

Alcohol Policy

Episcopal Diocese of Washington

Introduction

Diocesan Council is requesting that every parish vestry use the proposed policy below to establish, by September 2016 an alcohol/substance misuse policy for their own congregation. The foundation and framework of this policy is Resolution A158 adopted by the 78th General Convention of the Episcopal Church in 2015 as well as existing EDOW policy.

It is hoped that in the fall of 2016 there will be an opportunity to share with Council and other parishes how the established policy evolved - what were the experiences and conversations that led to the final policy. From there common problems and hopefully solutions will emerge.

Proposed Policy

1. The Diocese of Washington aims to provide a safe and welcoming environment for all people, including people in recovery.
2. All applicable federal, state and local laws will be obeyed, including those governing the serving of alcoholic beverages to minors.
3. When alcohol is served, it will be monitored and those showing signs of intoxication will not be served.
4. When alcohol is served, the event organizer will appoint an adult to oversee its serving. That adult should not drink alcoholic beverages during the time of his or her execution of his or her responsibilities.
5. Hard liquor will not be served at diocesan events.
6. If minors are present, alcohol must be served at a separate station that is monitored at all times to prevent underage drinking.
7. Alcoholic and non-alcoholic beverages will be clearly labeled as such. Food prepared with alcohol does not need to be labeled provided the alcohol is completely evaporated by the cooking process; however, it is recommended that even in this case the use of alcohol in cooking be noted on a label.
8. When alcohol is served, appealing non-alcoholic alternatives will be offered with equal prominence and accessibility.
9. The serving of alcoholic beverages at diocesan events, if publicized, will be publicized as a secondary or tertiary part of the event.
10. Alcohol consumption will not be the focus of any ministry or event.
11. Food will be served when alcohol is present. On these occasions, 50% of the total food served should be food of substance, such as proteins.
12. Groups or organizations sponsoring activities or events where alcoholic beverages are served will assume responsibility for those persons who might become intoxicated and will provide alternative transportation for anyone whose capacity to drive may be impaired.
13. Alcoholic beverages shall not be served when the business of the Church is being conducted.
14. Clergy shall consecrate an appropriate amount of wine when celebrating the Eucharist and perform ablutions in a way that does not foster or model misuse. Excess consecrated wine may be reserved for future use, poured into a piscina, poured into the ground or otherwise reverently disposed of. No one is required to consume excess consecrated wine.
15. Receiving the sacrament in one kind (bread only) is perfectly valid and the use of non-alcoholic wine as an alternative at the Eucharist is to be considered.
16. Individual parishes are expected to articulate and publish their own alcohol policies.

We believe that God's gifts are good and we know that humans struggle to use them in ways that are healthy, positive, joyful and in harmony with God's purposes for creation. Moreover, we recognize the pain, confusion and dis-ease that arise when the gift of free-will is impaired by addiction to alcohol and other drugs. Because we are people of faith, we do not lose hope nor do we despair in the face of addiction. God in the form of Jesus Christ offers new life and the Holy Spirit gives us power to transform our darkness into light.

General Principles

Addiction Is a Disease

The Diocese of Washington acknowledges that substance misuse is a major health concern in our society.

Addiction Destroys Relationships

We understand that alcohol and drug misuse impairs the body, mind and spirit of the individual, thus disrupting supportive relationships with family, friends, and colleagues. It is also a spiritual disease that impairs one's relationship with God.

Addiction Is Treatable

We agree with health authorities that alcohol and drug addiction can affect any individual, regardless of social, educational or financial status. However, the disease is treatable.

We Are Called to A Healing Ministry

We especially acknowledge the need for guidance and for a healing ministry for those who misuse alcohol or other drugs and also for those who have close personal relationships with them. We encourage parishes to provide opportunities for education and conversation about the use and misuse of alcohol and other drugs.

Therefore, we call on all clergy and lay people to take to heart the seriousness of alcohol and drug misuse and to offer forth the love of Christ in his healing ministry to those persons and families facing addiction. We also encourage the application of moderation and sensitivity in all matters to ensure the offering of a safe and welcoming house of worship to people in recovery.

The Diocese expects that every Parish adopt a policy concerning the use of alcoholic beverages on church property. Some churches may decide not to serve alcohol at church events or other social functions. Other parishes and vestries may decide to permit a limited use of alcoholic beverages at church-sponsored events. Either option is valid.

Awareness of Misuse among Clergy and Diocesan Employees

The Diocese of Washington believes it is important that any clergy person or diocesan lay employee having problems with the use of alcohol or drugs be treated with pastoral love and concern. We also understand that active substance misuse among those who minister to whole communities can have drastic and far-reaching consequences.

Thus when a clergy person or employee's alcohol or drug use interferes with the performance of his or her duties, the Diocese expects the clergy person or employee to get help and will support them in whatever way possible.

The Bishop reminds parish employees that salaried sick leave may be offered for hospitalization or treatment of substance misuse and that most parish health insurance will offer some coverage for the same.

Likewise, the Diocese recognizes that recovery is an ongoing process and seeks to be supportive of an employee or clergy person's need for continued clinical and spiritual support.

Misuse in the Episcopate

If there is reason to believe that the Bishop of the Diocese is in need of treatment, the President of the Standing Committee is to be contacted immediately. The President may consult with the Pastoral Office of the House of Bishops for guidance. In general, other provisions of this policy will apply.