General Policies

- Alcohol Policy

Alcohol Policy

Why this matters

This isn't legalism. We're not saying alcohol itself is sinful, or that a Christian who drinks is doing something wrong. Biblically, drunkenness is never okay, but as leaders and those who serve others, there are moments when we make decisions out of our care, love and duty to others. Paul's own conclusion, *"it is better not to… drink wine… if it might cause another believer to stumble"* (Romans 14:21, NLT), isn't a rule handed to him. It's a freedom he gladly lays down for someone he loves.

Why name alcohol in particular? Of all the things we could point to, this is an area where the harm is real, common and well documented: in addiction, in health, and in family violence. *(There's a short summary of the evidence at the end of this document, if you'd like it).*

On any given Sunday, someone here is quietly fighting an addiction, recovering from one, or carrying what someone else's drinking did to their family. We usually won't know who they are. They're simply the believer Paul had in mind.

So we go first. Not because drinking is wrong, but because the people we serve matter more to us than our liberty does.

In short

Where	Our practice
The Reside venue	Alcohol-free, always
Promoting any Reside event	Never feature or advertise alcohol
Leaders & serving teams, at Reside events	Don't drink
Supplying alcohol to anyone	NeverLeaders and volunteers don't provide it
Others, at external Reside events	Their choice. We don't encourage it, and we don't confront it
Small Groups & gatherings in homes	Alcohol-free and alcohol not visible
Non-Reside gatherings(e.g. a church member’s birthday)	Prayerfully consider what’s appropriate

What counts as a Reside event

A Reside event or gathering is anything organised by Reside or one of its ministries (a service, Small Group, team night, camp or social) or promoted through Reside channels: emails, announcements, socials, and anything said from the platform. It doesn't matter whether it happens at our venue, in a home or somewhere external. If Reside organised it or invited people to it, this policy applies.

Our venue is alcohol-free

The Reside venue is an alcohol-free venue. Alcohol is not served, supplied or consumed on site at any service, event or gathering.

We never advertise alcohol

Alcohol is never used to promote a Reside event or draw people to it:

- Not in an event's name or theme (e.g. no "Beer & BBQ night").
- Not as a drawcard (e.g. no "free cocktails on arrival").

This applies across all our communications: flyers, socials, emails, and anything said from the platform.

Leaders and teams don't drink at Reside events

If you lead, assist, or serve on a team, don't drink alcohol at Reside events or gatherings, including events held at external venues. While we're gathered as Reside, you're a leader in the room, and people take their cue from you.

We don't supply alcohol

Leaders, assistants and volunteers don't supply alcohol to anyone, at any age, in any Reside context. Don't buy the round, bring the bottle, stock the fridge, or hand someone a drink.

You never know whose fight you'd be adding to. (Supplying alcohol to someone under 18 can also be a criminal offence, but our standard is simpler than the law: we don't supply).

Where others choose to drink

At Reside events held at external venues, some people in our church may choose to drink. That's their choice**.** We don't provide it, we don't encourage it, and we don't confront people about it. We simply hold our own standard and extend grace.

Hosting in homes

Small Groups and similar gatherings often meet in leaders' homes. When you host, keep alcohol out of sight by putting it away before people arrive. It's a small thing that makes the space safe for whoever walks in.

When it's not a Reside event

Not everything church people do together is a Reside event. If someone from church invites you to their birthday party, that's their gathering, not ours, and this policy doesn't follow you there. We'd encourage you to prayerfully consider what's appropriate, the same care for others that shapes this policy is worth carrying everywhere.

Personal conduct

Expected behaviour around alcohol at a personal level is covered by the Code of Conduct. If you're ever unsure how this applies to you or your team, talk with your overseeing pastor.

The evidence behind this

If you'd like the detail behind this policy:

- **It's addictive, and there's no safe amount.** Australia's national guidelines hold that there is no completely safe level of alcohol use. Alcohol accounts for around 4.5% of Australia's total burden of disease and injury, and is the leading risk factor for people aged 15–44. *(NHMRC 2020; AIHW)*
- **It makes family violence worse.** Alcohol-related family violence incidents are roughly twice as likely to involve severe or life-threatening injury. To be clear: alcohol is not a cause of, or an excuse for, violence, but it is a recognised factor that escalates it. *(AIC; AIHW; ANROWS)*
- **It affects men most.** Alcohol is the leading risk factor for males aged 15–44 (10% of their disease burden, against 4.2% for females). Alcohol use disorders rank among the top five causes of disease burden for men aged 15–24, where they don't appear for women at any age. *(AIHW)*

Sources

- NHMRC, *Australian Guidelines to Reduce Health Risks from Drinking Alcohol* (2020). health.gov.au/news/australian-alcohol-guidelines-revised
- AIHW, *Burden of disease and injuries related to alcohol and other drugs*. aihw.gov.au/reports/alcohol/alcohol-drugs-disease-injuries
- AIHW, *The health of men in Australia*. aihw.gov.au/reports/mens-health/health-of-men
- AIHW, *Factors associated with family, domestic and sexual violence*. aihw.gov.au/family-domestic-and-sexual-violence/understanding-fdsv/factors-associated-with-fdsv
- Australian Institute of Criminology, *Alcohol/drug-involved family violence in Australia (ADIVA)*. aic.gov.au/publications
- ANROWS, *Links between alcohol consumption and domestic and sexual violence against women*. anrows.org.au