



## **Alcohol & Drug Policy Guide**

*Recovery Ministries of the Episcopal Church*

*Recovery Ministries of the Episcopal Church has drafted this resource to encourage and assist dioceses and parishes with developing appropriate safe church policies regarding the use of alcohol at church functions and address the serious problem of chemical addiction in our society. It is our hope that this resource will help church members understand and respond to this problem and provide a safe and welcoming environment for recovery.*

## **Recovery Ministries of the Episcopal Church**

**Recovery Ministries** is an independent, nationwide network of Episcopal laity and clergy, dioceses and parishes, schools, agencies, and other institutions—all with a common commitment to address the use and misuse of alcohol and other drugs in relation to the church's mission.

**Recovery Ministries** network serves as a voice of conscience to Episcopalians throughout the United States, building awareness of pastoral and spiritual dimensions of alcohol and drug usage. The original concept for Recovery Ministries' mission dates from the landmark 1979 General Convention resolution on alcohol.

**Recovery Ministries** of the Episcopal Church is a national membership organization with a mission to those who, through addiction, have lost their health and freedom. Our ministry seeks to:

Help the addicted and those who love them connect with spiritual resources and find lasting recovery,

- Witness to Christ's unfailing mercy by welcoming unchurched members of Alcoholics Anonymous, all 12-Step and other recovery programs into an Episcopal faith community,
- Raise the awareness of bishops, and other clergy and leaders, about the disease of addiction and the redemption and grace found in recovery,
- Strengthen recovering Episcopalians in the work of their recovery and help proclaim the Gospel in the world and carry their recovery into the Church.

*\*We acknowledge the work of the Dioceses of Delaware and Pennsylvania in contributing to this policy*

## Alcohol and Drug Abuse Policy Guide

*The foundation and framework of this policy is “An Episcopal National Policy on Alcohol and Drug Abuse” adopted by the 68<sup>th</sup> General Convention of the Episcopal Church in 1985.<sup>1</sup>*

*The Recovery Ministry Committee also acknowledges and thanks the Dioceses of Pennsylvania, Delaware for their policy work.*

### Preamble

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 Easter 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. Therefore, we adopt and commend the following principles, guidelines and policies to aid our efforts to understand, respond to and recover from chemical addiction.

### General Principles

- **Addiction is a Disease** - The Diocese of \_\_\_\_\_ acknowledges that alcohol and drug abuse is a disease that affects the brain, and it is a major health concern in our society.
- **Addiction Destroys Relationships** - We understand that such alcohol and drug abuse impairs the body, mind and spirit of the abuser, thus disrupting supportive relationships with family, friends, and colleagues. It is 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 abuse 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 abuse of alcohol and other drugs.
- **Therefore**, we call on all clergy and lay people to take to heart the seriousness of alcohol and drug abuse 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

<sup>1</sup> General Convention, Journal of the General Convention of ... The Episcopal Church, Anaheim, 1985 (New York: General Convention, 1986), p. 135.

## **The Need for a Policy in Every Diocese and Parish**

Recovery Ministries of the Episcopal Church recommends that every Diocese and Parish Vestry adopt a policy concerning the use of alcoholic beverages on church property. Some churches decide not to serve alcohol at church events or other social functions. For those dioceses and vestries who have decided to permit a limited use of alcoholic beverages at church-sponsored occasions or other events, the following is a sample policy.

## Sample Alcohol/Drug Policy

### Concerning Alcoholic Beverages in the Local Parish

The Episcopal Church has never endorsed prohibiting the use of beverages containing alcohol among adult members. Scripture offers Jesus' example of the use and serving of wine in his first miracle at Cana and in the institution of the Holy Eucharist. This Church also supports and has a responsibility to those people who abstain from the use of alcoholic beverages for whatever reason. Many churches do not serve alcoholic beverages at social functions, but for those which do, the following guidelines are suggested:

- All applicable federal, state and local laws should be obeyed, including those governing the serving of alcoholic beverages to persons not of legal age to consume alcohol. Service of alcohol must be monitored and those showing signs of intoxication must not be served. Whenever alcohol is served, the rector, vicar, or priest-in-charge must appoint an adult to oversee its serving. That adult must not drink alcoholic beverages during the time of his or her execution of his or her responsibilities. Anyone involved in serving alcohol should complete TIPS(Training for Intervention Procedures) or other skills based training designed to prevent intoxication, drunk driving and underage drinking by enhancing the fundamental "people skills" of servers, sellers and consumers of alcohol. While liquor is not recommended, if it is served a certified server is required.
- Alcoholic and non-alcoholic beverages must be clearly labeled as such. Whenever alcohol is served, non-alcoholic alternatives must always be offered with equal attractiveness and accessibility. Suitable drinks include ice tea/coffee, lemonade, and flavored waters.
- The serving of alcoholic beverages at church events should not be publicized as an attraction of the event, (e.g., "cocktail party", "theology on tap", "beer and wine").
- Food must be served when alcohol is present and the serving of alcoholic beverages should conclude well before guests are scheduled to leave.
- The group or organization sponsoring the activity or event at which alcoholic beverages are served must have permission from the vestry. Such groups or organizations must also assume responsibility for those persons who might become intoxicated and must provide alternative transportation for anyone whose capacity to drive may be impaired.
- Recognizing the effect of alcohol as a mood-altering drug, it would be advisable to consider the nature of the function at which alcoholic beverages are to be served. Alcohol should not be served before or during a business meeting of the parish. *A caution: If participants at a church event are paying separately for alcoholic drinks or if the event is publicized to the general public, or if alcohol is not accompanied by a meal, special liability insurance coverage beyond the usual policies of the church will most likely be required. Consult with your insurance carrier well in advance of announcing such an event.*
- The use of other illegal mood altering substances is forbidden at any function.

*\* These policies are designed to be easily adapted and adopted by dioceses, parish vestries and other church organizations.*