
WHAT THE CHURCH
HAS DONE,
FAILED TO DO,

— A N D —

MUST DO

— A B O U T —

ALCOHOLISM

A N D

ADDICTION

by

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What the Church Has Done, Failed to Do, and Must Do About Alcoholism and Addiction, by Sister Debra Susannah Mary Rhodes, CMMR

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WHAT THE CHURCH
HAS DONE,
FAILED TO DO, AND
MUST DO
ABOUT
ALCOHOLISM AND ADDICTION

Scripture gives us a perfect picture of addiction:

So they ate and were well filled, *
for he gave them what they craved.

But they did not stop their craving, *
though the food was still in their mouths.¹

And Scripture warns, again and again, against getting drunk. In fact, there is more Scripture objectively condemning the use of alcohol than will be found on the subjects of lying, adultery, swearing, cheating, hypocrisy, pride, or even blasphemy.

This is especially true for priests, deacons, and bishops, who need to be able to distinguish between the holy and the unholy, who need to be able to be filled with the Spirit, and to properly watch over their flocks:

Drink no wine or strong drink, neither you nor your sons, when you enter the tent of meeting, that you may not die; it is a statute forever throughout your generations. You are to distinguish between the holy and the common, and between the unclean and the clean; and you are to teach the people of Israel all the statutes that the Lord has spoken to them through Moses.²

It is not for kings to drink wine, or for rulers to desire strong drink; or else they will drink and forget what has been decreed, and will pervert the rights of all the afflicted.³

¹ Psalm 78:29-30

² Leviticus 19:9-11

³ Proverbs 31:4-5

No priest shall drink wine when he enters the inner court.⁴

And do not get drunk with wine, for that is dissipation, but be filled with the Spirit.⁵

The saying is sure: whoever aspires to the office of bishop desires a noble task. Now a bishop must be above reproach, married only once, temperate, sensible, respectable, hospitable, an apt teacher, not a drunkard, not violent but gentle, not quarrelsome, and not a lover of money. Deacons likewise must be serious, not double-tongued, not indulging in much wine, not greedy for money; they must hold fast to the mystery of the faith with a clear conscience. And let them first be tested; then, if they prove themselves blameless, let them serve as deacons.”⁶

In some translations, “bishop” is translated as “overseer,” which can then include priests and all church leaders.

Keep watch over yourselves and over all the flock, of which the Holy Spirit has made you overseers, to shepherd the church of God that he obtained with the blood of his own Son.⁷

Although some addictions have a physical component, and probably all have an emotional component, including comorbidities like depression or bipolar disorder, addiction is at its heart a spiritual malady. Most addicts refer to it as a “hole in the soul” that they are trying to fill. And while physical intervention may be necessary to prevent the effects of withdrawal for alcohol and certain drugs, a spiritual malady requires a spiritual solution. Addiction is a Power greater than us, which is why Alcoholics Anonymous was wise enough to know that alcoholics needed a power greater than that and greater than themselves to combat it.

⁴ Ezekiel 44:21

⁵ Ephesians 5:18

⁶ 1 Timothy 3.1-3, 8-10.

⁷ Acts 20:28

Alcoholics Anonymous says plainly,

There is a solution... The great fact is this... That we have had deep and effective spiritual experiences which have revolutionized our whole attitude towards life, toward our fellows, and towards God's universe.⁸

Within the Church, the solution is summed up neatly by Saint Paul: we must put on the armor of God.

Finally, be strong in the Lord and in the strength of his power. Put on the whole armor of God, so that you may be able to stand against the wiles of the devil. For our struggle is not against enemies of blood and flesh, but against the rulers, against the authorities, against the cosmic powers of this present darkness, against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly places. Therefore take up the whole armor of God, so that you may be able to withstand on that evil day, and having done everything, to stand firm. Stand therefore, and fasten the belt of truth around your waist, and put on the breastplate of righteousness. As shoes for your feet put on whatever will make you ready to proclaim the gospel of peace. With all of these, take the shield of faith, with which you will be able to quench all the flaming arrows of the evil one. Take the helmet of salvation, and the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God. Pray in the Spirit at all times in every prayer and supplication. To that end keep alert and always persevere in supplication for all the saints.⁹

With a disease like addiction that has at its roots a spiritual angst and debility, who could be more susceptible than the ordained to the lure of the Enemy?

