

GUIDELINES FOR USE OF ALCOHOL AT CHURCH FUNCTIONS

General Convention in July 2015 passed a resolution regarding the use of alcohol at church functions. The following was in the preamble to the resolution: “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. The Board of Trustees of the Diocese of El Camino Real urges all diocesan entities and commissions, committees, etc. to follow the guidelines below, most of which comes directly from GC Resolution 158.

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. Alcoholic beverages cannot be sold without a license; this is in violation of State law. Serving a meal for a charge and including complimentary wine, for example, could be construed as “selling” alcohol, so each situation should be carefully reviewed with the applicable law in mind. See the following link that will help you determine if you need a license/permit: <http://staffworkx.com/abc-alcohol-event-permits>
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. No alcoholic beverages will be served or consumed at any activity, event, program, trip, or retreat that is primarily for minors.
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.

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8. The serving of alcoholic beverages at church events should usually 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. Unused alcoholic beverages are to be removed from church premises or safely locked away as soon as possible following an event. Alcohol should always be inaccessible to those under 21 years of age. Servers of alcohol at any function must be over the age of 21.
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.
15. Clergy are encouraged to acknowledge the efficacy of receiving the sacrament in one kind and consider providing non-alcoholic wine or fruit juice.
16. Please refer to the Diocesan Personnel Policy and Procedures manual – section 506A.2.C. - on prohibited behavior for clergy and lay employees for additional responsible use of alcohol.