:

- Supplying or attempting to supply illegal drugs while on the premises.
- Using illegal drugs on the premises.
- Consuming alcohol, having alcohol on their person, or bringing alcohol onto the church property.
- Observed providing advice, instruction or encouragement to anyone (especially youth) in the acquiring or use of illicit substances.

*Young People*

- If illegal drugs are found on the premises or used at or near a youth event by a student, immediate action will include keeping all participants safe as deemed appropriate by the ministry leaders and a contact with the parent or the transporting adult to the event in addition to the procedures outlined in this policy.
- A contact with the parents or the transporting adult to the event in addition to the procedures outlined in this policy will take place if a young person comes to an event under the influence of any substance.

In the event of such reports, the following should be considered before taking action:

- A. Is the individual a danger to themselves or others, or could the individual be a danger to themselves or others?
- B. Are there enough leaders/helpers to respond to the suspected intoxicated individual?
- C. Do available leaders/helpers feel they can respond to the suspected intoxicated individual?
- D. In the absence of available leadership/helpers, action may also include calling the police depending on severity of the incident.
- E. When it is discovered that someone is supplying or attempting to supply illegal drugs on church property, an expedient report to local police should be made.

NOTE: some individuals may appear impaired, but maybe under treatment with prescribed medication. For example, someone prescribed pain medication following a surgical procedure. These will be considered as "special cases."

## **7. Advice and Counseling**

If anyone connected to the Blue Church is discovered under the influence, a consultation will take place in accordance with Bible principles and as indicated in the church's bylaws. This may include:

- A request to meet with church leadership
- Referral to treatment and counseling
- Provisions/restrictions regarding immediate involvement in ministry activities and expectations for return to such activities. These will be at the discretion of the Elder council.
- In the event that the individual is a young person, the applicable Child Protection Policy items will be employed and parents will be included in the discussion.

The Blue Church is committed to providing support and pastoral care to those who abuse substances or are affected by the abuse of substances. Therefore:

- We will foster relationships with specialist support organizations outside of the church (e.g. Teen Challenge, Narcotics Anonymous, Alcoholics Anonymous, Celebrate Recovery, etc.) This will include having a list of useful phone numbers to be provided to those in need.
- We will be aware of drug issues that arise in the community and be prepared to comment on or have an input into them. This would include reporting on current trends as tracked by the Springfield Police Department.
- We encourage anyone with a substance-related problem to immediately enter into treatment. The Blue Church will provide love, prayer, care and appropriate support during this time.
- Rather than sitting in judgment, our goal will be to effectively and empathetically respond to an individual's substance-related problem to the extent it is possible, as long as the safety of others is not compromised in any way.

This policy will be reviewed by the Blue Church Council every two years.

\*The Blue Church leadership would like to acknowledge Woodford Baptist Church in South Woodford, London. Their very thorough and Godly substance abuse policy served as inspiration and as an outline for this current document.

The Blue Church Council — July, 2025