⁸ *Big Book of Alcoholic Anonymous*, 25.

⁹ Ephesians 6:10-18



In an article written in 1975, the author noted that a decade prior, the World Health Organization had found that the United States had the highest incidence of alcoholism of any country. At that time they estimated there were more than six and a half million alcoholics in North America, and that alcoholism was our country's number one drug problem.¹⁰ He cited a study showing that the Episcopal Church has a larger proportion of drinkers than any other Protestant denomination,¹¹ as so there is a greater likelihood of dealing with alcoholism in Episcopal parishes.¹² He was surprised, therefore, to discover in his study that the Episcopal Church was in denial about the problem and was therefore not dealing with it adequately.

Thirteen years later, in November 1988, an article appeared in the *Christian Century*, called "Are the Blind Leading the Blind?" The author of the article, an episcopal priest and director of Alcohol and Substance Abuse Prevention in Tucson, Arizona, wrote that the high number of clergy scarred by substance abuse who are seeking to help parishioners who bear the same wounds is alarming: "In regional training seminars I've conducted for denominational clergy and lay leaders, a show of hands has indicated that 80 percent of clergy present have come from families debilitated by substance abuse, and they were aware that it had drastically harmed them. For many this history was a determining factor in the decision to enter the ministry -- "hope of the Lord's salvation," as it were... A show of hands among the lay leaders has revealed a similar percentage."¹³

¹⁰ David M. Moss, "Parochial Ministry, the Episcopal Church, and Alcoholism." *Journal of religion and Health*, Vol. 14, No. 3, 1975, 192.

¹¹ I would argue that we're Anglican, not Protestant, but for the purposes of this pamphlet, I'm including the quote.

¹² Moss, "Parochial Ministry, the Episcopal Church, and Alcoholism," 192.

¹³ Stephen P. Apthorp, "Drug Abuse and the Church: Are the Blind Leading the Blind?" Religion Online, <https://www.religion-online.org/article/drug-abuse-and-the-church-are-the-blind-leading-the-blind/>.

In July of 2019, the *Journal of Religion and Health* published an article called “Belief, Behavior, and Belonging: How Faith is Indispensable in Preventing and Recovering from Substance Abuse.” The major finding, which the authors then talk about in detail, is that “America is in the midst of an acute alcohol and drug addiction crisis. Life-saving medicines and psychological interventions are important components of rescue and recovery. Along with the body and the mind, the spirit is also a central part of the continuum of addiction health care. Based on our review of extensive evidence-based research on addiction that follows, it is clear that religion and spirituality—which we refer to collectively as faith—are exceptionally powerful, integral, and indispensable resources in substance abuse prevention and recovery. This body of research shows that the efficacy of faith includes not only the behaviors people engage in (or don’t engage in) because of their faith and the support people find in belonging to faith communities, but also people’s religious and spiritual beliefs themselves.”¹⁴

In an article written in 2021, author Jeremy Smith quotes statistics from the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration: Among people aged 12 or older in 2019, 60.1% (or 165.4 million people) used a substance (i.e., tobacco, alcohol... or an illicit drug) in the past month. Of the almost 140 million current alcohol users in 2019, nearly half had binge drunk in the last month. Among those binge drinkers, 16 million people or nearly a quarter of them are daily heavy drinkers.¹⁵ And further, according to this author, many pastors also have struggled with this issue, leading to many issues within the Church including suicide and domestic violence among clergy.¹⁶

In another article written in 2021, published in USA Today, author

¹⁴ Brian J. Grim and Melissa E. Grim, “Belief, Behavior, and Belonging: How Faith is Indispensable in Preventing and Recovering from Substance Abuse.” *Journal of Religion and Health*, 2019; 58(5): 1713–1750.

¹⁵ Jeremy Smith, “Even Leaders Struggle with Addiction,” *Church and Mental Health*, September 10, 2021, <https://churchandmentalhealth.com/even-leaders-struggle-with-addiction/>.

¹⁶ <https://churchandmentalhealth.com/even-leaders-struggle-with-addiction/>.

