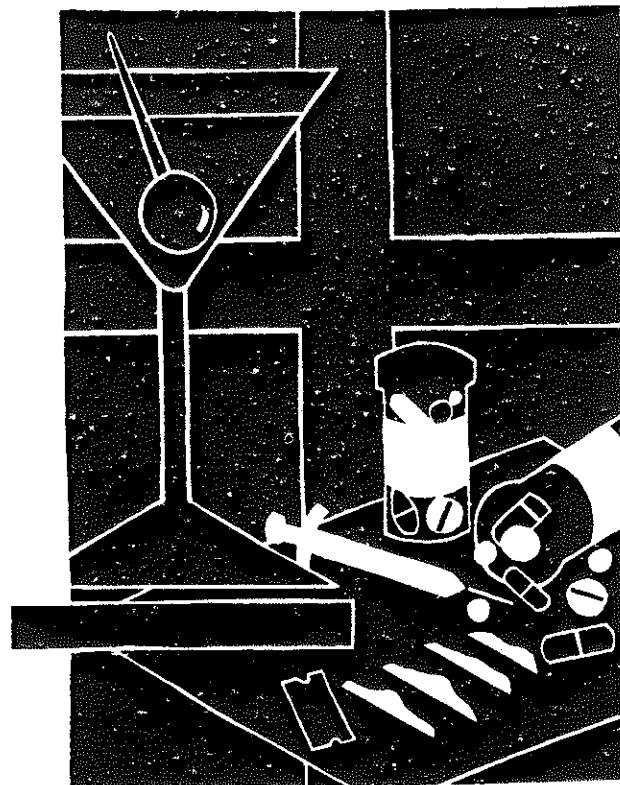

FREEDOM AND SUBSTANCE ABUSE



The 205th General Assembly (1993) believes that the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) needs honest talk about the use of drugs and other substances. It is time to talk and learn from one another about substance use and abuse and about drug dependency. It is time for congregations, especially youthful members of congregations, to begin the discussion.

The decisions all of us make about the use and misuse of drugs, medicines, foods, and other substances ripple through our homes, communities, and churches. It is no secret that abusing alcohol and other drugs changes people. People in our churches, schools, businesses, towns, and cities are affected. The realities of pain, illness, poverty, and crime are also a part of the substance-use problem facing our country. Each must be addressed.

There is no simple, quick cure for substance misuse in our society. But silence is no answer either. This 205th General Assembly (1993) invites Presbyterian congregations to become "partners for prevention," to read a pulpit letter on substance abuse during worship, and to work for changes in our society's treatment of substance use and abuse problems.

The 205th General Assembly (1993) makes these recommendations:

A. Regarding Members of the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.)

1. In view of the social impact of substance abuse, that Presbyterians accept the challenges of conscience and informed responsibility, for ourselves and others, in faith and action.
2. That individuals prayerfully explore their substance use behaviors and make decisions about personal substance use based on our church's confessions and teachings. As a guide to behavior and conscience, the 205th General Assembly (1993) urges:
 - a. abstinence from manufacture, sale, purchase, possession, or use of illicit drugs;
 - b. restraint in use of over-the-counter drug preparations, caffeine, and the emotional use of food;
 - c. study and reaffirmation of the General Assembly's positions on abstinence and the appropriate use of alcohol, and the General Assembly's pastoral encouragement to abstain from tobacco products; and
 - d. exploration of the connections between health and faith, and attention to health-maintenance practices through lifestyle change: diet, exercise, stress control, rest, and other healthy practices.
3. That individuals share faith decisions and reflections on substance abuse with others in relationships of trust and respect.
4. That members of the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.), recognizing their responsibility to the wider society, be prepared to confront, challenge and, where necessary, report—to appropriate persons in households, schools, or communities—substance abuse and the manufacture, sale, purchase, possession, and use of addictive or illicit substances.

B. Regarding Families and Households

1. That families create worship and faith rituals (such as devotionals and bedtime prayers), and make frequent opportunities to share their faith with one another in the home.
2. That families of the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) clearly state behavioral expectations about substance use for their members and hold open discussions of substance use/abuse and its implications.
3. That families talk about the issues raised in this resolution and use the educational materials concerning substance use/abuse published by the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.).
4. That families discuss the values and beliefs that sustain a Christian social witness, and that they engage in social action and personal ministry related to substance abuse as a household and in congregations and communities.

