Alcohol and Substance Use Policy for the Episcopal Diocese of California
Adapted from General Convention Resolution 2015-A158

The 78th General Convention acknowledged 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. 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 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.

The Bishop — as head of the Diocese of California — has adopted the following policy on alcohol and other substance misuse following the directions of the 78th General Convention of The Episcopal Church. Congregations are encouraged to update their policies on the use of alcohol and other substances with the potential for misuse. These policies should consider and include the following:

- The Church must provide a safe and welcoming environment for all people, including people in recovery.
- 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.
- All applicable federal, state and local laws should be obeyed, including those governing the serving of alcoholic beverages to minors. In California this also includes evaluating whether a temporary liquor license is necessary to serve alcoholic beverages. Information and applications can be found at http://www.abc.ca.gov/Forms/PDFSpc.html.
- 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, in which case, an equally attractive non-alcoholic alternative must be offered. Both can be appropriate if approached mindfully.
- 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 California Responsible Beverage Service (RBS) certified server is expected, and encouraged for beer and wine service.
- Alcohol should not be available or served at congregational events specifically for minors. The reason for having alcohol at events for all people — including families and a broad age range — should be seriously considered, and a healthy relationship with alcohol should be modeled. If minors are present, alcohol must be served at a separate station that is monitored at all times to prevent underage drinking.
- Alcoholic and non-alcoholic beverages must be clearly labeled as such. Food prepared with alcohol should also be labeled.
- Whenever alcohol is served, appealing non-alcoholic alternatives must always be offered with equal prominence and accessibility.

- The serving of alcoholic beverages at church events should be publicized as an attraction of the event on a very limited basis. “Wine and cheese reception,” “cocktail party” are discouraged. Diocesan publications will not advertise alcohol as an event’s attraction — with limited exception.
- Given the Diocese of California’s relative location to Northern California wineries, breweries, and distilleries, congregations may at times feel drawn to hold alcoholic-beverage tastings. Care should be given for those in recovery and the potential presence of minors before deciding to host such an event. Alternative events not revolving around alcohol must be considered.
- 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.
- Food must be served when alcohol is present.
- The groups or organizations sponsoring the activity or event at which alcoholic beverages are served must have permission — in writing — 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.
- Any alcohol stored on church property should be in a locked cabinet, room, or closet. Key access should be limited and restricted to members of the clergy and church wardens. As with all congregational keys, this key holder must be current with safe church certification.
- 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.
- We encourage clergy to acknowledge the efficacy of receiving the sacrament in one kind — and to teach on the historic doctrine of concomitance — and consider providing non-alcoholic wine.

Amendment – Marijuana:

The Diocese of California cannot condone nor allow behavior that is in willful violation of federal, state, or local law (statutory, common, or otherwise), constitution, treaty, convention, ordinance, code, rule, regulation, order, injunction, judgement, decree, ruling, or other similar requirement of any governmental authority or any court, administrative agency, or other regulatory authority.

As such, the use of marijuana, either medically or recreationally, and the recreational and intentional misuse of prescription drugs is prohibited at diocesan or parish events, whether held on or off of diocesan or parish property.