Chuck Ingoglia, MSW, president and CEO of the National Council for Mental Wellbeing, writes that drug overdose deaths rose nearly 30% in 2020 to 93,000, according to preliminary statistics released in July by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. But an estimated 95,000 people die from alcohol-related causes annually, according to the National Institute on Alcohol Abuse and Alcoholism. Alcohol is the third-leading preventable cause of death in the United States.¹⁷ He states the obvious – talking about alcohol abuse and alcoholism is difficult because drinking is widely accepted and alcohol is easy to obtain. Also, the government loves to talk about the opioid epidemic while ignoring the larger topic of alcoholism.

Still, drug abuse is a serious issue that the Church needs to address along with alcoholism. The statistics are alarming: In 2021, among Americans aged 12 years and older, 11.7 percent, or 31.9 million, are current illegal drug users (used within the last 30 days). 53 million or 19.4% of people 12 and over have used illegal drugs or misused prescription drugs within the last year. 8.1 million or 25.4% of illegal drug users have a drug disorder 2 million people or 24.7% of those with drug disorders have an opioid disorder; this includes both prescription pain relievers and heroin. 9.7 million or 96.6% of opioid misusers use prescription pain relievers.¹⁸ Prescription pain relievers, I would imagine, are the “drugs of choice” for most of the addicted church leaders, if not the laity.

It is beyond doubt that dysfunction begets dysfunction, and that denial is a primary symptom of addiction, which makes it very easy for both church leaders and laity to ignore their problems, and for those around them to ignore them as well. This is very dangerous, especially when it’s a church leader and especially when it’s an ordained church leader, because just one alcoholic or otherwise addicted clergyman can sicken,

¹⁷ Chuck Ingoglia, “A sobering reality: Alcohol kills more Americans each year than drug overdoses do,” USA Today, September 24, 2021, <https://www.usatoday.com/story/opinion/2021/09/24/stop-glamorizing-alcoholism/5819630001/>.

¹⁸ “Drug Abuse Statistics” National Center for Drug Abuse Statistics, <https://drugabusestatistics.org/>.

dishearten, and dispirit an entire parish or diocese, just as one alcoholic can infect an entire household, and even the generations that follow.

A full forty years after that first article, in a post first written for the Episcopal News Service after the 2015 General Convention about the drunk-driving incident involving then-Maryland Bishop Suffragan Heather Cook, who, driving and texting while drunk, killed bicyclist Thomas Palermo in December 2014 (she had a prior drunken-driving charge in 2010, which was before she as ordained a bishop), the Church, it says, realized it needed to take a “a deeper look at the way it handles impairment of various kinds at every level and stage. The church’s culture surrounding alcohol also has faced scrutiny.”¹⁹

Three resolutions were passed at the 2015 General Convention. Resolution A158, titled “Adopt Policy on Alcohol and Other Drug Misuse,” specifically stated that

“Our church culture too often avoids hard conversations about alcohol use, and the role of forgiveness and compassion in healing and recovery”²⁰ This is just one of many, many resolutions passed by General Convention since 1973 regarding Substance Abuse that have not been put into action.²¹

The newly commissioned “Commission on Impairment: Drug Abuse and the Church Leadership” issued its report in March 2017. This report stated, in part: “We are recommending actions that promote a significant cultural shift in the Episcopal Church...These recommendations address the problem of impaired leaders, but they also diagnose and suggest treatment for an impaired system that maintains denial and helplessness

¹⁹ Amy Sowder, “Episcopal Church needs to change approach to substance abuse, report says,” Episcopal News Service, April 21, 2018, <https://www.episcopalnewsservice.org/2018/04/21/episcopal-church-needs-to-change-approach-to-substance-abuse-report-says/>.

²⁰ <https://www.episcopalnewsservice.org/2018/04/21/episcopal-church-needs-to-change-approach-to-substance-abuse-report-says/>.

