

A Policy for the Use of Alcoholic Beverages for the Episcopal Diocese of Massachusetts

Endorsed by Diocesan Council on February 15, 2024

The Episcopal Church and Use of Alcohol

The Episcopal Diocese of Massachusetts acknowledges the long-standing tolerance for the use of alcohol in church settings which, in some cases, has contributed to its misuse, and has undermined a climate of wholeness and holiness for all. Our church culture too often avoids hard conversations about alcohol use, and the role of forgiveness and compassion in healing and recovery. We aspire to be a place in which conversation about alcohol, substance misuse, or addiction are not simply about treatment but about renewal, justice, wholeness, and healing.

The Episcopal Diocese of Massachusetts seeks to create a welcoming and safe environment for all of God's people, including those in recovery. To that end, we commit to purposefully regulate alcohol use at diocesan events or refrain from serving non-sacramental alcohol.

We strongly urge our churches and organizations affiliated with our diocese to adopt a policy for the use of alcoholic beverages that promotes these same goals.

Guidelines for Celebrations of the Eucharist

At diocesan celebrations of the Holy Eucharist, 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.

The people are to be reminded of the efficacy of receiving the Sacrament in one kind only.

Should consecrated wine remain after the communion of the people, apart from a small amount which may be consumed at the ablutions, it is to be reserved or returned to the earth.

Guidelines for Diocesan Events

The consumption of non-sacramental alcohol at any diocesan event, whether held on diocesan property or elsewhere, is permitted only when all the following conditions are met:

1. The bishop diocesan, bishop suffragan, assistant bishop, or canon to the ordinary must approve the serving of alcohol prior to the diocesan event.
2. Event organizers shall ensure that responsible adults oversee the serving of alcoholic beverages to assure full compliance with this policy, including the moderate consumption of alcohol. The responsible adults overseeing the serving of alcohol must not drink alcoholic beverages during the time they carry out their responsibilities. Following the

event, all alcohol shall be removed from the premises by a responsible adult. If a bartender is employed for the event, the event organizer shall ensure that they have been certified by a nationally recognized alcoholic beverage server-training program.

3. The diocese shall comply with all Massachusetts and local laws regarding alcohol, including those related to the sharing of alcoholic beverages and the prohibition of serving alcohol to any person under 21 years of age, or allowing minors to drink, even if a parent is present. Necessary and reasonable precautions shall be taken to supervise alcohol use to ensure that no individual is over-served and that no individual under the legal drinking age is served. This includes assuming responsibility for persons who arrive impaired or become visibly intoxicated and providing alternative transportation for anyone whose capacity to drive is visibly impaired.
4. If required, a special license must be obtained from the Town/City in which the event is to be held and, if applicable, a list of designated drivers as required by the jurisdiction granting the license. The diocesan organizer of the event shall ensure compliance with all terms of the license.
5. No business or open discussion of the church's governance or financial affairs may be conducted during or after the serving or sharing of alcohol. This includes all diocesan governance bodies, commissions, and committees. Diocesan staff shall not participate in congregational governance meetings which take place during or after the serving of alcohol, including vestry meetings, search committees, all church committees, and all church school and youth group leadership groups.
6. Volunteers who do work on diocesan property or at diocesan-sponsored events must not be alcohol impaired or use alcohol while working on behalf of the diocese (this includes but is not limited to lawn mowing, using heavy machinery or equipment, painting, or clean-up crews).
7. When beverages containing alcohol are served, they should be limited to beer, wine and hard seltzer. Hard liquor is not to be served at diocesan events. Whenever alcohol is served, appealing non-alcoholic alternatives must always be offered with equal prominence and accessibility.
8. If alcohol is served at a social time prior to a meal, the social time should be limited to a maximum of 45 minutes. Alcohol service that is part of a social time prior to a meal is to be discontinued when the meal begins. Additional alcoholic beverages are not to be served at the table unless they are offered and poured by a server.
9. Food always must be served when alcohol is present, including at a social time prior to a meal.

10. Any food served at diocesan events, cooked or cold, that contains alcohol, must be clearly labeled as such. This includes all food brought to potluck occasions.
11. The sharing of alcohol is not advertised or promoted in any way and shall not be the primary purpose of any event. Alcohol may never be used as an enticement for any event or function (e.g. wine tasting, wine and cheese, BYOB dinner, etc.).
12. No alcohol may be served or consumed at any event sponsored by or put on for the children and youth of the diocese (e.g. a dinner put on by the youth group). The service of alcohol at events where children or youth are present is strongly discouraged. If alcohol is served at an event where children or youth are present, it shall be served at a separate station monitored at all times by a responsible adult.
13. No alcohol may be consumed by any adults accompanying children or youth on diocesan-sponsored outings (e.g. youth mission trip).
14. For organizations not directly sponsored by the diocese or private groups holding events on property owned by the diocese: No alcohol may be served or sold by external organizations or private groups holding events on diocesan property unless permission in writing has been received from the bishop diocesan, bishop suffragan, assistant bishop or canon to the ordinary. The event organizer shall ensure compliance with all Massachusetts and local laws regarding alcohol. If required, the event organizer shall ensure that a special license has been obtained from the Town/City in which the event is to be held and, if applicable, a list of designated drivers as required by the jurisdiction granting the license. The sponsor of the event shall be required to obtain an event rider from an insurance company that lists the diocese as a named insured, and which contains an appropriate level of liability coverage. Consultation with The Church Insurance Company is strongly recommended.
15. Diocese-sponsored events held at other venues, i.e. at locations not owned by the diocese, are to abide by these same policies in spaces occupied exclusively by attendees of the diocesan event (e.g., in meeting rooms of a hotel or private rooms of a restaurant where the diocesan event is to occur).

Accountability and Reporting

Policy alone cannot accomplish the greater cultural shift required in our church to address issues of addiction and substance abuse. We firmly believe that the health and well-being of our church highlights the critical importance of mutual and systemic accountability.

In Christian community we are all accountable to one another for our actions. The Episcopal Diocese of Massachusetts invites anyone who has witnessed a violation of this alcohol policy, or

who has experienced an incident caused by misuse of alcohol, to make a report so a response can be offered. Our goal is to ensure the safety of all members and guests of our diocese and to promote renewal, justice, wholeness, and healing.

Alcohol misuse at a diocesan event may be reported to the event organizer, or to a designated responsible adult, if an immediate response is warranted.

Alcohol misuse involving an Episcopal Church clergy member may be reported confidentially to a Diocese of Massachusetts intake officer (as part of the church's Title IV clergy disciplinary process):

Ms. Starr Anderson: 978-352-2147 • starrkanderson@gmail.com

The Rev. Thea Keith-Lucas: 617-458-1253 • revthea@gmail.com

The Rev. Ema Rosero-Nordalm (Se habla español): 617-921-3490 • erosero@bu.edu

Alcohol misuse by a bishop of the church will be referred to the intake officer for bishops:

The Rev. Barbara Kempf: <https://www.episcopalchurch.org/staff/barbara-kempf/>

Alcohol misuse at a diocesan event involving a lay person may be reported confidentially by notifying the bishop's office through the canon to the ordinary by email at bparnell@diomass.org or by phone at 617-482-4826, ext. 205. If you wish to be contacted in response to your report, please include contact information so that a designated responder can follow up with you.