



## *The Use of Alcohol at Church Functions*

The Episcopal Church has never taken a stance endorsing the prohibition of the use of beverages containing alcohol. To the contrary, the Church has recognized that Scripture sanctions alcoholic beverages as a gift from God, and that the Lord himself dignified the use and serving of alcoholic beverages in his first miracle at Cana and in the institution of the Holy Eucharist. Responsible use of the “wine that makes glad the heart” is, in fact, one of the elements of the freedom of those who are in Christ.

However, the Church also recognizes that where there is potential for good, there is often a potential for evil; nowhere is this more evident than in the use of alcoholic beverages. Alcoholism is an illness which has reached epidemic proportions; for that reason, it is imperative that the members of the Church use the same prudence regarding alcohol use that they would use in handling any other dangerous drug. Although the social use of alcohol may be permitted for those who use it responsibly, the Church has a responsibility to those whom, for one reason or another, choose to abstain from alcoholic beverages.

Therefore, the following guidelines are given for the serving and use of alcoholic beverages at Church functions or on Church property within the Diocese of Michigan:

1. Any beverage containing alcohol must always be clearly labeled as such; this also applies to any food (i.e., fruit compotes or desserts) where the alcohol has not been volatilized (cooked away.)
2. When alcohol is served in any form, non-alcoholic alternatives must be offered. Non-alcoholic beverages must be served with the same attractiveness and accessibility as those containing alcohol, so that people who choose to abstain need not feel any embarrassment, discomfort or inconvenience in exercising their preference.
3. Alcoholic beverages or foods containing alcohol must never be promoted in such a way as to imply that partaking of them is any sort of social requirement.
4. Sale of alcoholic beverages without a license is in violation of the law of the State of Michigan.
5. All applicable federal, state, and local laws and ordinances must be observed, including those governing the serving of alcoholic beverages to minors.
6. Any occasion at which alcoholic beverages are to be offered should not be openly advertised as such: for example “Beer and Shrimp Supper.” The group sponsoring the event should be either a parish organization or a group of members of the parish.
7. Although these guidelines recognize the positive social value of alcoholic beverages (Christians must take care never to encourage drunkenness); care must be taken to insure that responsible persons are in control of serving the alcoholic beverages. The sponsors of an activity or event bear primary responsibility for the manner in which alcohol is used at that activity or event. Such responsibility includes provision for safe transportation for anyone whose driving ability is impaired.
8. It is the duty of the priest in charge of the congregation, or in his or her absence, the Senior Warden and the Vestry or Bishop’s Committee, to assume responsibility for the dissemination and observance of these guidelines.
9. Individual parishes may choose to adopt alcohol policies that are more restrictive than those set forth in these guidelines.