²¹ See Appendix for (almost) all Resolutions on Substance Abuse from 1973-2018. You can see that similar resolutions were passed repeatedly.

toward addiction, mental illness and physical disease.”²² They noted particularly how “the isolation of leaders and the authority structures within and among dioceses can work together with the denial and codependence that are typical of addiction to prevent identification and treatment of impairment.”²³

And included in their report was a recommendation that was used for Resolution D057 at the 2018 General Convention. The Report offered the following definition of impairment: “The inability to exercise ministry with reasonable skills and safety by virtue of physical or mental illness, inebriation, or excessive use of drugs, narcotics, alcohol, chemicals, or other substances.”²⁴ The Commission stated that “[u]nnamed and unaddressed impairment of leaders causes damage with and beyond the body of Christ. The Commission has discovered that in many instances, church polity has impeded the ability of the Church to intervene, assess and treat impaired people and care for the injured community.”²⁵ In offering the above recommendation, the Commission concluded that “the investment in creating such a program, reflecting current research and best practices with regard to addiction and substance abuse, would yield a significant return in the health and wholeness of the church’s leadership. The program could be modeled in part on the Church Pension Group’s ‘Safeguarding’ curriculum.”²⁶

Resolution A159 encourages dioceses to work more with Recovery Ministries of the Episcopal Church, a church-wide ministry for networking for clergy and lay people, providing resources, education and awareness. The Reverend Ben Nelson, then president of the board of Recovery Ministries, said that despite its failings with this issue, the Episcopal Church had a rich history in recovery, and discussed its

²² <https://www.episcopalnewsservice.org/2018/04/21/episcopal-church-needs-to-change-approach-to-substance-abuse-report-says/>.

²³ <https://www.episcopalnewsservice.org/2018/04/21/episcopal-church-needs-to-change-approach-to-substance-abuse-report-says/>.

²⁴ General Convention of the Episcopal Church 2018 Archives’ Research Report, 2.

²⁵ Research Report, 4.

²⁶ Research Report, 17.

connected to Alcoholics Anonymous: “We’re connected to Bill W. [co-founder of Alcoholics Anonymous]. He got sober when he met with a friend named Ebby, who got sober with the Oxford Group, which was led by an Episcopal priest named Sam Shoemaker... I think the 12-step movement is really a great spiritual movement, and the Episcopal Church has been present since the beginning. When we’re at our best, this is who we can be.”²⁷

Finally, the last important takeaway from this article is a statement from the Right Reverend Todd Ousley, who is bishop of the Office of Pastoral Development: “We’ve worked really hard in the church to create an environment where you can come and ask questions, speak the truth and expect the support you need. We want that throughout all the dioceses and on the congregational level,” Ousley said. “We’re about fostering healthy spiritual community; that means meeting people where they are, challenging them and holding them accountable and getting them the help they need either individually or community-wide.”²⁸

Of course, other addictions need to be attended to as well. For instance, a recent study by the North American Foundation for Gambling Addiction Help found that 2.6% or almost 10 million people have an addiction problem because of gambling.²⁹ And in an article published by Atlantic Magazine at the end of 2021, author Stephen Marche noted that “gambling as a pastime is part of a dismal trend, the inevitable result of market fundamentalism, the belief in the power of capitalism above all, and the collapse of faith in institutions generally. Betting tends to surge during periods of social breakdown.” So we can expect this trend to continue. And gambling addiction, like alcohol, drug, and other forms of addiction, have tremendous social costs. “Gambling also leads,

²⁷ <https://www.episcopalnewsservice.org/2018/04/21/episcopal-church-needs-to-change-approach-to-substance-abuse-report-says/>.

²⁸ <https://www.episcopalnewsservice.org/2018/04/21/episcopal-church-needs-to-change-approach-to-substance-abuse-report-says/>. I would love to see what, if anything, has changed since Bishop Ousley made this statement.

²⁹ <https://nafgah.org/statistics-gambling-addiction-2016/>

indirectly, to increases in violent crime, suicide, divorce, and bankruptcy. Problem gambling is a significant social cost; the pain of the lives that are ruined spreads to whole families.”³⁰

Part of the problem with all of these addictions is that the addicted person usually has helpers, called enablers; they also have victims, like children, spouses and parents, or whole systems like workplaces, parishes, or dioceses. All of these “victims” can also be enablers, which creates even more of a problem. That’s why there are programs like Al-Anon, Al-Ateen, Codependents Anonymous, and other similar programs.



So what can we do?

