



Recovery Resolutions of The General Convention of the Episcopal Church 2015

A158 Task Force to Review and Revise Policy on substance abuse, addiction and recovery

Topic: Structure

Committee: 22 - Alcohol & Other Drug Abuse

Proposer: 22 - Alcohol & Other Drug Abuse

Finalized text

Resolved, the House of Bishops concurring, that the 78th General Convention acknowledge The Episcopal Church's long-standing tolerance for the use of alcohol which, in some cases, has contributed to its misuse, and has undermined a climate of wholeness and holiness for all; that our Church culture too often avoids hard conversations about alcohol use, and the role of forgiveness and compassion in healing and recovery; and that The Episcopal Church now commits to create a new normal in our relationship with alcohol. We aspire to be a place in which conversations about alcohol, substance misuse, or addiction are not simply about treatment but about renewal, justice, wholeness, and healing. We affirm that Recovery Ministries of The Episcopal Church has long been and continues to be a valuable resource for this work; and be it further

Resolved, that the 78th Convention adopt the following policy on alcohol and other substance misuse and encourage dioceses, congregations, seminaries, schools, young adult ministries, and affiliated institutions to update their policies on the use of alcohol and other substances with the potential for misuse. These policies should consider the following:

1. The Church must provide a safe and welcoming environment for all people, including people in recovery.
2. All applicable federal, state and local laws should be obeyed, including those governing the serving of alcoholic beverages to minors.
3. Some dioceses and congregations may decide not to serve alcohol at events or gatherings. Others may decide to permit a limited use of alcoholic beverages at church-sponsored events. Both can be appropriate if approached mindfully.

4. When alcohol is served, it 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. If hard liquor is served, a certified server is required.
5. Serving alcoholic beverages at congregational events where minors are present is strongly discouraged. If minors are present, alcohol must be served at a separate station that is monitored at all times to prevent underage drinking.
6. Alcoholic and non-alcoholic beverages must 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.
7. Whenever alcohol is served, appealing non-alcoholic alternatives must always be offered with equal prominence and accessibility.
8. The serving of alcoholic beverages at church events should not be publicized as an attraction of the event, e.g. "wine and cheese reception," "cocktail party," and "beer and wine tasting."
9. Ministries inside or outside of congregations will make certain that alcohol consumption is not the focus of the ministry and that drinking alcohol is not an exclusively normative activity.
10. Food must be served when alcohol is present.
11. The groups or organizations sponsoring the activity or event at which alcoholic beverages are served must have permission from the clergy or 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. Consulting with liability insurance carriers is advised.
12. Recognizing the effects of alcohol as a mood-altering drug, alcoholic beverages shall not be served when the business of the Church is being conducted.
13. 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.
14. We encourage clergy to acknowledge the efficacy of receiving the sacrament in one kind and consider providing non-alcoholic wine.

And be it further

Resolved, that, mindful of the emerging legalization of other addictive substances and the increasing rise of addiction, the Executive Council of The Episcopal Church provide for the ready availability, implementation, and continuing development of this policy church-wide, in consultation and coordination with Recovery Ministries of The Episcopal Church.

A159 The Role of the Church in the Culture of Alcohol and Other Drug Abuse

Topic: Substance Abuse

Committee: 22 - Alcohol & Other Drug Abuse

Proposer: 22 - Alcohol & Other Drug Abuse

Finalized text

Resolved, the House of Bishops concurring, that the 78th General Convention recognize that the field of substance use disorders and addiction has advanced substantially since 1985 when the 68th General Convention passed the current policy, acknowledging that alcohol use, addiction and recovery all involve biological, psychological, social and spiritual dimensions; and be it further

Resolved, that, as Holy Baptism is the entrance to the life of wholeness and holiness and addiction disrupts relationships with God, others, and ourselves, impairing body, mind, and spirit, the Church, respecting the dignity of every human being, has a moral and ethical responsibility to:

1. Confront and repent of the Episcopal Church's complicity in a culture of alcohol, denial, and enabling,
2. Speak to cultural norms that promote addiction,
3. Promote spiritual practices as a means of prevention and healing,
4. Advocate for public funding and health insurance coverage for prevention, intervention, treatment and recovery, and collaborate with qualified community resources offering these services, and to respond with pastoral care and accountability.

And be it further

Resolved, that The Episcopal Church affirms the need for exercising a healing ministry to all whose lives are affected by addiction and encourages all members of The Episcopal Church to pursue healing in their personal, professional, relational and vocational lives, and to seek help at the first sign of the disease of addiction; and be it further

Resolved, that The Episcopal Church acknowledge that the epidemic of addiction has a severely adverse social, economic, environmental, and spiritual impact on all communities, and presents particular challenges to communities of marginalized people at home and abroad; and be it further

Resolved, The Episcopal Church directs dioceses to work in partnership with The Episcopal Church Medical Trust, Recovery Ministries of The Episcopal Church, and community-based organizations in order to address most effectively prevention, intervention/diversion, education, advocacy, treatment, and recovery, including developing a list of trained therapists and consultants who are available to assist clergy and laity in this education process.

D014 Question Ordinands About Addiction

Topic: Substance Abuse

Committee: 22 - Alcohol & Other Drug Abuse

Proposer: The Very Rev. Dr. Benjamin Shambaugh

Finalized text

Resolved, the House of Bishops concurring, That Sponsoring Clergy, Vestries, Commissions on Ministry, Standing Committees, and Bishops interviewing and evaluating Nominees, Postulants, and Candidates for Ordination explore directly issues regarding substance use in their lives and family systems; and be it further

Resolved, That Nominees, Postulants, and Candidates who may have addiction issues be offered appropriate resources and referred to qualified mental health, healthcare, and/or addiction professionals for further evaluation prior to proceeding in the ordination process.

Explanation

Events this past spring involving addicted clergy have indicated that search and evaluation committees for ordination may consider addiction a moral failing rather than a disease. While those committees are not qualified to make a diagnosis of addiction, in the future, questions about addiction asked may help discern the need for further evaluation of the aspirant. Such questions may simply say: have you or members of your immediate families had issues of addiction? Or: If you are in recovery from addiction, what therapeutic tools, such as counseling or AA do you use? The effect of addiction on seminary life as well as congregational life ill prepare an aspirant for fulfilling and fruitful ministry. We, as a church, need to become better equipped to face the issues of addiction in those seeking ordination.



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