

## HEALTH AND WHOLENESS: ALCOHOL & DRUG ADDICTION

### What does the Bible say?

- God created humankind in his image, in the image of God he created them. (Genesis 1:27)
- I came that you might have life and have it abundantly. (John 10:10)
- Do not be among winebibbers or among gluttonous eaters of meat; for the drunkard and the glutton will come to poverty, and drowsiness will clothe them in rags ... Who has woe? Who has sorrow? Who has strife? Who has complaining? Who has wounds without cause? Who has redness of eyes? Those who linger late over wine, those who keep trying mixed wines. Do not look at wine when it is red, when it sparkles in the cup and goes down smoothly. At the last it bites like a serpent, and stings like an adder. (Proverbs 23:20-21; 29-32)

### What does The United Methodist Church say?

- As God's children and participants in the gift of abundant life, we recognize the need to respond to those who know brokenness from the widespread abuse of alcohol and other drugs in our world. The experience of God's saving grace offers wholeness to each individual. In light of the reality of alcohol and other drug abuse, the church has a responsibility to recognize brokenness. (The Book of Resolutions, 3042)
- We affirm our long-standing support of abstinence from alcohol as a faithful witness to God's liberating and redeeming love for persons. We support abstinence from the use of any illegal drugs. Since the use of illegal drugs, as well as illegal and problematic use of alcohol, is a major factor in crime, disease, death,
- and family dysfunction, we support educational programs as well as other prevention strategies encouraging abstinence from illegal drug use and, with regard to those who choose to consume alcoholic beverages, judicious use with deliberate and intentional restraint, with Scripture as a guide. (Social Principles, ¶162.L)
- "Neither may we gain by hurting our neighbor in his body. Therefore we may not sell anything which tends to impair health." (John Wesley, Sermon: The Use of Money)

### What do the facts say?

- Alcohol is the world's third largest risk factor for disease burden; it is the leading risk factor in the Western Pacific and the Americas and the second largest in Europe.
- Excessive drinking cost the U.S. \$223.5 billion in lost productivity, health care expenditures, criminal justice impact, and car accidents in 2006.
- As of 2012, 250,000 people die each year from illegal drug related complications, 2.3 million people die as a result of alcohol, 5.1 million people die as a result of tobacco.
- Prescription drugs are the drugs most commonly abused by teenagers. Seventy percent of teens who use prescription drugs non-medically get pills from their family or friends.

### Take ACTION for justice...

- Remind your member of Congress and state legislators that alcohol is a leading cause of addiction.
- Encourage your state to invest in strongly enforcing your state's criminal laws regarding alcohol and to update regulations for alcohol advertising directed at youths to best practices standards (see the Center on Alcohol Marketing and Youth at the Johns Hopkins Bloomberg School of Public Health).
- Actively discourage members of Congress from taking contributions from the alcohol industry, and raise awareness of the prevalence and dangers of drug abuse, including prescription drugs. Take action today at [www.umpower.org](http://www.umpower.org)
- Learn more about alcohol and other drugs by visiting the following Web sites:
  - Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration at [www.samhsa.gov](http://www.samhsa.gov)
  - Centers for Disease Control at [www.cdc.org](http://www.cdc.org)
  - National Institute on Drug Abuse at [www.drugabuse.gov](http://www.drugabuse.gov)
  - World Health Organization at [www.who.int](http://www.who.int)
- Join Church and Society's Global Health and Wholeness Network at <http://action.umc-gbcs.org/joinnetworks>
- Make a commitment to value health for others and for yourself equally!

## Justice Issue: Addictions

<https://www.umcjustice.org/what-we-care-about/health-and-wholeness/addictions>

*Successful treatment for addiction typically requires continual evaluation and modification as appropriate, similar to the approach taken for other chronic diseases.* -U.S. National Institute on Drug Abuse

Abstinence from alcohol, illicit drugs and gambling is part of living into the life God has prepared for us. The abuse of alcohol and other drugs can lead to physical dependency, addiction, or both. Physical dependency is a person's body requiring the drug in order to function. Not taking the drug can lead to significant withdrawal symptoms. Addiction is compulsive use despite the harmful consequences. Addiction can include a physical dependency.

The abuse of alcohol and other drugs can have devastating effects on individuals, families and communities. Tobacco is the leading cause of preventable death and alcohol is a significant contributing factor to many risky behaviors that cause tragedy and illness. Gambling addiction harms not only the individual, it harms families and the community.

There are many reasons people abuse alcohol and other drugs or develop a gambling addiction. Genetics and family history play a role. As does mental illness. Too often we treat physical dependence and addictions as moral failings and further stigmatize users. Addiction is a disease. To make widespread change to the rate of addiction we should view these a medical realities, and help people seek treatment.

Treatment works. Like other chronic illness, physical dependence and addiction can be managed. According to the [U.S. National Institute on Drug Abuse](#), "Relapse rates for addiction resemble those of other chronic diseases such as diabetes, hypertension and asthma." They go on to say, "Unfortunately, when relapse occurs many deem treatment a failure. This is not the case: Successful treatment for addiction typically requires continual evaluation and modification as appropriate, similar to the approach taken for other chronic diseases."

### What the Bible and The United Methodist Church Say:

The United Methodist Church has long believed that abstinence from alcohol, illicit drugs and gambling is part of living into the life God has prepared for us. The Church promotes a compassionate response encouraging therapeutic assistance for people who suffer from addiction. "We affirm our long-standing support of abstinence from alcohol as a faithful witness to God's liberating and redeeming love for persons." ([Social Principles, ¶162.L](#)) and "The Church should promote standards and personal lifestyles that would make unnecessary and undesirable" to resort to gambling. ([Social Principles, ¶163.G](#))

The church also supports government regulation to restrict the sale and access of alcohol, tobacco and controlled substances. It also encourages treatment, rehabilitation and ongoing life-changing recovery.

### Three Things You Can Do:

- Contact your local community leaders to find out what is happening in your community to prevent addiction in the first place and offer to help.
- Talk about these issues with members of your congregations. We've created [this worksheet](#) to help you reflect biblically and theologically about health care.
- Find others in your church and community with whom you can share both your passion for substance abuse and gambling prevention and the ability to develop strategies for local efforts.