The Episcopal Church has a website, www.episcopalrecovery.org, which can be of help. Their goal, according to the website, is: “to renew and revitalize the Church’s capability to recognize and address the serious social ills surrounding the pathological use of alcohol, drugs and other addictive behaviors (gambling, overeating, sex, etc.) and suggest an appropriate Christian response.” They have information and literature to help those congregations that are interested.

Also from the website: “The original concept for Recovery Ministries’ mission dates from the landmark 1979 General Convention resolutions on alcohol. The resolutions from the 2015 General Convention, and Resolutions D057, D058, D059 from the 2018 General Convention underscore the need to strengthen our resolve.” They also publish a weekly blog called, “Through the Red Door,” in which Episcopalians in recovery share a little bit of their stories. I highly recommend it.

If we look at the individual resolutions beginning in 1973, we can see that they were not put into action, or not put into action in any useful

³⁰ “Statistics of Gambling Addiction,” NAFGAH, <https://nafgah.org/statistics-gambling-addiction-2016/>.

way. **We need to put them into action.**

One thing the Church did was to add a prayer for victims of addiction to the 1979 *Book of Common Prayer*:

O blessed Lord, you ministered to all who came to you: Look with compassion upon all who through addiction have lost their health and freedom. Restore to them the assurance of your unfailing mercy; remove from them the fears that beset them; strengthen them in the work of their recovery; and to those who care for them, give patient understanding and persevering love. Amen.

(BCP, 831).

That's good but not nearly enough.

1. **We need to start publicly talking about this issue** so that we can de-stigmatize it and normalize these types of conversation. We need to bring alcoholism and addiction to the forefront of the Church's attention, no matter how uncomfortable it makes people. Addiction hurts not only the user *but everyone around that person*. Once individuals become psychologically and/or physically addicted, alcohol and drug abuse can become all-consuming. As people are normally part of social networks, especially in the Church, it is easy to understand how alcohol and drug abuse has a tornado-like effect across a person's entire network of family, friends, employers, employees, colleagues, and anyone else who depends on the person. This is especially true in the Church and the Church has a special responsibility to protect its people.
2. We need to let go of our pride and our fear; imagine a Church where we can be honest about our own weaknesses, shortcomings, and sins, and not fear being exiled (a Church that works like twelve-step programs). Imagine that instead we were

welcomed with love by others who know that “all have sinned and fallen short of the glory of God.”³¹ Imagine that we could share our stories and be affirmed for our honesty and vulnerability. This starts in leadership, first and foremost, with priests, deacons, and bishops, as well as lay leaders. If you want your congregation and community to be honest, you need to be honest yourself.

3. We need to hold ordained leaders accountable and not enable their addiction to protect their or the Church’s reputation.
4. At the same time, we need to remember that addiction is at its heart a spiritual disease and treat people who are suffering from it with love and respect. The Church should be a soft landing place for anyone who has gone astray. Like the father in the parable of the Prodigal Son,³² we should be running with open arms and open hearts toward those who are sincerely trying to recover from their addictions, as much as we would for those who had sinned and now wanted to return to the fold. We need people who can speak the truth with mercy, gentleness and honesty.
5. We need better policies around the use of alcohol – policies that are for the whole Church, so it’s not up to individual dioceses.
6. Dioceses need to be willing to pay for treatment if someone needs it and is truly committed to recovery. In a recent New York Times article, author German Lopez said of the opioid crisis, “Experts have a concise, if crude, way to summarize this: If it’s easier to get high than to get treatment, people who are addicted will get high. The U.S. has effectively made it easy to get

³¹ Romans 3:23.

³² Luke 15:11-32.

high and hard to get help.”³³ Let’s make that the *opposite* in the Episcopal Church!

If the Episcopal Church is truly in the business of redeeming lives, it must recognize addiction as a spiritual, emotional, and sometimes physical disease, and without enabling or ignoring the problem, or shunning the person who needs help, we must minister to every member of the Body of Christ. The Church must provide its members, especially its leaders, with the help... the armor... they need to do battle with this Power greater than themselves.

Furthermore, it must recognize alcoholism and addiction as just as important a concern as Creation Care, Racial Reconciliation, and some of the other “hot button” issues of our times. It needs to be front and center of the Church’s mind and resources, as the 1991 General Convention Resolution D172 resolved that it should be. The title of this resolution was:

Make the Problem of Alcohol and Drug Addiction a Program Priority.³⁴
So far, that has not happened.