C. Regarding Congregations

1. That sessions develop and adopt congregational substance-use policies that reflect the church's confessions and teachings and emulate the recommendations of this resolution.
 2. That sessions provide an alcohol-free element during services of communion and work toward providing a smoke-free environment in their buildings.
 3. That congregations support the role of households as places of worship and spiritual development.
 4. That congregations offer intergenerational classes on parenting, peer pressure, self-esteem, and substance use/abuse, and use the educational materials concerning substance use/abuse published by the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.).
 5. That congregations foster exploration of the relation between health and faith.
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6. That congregations enter into “partnerships for prevention” by:
 - a. inviting other congregations and faith groups to engage in mutual ministry and mission for prevention, education, and social action;
 - b. affirming cross-cultural and interfaith differences and similarities, strengths, and faith journeys among the members of a partnership for prevention;
 - c. working with other community-based programs and government agencies against patterns of substance abuse and for prevention.
 7. That congregations foster conversation with youth, parents, and their leaders about substance-abuse problems in their communities and work with them for prevention, education, and social action; and that congregations help members fulfill their responsibility to confront, challenge and, where necessary, report the manufacture, sale, purchase, possession, and use of addictive or illicit substances.
 8. That congregations explore and incorporate the spiritual vitality of Twelve Step spirituality and disciplines into the life of the church, in consultation with members of Twelve Step fellowship programs.

D. Regarding Presbyteries and Synods

1. That presbyteries and synods adopt policies concerning substance use and abuse that reflect the church’s confessions and teachings, and emulate the recommendations of this resolution; and that they encourage related bodies to do the same.
2. That presbyteries and synods provide pastoral care for individuals (members and employees) with substance-abuse problems and foster education concerning drug and alcohol use and abuse.
3. That presbyteries and synods provide leadership for the creation of partnerships for prevention among Presbyterian congregations and with other denominations, community-based programs, and government agencies.
4. That committees on ministry be given annual training for prevention of and response to addiction and substance abuse.
5. That presbyteries and synods provide leadership for intergenerational and multicultural study of and response to substance abuse and addiction.
6. That presbyteries and synods discuss this resolution and its recommendations and encourage the use of educational materials concerning substance use/abuse published by the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.).
7. That presbyteries and synods advocate public policies that foster justice, treatment, and proactive preventive measures (including education, training, and health care) concerning addictions.

E. Regarding the General Assembly, the 205th General Assembly (1993)

1. Commends these materials to Presbyterian individuals, members, families, pastors, congregations, and governing bodies for study and action.
 2. Encourages economic conversion and public investment in need-reduction policies:
 - a. education concerning addictions, and prevention programs;
 - b. public health maintenance programs, which include counseling;
 - c. rehabilitation of individuals who are addicted, and rehabilitation programs for their families;
 - d. justice in educational opportunity;
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- e. justice in economic opportunity; and
 - f. economic conversion for tobacco growers and industry workers.
3. Urges reversal of current U.S. drug supply-limiting policies:
 - a. mandatory drug sentencing;
 - b. zero tolerance policy and property confiscation without due process;
 - c. domestic and international low-intensity conflict;
 - d. erosion of personal rights and equal protection under the law; and
 - e. decriminalization of possession with judicial focus on drug manufacturers and suppliers.
 4. Urges the elimination of tobacco export subsidies and supports the aggressive enforcement of banking regulations that control the flow of illegal drug moneys and the regulation of drug-refining chemicals produced and sold in the United States, except where involved with medical therapy and/or research.
 5. Supports legalization of programs that distribute clean hypodermic needles with counseling to drug-dependent individuals for prevention of disease.
 6. Urges the nation to establish treatment-on-demand for those with chemical dependencies and their families.
 7. Urges the nation to create opportunities for education and training on demand for those who experience economic injustice and lack of opportunity.
 8. Encourages the support of innovative, ecumenically sponsored treatment programs and halfway houses, with access to medical support, particularly in economically impoverished regions and neighborhoods.
 9. Calls for the demilitarization of U.S. drug wars policies in foreign countries, and calls for the replacement of low-intensity conflicts with programs of economic aid and local self-development.
 10. Urges the Board of Pensions to require second medical opinions in the prescription of psychoactive medications.
 11. Encourages Presbyterian theological institutions and denomination-related schools to include substance-abuse education.
 12. Encourages the denomination to incorporate the spiritual vitality of Twelve Step spirituality and disciplines into the life of the church, in consultation with members of Twelve Step fellowship programs.
 13. Declares that the annual Alcohol Abuse and Alcoholism Prevention and Treatment Week of the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) be expanded to be called Alcohol and Other Substance Abuse Prevention and Treatment Week.
 14. Encourages the reading of the Pulpit Statement to Presbyterian Congregations on Sunday, November 7, 1993, and the use of educational materials provided by the denomination for that week.
 15. Directs the Stated Clerk to distribute the Pulpit Statement to Presbyterian Congregations with promotional materials for Alcohol and Other Substance Abuse Prevention and Treatment Week and with a message of encouragement to churches to order and distribute copies of Substance Abuse Handbook for Youth to their youth and young adult members for use during the week of November 7, 1993. The distribution is to include those persons in nonparish ministries.
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