

Alcoholic Beverages in the Local Congregation

The following is from the statement approved by the 1985 General Convention and the current policy in effect for the Diocese of Olympia.

The Episcopal Church has never endorsed the prohibition of using beverages containing alcohol among adult members. Scripture offers Jesus' example of the use of wine in his first miracle at Cana and in the institution of the Holy Eucharist. When an adult member elects to use alcohol, moderate usage is expected. Church members are expected to be educated regarding those conditions that might compromise the health and safety of oneself or others. The church also supports those people who abstain from the use of alcoholic beverages for whatever reason. Many congregations do not serve alcoholic beverages at social functions, but, for those that do, the following guidelines are given:

- All applicable federal, state and local laws must be observed, including age identification requirements and those governing the purchase and sale of alcoholic beverages.
- Beverages and food containing alcohol must be clearly labeled as such.
- When alcoholic beverages are served in any form, nonalcoholic beverages must always be accessible and served in an equally attractive manner, and food should always be served.
- The serving of alcoholic beverages at church events should not be publicized as an attraction of the event. Clearly state in advance, and adhere to, the hours during which alcoholic beverages will be served; serving should stop a reasonable amount of time before the end of the event. The serving of alcohol should not precede any congregation's business meeting.
- Any group or organization sponsoring an activity or event at which alcoholic beverages will be served must have permission from the parish or mission congregation of such a plan. They must assume responsibility for following these guidelines and for the actions of those persons who might become intoxicated, and must provide alternative transportation for anyone whose capacity to drive is impaired.
- When a congregation's facilities are made available to private parties, following these policies must be required.
- Recognizing the effect of alcohol as a mood-altering drug, it is advisable to consider the nature of the function at which alcoholic beverages are proposed to be served.
- The usage of chemicals or substances other than alcohol is clearly controlled under federal, state and local laws.

(Note: To serve alcohol at a charity event or to raffle alcohol you must obtain a permit from a State Liquor Store)