The time is now.

³³ German Lopez, “Good morning. Overdoses are increasing at a troubling rate,” The New York Times: The Morning, https://messaging-custom-newsletters.nytimes.com/template/oakv2?campaign_id=9&emc=edit_nn_20220213&instance_id=53054&nl=the-morning&productCode=NN®i_id=115024024&segment_id=82588&te=1&uri=nyt%3A%2F%2Fnewsletter%2Fd0b375f1-834d-5379-8037-4520a01a0f1a&user_id=442972d4e09a52b901e9d1f48fe93596.

³⁴ See full text in Appendix

Appendix

General Convention Resolutions on Substance Abuse since 1973

Resolution Number: 1973-D037

Title: Examines Ministry to Those Suffering from Addiction

Legislative Action Taken: Concurred as Amended

Final Text:

Resolved, That the 64th General Convention, meeting in Louisville, urge each Diocese, through local Departments of Christian Social Relations or otherwise, to examine its own resources and record in motivating and supporting effective and useful ministries to clerical and lay family [sic] and communities suffering from problems related to alcohol and other drug problems of life, so that needed resources and competencies will be developed; and be it further

Resolved, That Diocesan and Church-related resources, including the highly recommended "North Conway Gives Healing", which now possess skill and competence consider taking compassionate responsibility, in co-operation with such organizations as Alcoholics Anonymous and the Recovered Alcoholic Clergy Association, in assisting the whole Church, by sharing experience and resources in the area.

Resolution Number: 1979-B122

Title: Request Dioceses to Establish Committees on Alcoholism

Legislative Action Taken: Concurred

Final Text:

Resolved, That the 66th General Convention of the Episcopal Church request each Diocese of the Church to form a Committee on Alcoholism, working under the guidance of the Bishop and including in

its membership representatives from the Clergy and Laity, and if possible, both recovering alcoholics and non-alcoholics. Each Diocesan committee hopefully would work in conjunction with local and regional health resources, councils on alcoholism and the fellowship of Alcoholics Anonymous to provide materials for education and training on the subject of alcoholism and alcohol abuse and its effect on the quality of life of human beings. Each Diocese is requested through its Committee on Alcoholism, to develop a written policy on alcoholism which will:

- a. Address the issues of education, prevention, intervention and treatment;
- b. Provide a written procedure for treatment of Clergy and Diocesan employees and members of their families who suffer from the illness of alcoholism;
- c. Include in its policy a statement covering the use of alcoholic beverages at Church functions and/or on Church property, with particular emphasis on the provision of non-alcoholic choices;
- d. Provide an employees policy statement which includes assurances of job security and insurance coverage for those completing a prescribed course of alcoholic treatment;
- e. e. Provide help or encouragement for Clergy and Lay persons working with alcoholics and their families; and be it further

Resolved, That the Executive Council of the General Convention also comply with provisions b, c, and d, as they relate to the staff of the Executive Council of the General Convention.

Resolution Number: 1982-D015

Title: Develop a Church-wide Policy of Education and Response to Alcoholism

Legislative Action Taken: Concurred As Amended

Final Text:

Resolved, That this, the 67th General Convention, direct the Standing

Commission on Human Affairs and Health to develop a Churchwide policy of education and response to those suffering from the devastating disease of alcoholism; and be it further

Resolved, That churches and agencies concerned with this problem be urged to forward any applicable material to the Standing Commission on Human Affairs and Health for their use; and be it further

Resolved, That the Standing Commission on Human Affairs and Health report its findings and recommendations to the Church at large (Bishops, Standing Commission, committees of the national Church and diocesan Commissions on Alcoholism) for study, and also report to the next General Convention.

Resolution Number: 1985-A083

Title: Adopt Church Policy on Alcohol and Drug Abuse

Legislative Action Taken: Concurred As Amended

Final Text:

Resolved, That this 68th General Convention adopt the following policy statement:

AN EPISCOPAL NATIONAL POLICY
ON ALCOHOL AND DRUG ABUSE

The Episcopal Church acknowledges the need for exercising a healing ministry and for offering guidance to problem drinkers or chemically dependent persons and to members of their families.

Alcoholism and other drug abuse are recognized as treatable human disorders which are manifested by a three-fold impairment of the body, mind and spirit. The Church concurs with health authorities that alcohol and other substance abuse is a major health concern of our society. It affects not only the alcoholic or abuser's health and self-concept, but also interpersonal relationships with family, co-workers,

friends and counselors. It may affect any individual, regardless of financial situation, education, employment, race or creed.

The Church calls on all clergy and lay people to take to heart the seriousness of the illness of alcohol and drug abuse and its manifestations as a disrupter of family, economic and social life; and urges all churchpeople to do everything in their power to offer forth the love of Christ in his healing ministry to those afflicted persons and families.

Diocesan Committees on Alcoholism and Drug Dependency

The General Convention of 1979 encouraged each diocese to appoint a Diocesan Committee on Alcoholism and Drug Dependency to implement a program on alcohol and drug abuse. Such committees are responsible for developing a diocesan policy and planning a diocesan resource center for education, information, counseling and training. Clergy and lay counselors are encouraged to pursue continuing education in these fields. Congregations are encouraged to provide members with educational opportunities to learn more about the nature, prevention, techniques of treatment and pastoral care of alcoholics and drug abusers and their families. Trained consultants should be made available to interested clergy and congregations to facilitate this education process. Through education and usage of appropriate resources, intervention is made possible to stop the progress of the disorder before it runs its full destructive course.

The Church commends and encourages the many programs offering treatment and support to persons suffering from the illnesses of alcoholism and drug addiction. Clergy and vestries are encouraged to further their assistance to the National Episcopal Coalition on Alcohol (NECA), Alcoholics Anonymous, Al-Anon, AlaTeen Groups, Adult Children of Alcoholics Groups, Narcotics Anonymous and to chemical dependency programs and halfway houses as well as becoming knowledgeable concerning all local resources offering intervention, treatment and continuing care for these persons.

Employees of the Church

Alcoholic or drug dependent employees of the Church should be treated with pastoral love and concern. Church health insurance policies should include provision for the treatment and care of persons afflicted with these illnesses. Treatment intervention for the person and family along with counseling and continuing support during recovery should be coordinated by the clergy and other support groups in the parish. Every effort should be made to offer job protection and re-employment, with salaried sick leave during hospitalization, to alcoholics and drug abusers accepting treatment. Those refusing treatment will not be offered this protection.

Alcoholic Beverages in the Local Parish

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

All applicable federal, state and local laws should be obeyed, including those governing the serving of alcoholic beverages to minors.

Alcoholic beverages and food containing alcohol must be clearly labeled as such.

Whenever alcohol is served, non-alcoholic alternatives must always be offered with equal attractiveness and accessibility.

The service of alcoholic beverages at church events should not be publicized as an attraction of the event.

The group or organization sponsoring the activity or event at which alcoholic beverages are served must have permission from the parish for this plan. 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 thus be impaired.

Recognizing the effect of alcohol as a mood-altering drug, it would be advisable to consider the nature of the function at which alcoholic beverages are proposed to be served.

Chemical usage other than alcohol is clearly controlled under federal, state and local laws and, as such, should be forbidden at any function.

Resolution Number: 1991-D172

Title: Make the Problem of Alcohol and Drug Addiction a Program Priority

Legislative Action Taken: Concurred As Amended

Final Text:

Resolved, That the 70th General Convention of the Episcopal Church establish that addressing addiction to alcohol and other drugs should be one of the program priorities for the Episcopal Church during the next triennium; and be it further

Resolved, That the Episcopal Church proclaim that the abuse of and addiction to alcohol and other drugs adversely affect the people of the Church, and that awareness of these problems provides an opportunity for ministry; and be it further

Resolved, That the Advocacy, Witness and Justice Unit be directed to

work cooperatively with such constituency groups as the National Episcopal Coalition on Alcohol and Drugs, the Recovering Co-Dependent Clergy Association, the Recovered Alcoholic Clergy Association, and other pastoral and social ministry organizations to develop materials and programs to implement their call to mission.

Resolution Number: 2003-A123

Title: Call on Dioceses to Establish Committees on Alcoholism and Drug Dependency

Legislative Action Taken: Concurred as Amended

Final Text:

Resolved, That the 74th General Convention call on all dioceses to establish Diocesan Committees on Alcoholism and Drug Dependency to provide educational programs for clergy, church staff, and congregations that take account of recent advances in treatment of alcohol and drug dependency, and that such committees address problems related to alcohol or drug dependency in clergy, church staff, and, when requested, laypersons; and be it further

Resolved, That dioceses make strong efforts to develop policies concerning treatment and future employment for diocesan clergy and church staff who are dependent on alcohol or drugs; and be it further

Resolved, That dioceses make strong efforts to ensure that health care insurance for diocesan clergy and church staff includes adequate coverage for mental health and addiction, particularly inpatient treatment for dependency on alcohol or drugs.

Resolution Number: 2009-A186

Title: Refer a Resolution on Substance Abuse and Clergy Impairment

Legislative Action Taken: Concurred

Final Text:

Resolved, That the 76th General Convention, having received the report and recommendations of the Title IV Task Force II regarding possible canonical amendments by which to address the needs and circumstances of Members of the Clergy who may be impaired by physical, mental or substance abuse-related causes, hereby refers this issue to the Standing Commission on Ministry Development for further study and recommendations to the 77th General Convention.

Resolution Number: 2009-A078

Title: Urge Congregations to Raise Awareness of Recovery Issues

Legislative Action Taken: Concurred as Amended

Final Text:

Resolved, That every congregation in The Episcopal Church be encouraged to raise awareness of recovery issues in a way suited to the particular congregation.

Resolution Number: 2009-A079

Title: Request Education in Addiction Issues for Ordained Ministry

Legislative Action Taken: Concurred as Amended

Final Text:

Resolved, That every course of study for the ordained ministry of the Church include education in the nature of addiction, in the identification, practices of intervention and treatment of addiction, and in Twelve-Step programs for recovery from addiction; and be it further

Resolved, That the 76th General Convention direct the Standing

Commission on Ministry Development to consider changes to the ordination canons to further promote such study; and be it further

Resolved, That each diocese commit to continue to address the issues of education, prevention, intervention and treatment in support of its congregations, clergy, laity and employees.

Resolution Number: 2015-A158

Title: Adopt Policy on Alcohol and Other Substance Misuse

Legislative Action Taken: Concurred as Substituted and Amended

Final Text:

Resolved, That the 78th General Convention acknowledge 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; that our Church culture too often avoids hard conversations about alcohol use, and the role of forgiveness and compassion in healing and recovery; and that 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. We affirm that Recovery Ministries of The Episcopal Church has long been and continues to be a valuable resource for this work; and be it further

Resolved, That the 78th Convention adopt the following policy on alcohol and other substance misuse and encourage dioceses, congregations, seminaries, schools, young adult ministries, and affiliated institutions to update their policies on the use of alcohol and other substances with the potential for misuse. These policies should consider the following:

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.
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.
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.
8. The serving of alcoholic beverages at church events should 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. 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.
14. We encourage clergy to acknowledge the efficacy of receiving the sacrament in one kind and consider providing non-alcoholic wine.; and be it further

Resolved, That, mindful of the emerging legalization of other addictive substances and the increasing rise of addiction, the Executive Council of The Episcopal Church provide for the ready availability, implementation, and continuing development of this policy church-wide, in consultation and coordination with Recovery Ministries of The Episcopal Church.

Resolution Number: 2015-A159

Title: Promote a Healing Ministry to Those Affected by Addiction

Legislative Action Taken: Concurred as Substituted and Amended

Final Text:

Resolved, That the 78th General Convention recognize that the field of substance use disorders and addiction has advanced substantially since

1985 when the 68th General Convention passed the current policy, acknowledging that alcohol use, addiction and recovery all involve biological, psychological, social and spiritual dimensions; and be it further

Resolved, That, as Holy Baptism is the entrance to the life of wholeness and holiness and addiction disrupts relationships with God, others, and ourselves, impairing body, mind, and spirit, the Church, respecting the dignity of every human being, has a moral and ethical responsibility to:

Confront and repent of the Episcopal Church's complicity in a culture of alcohol, denial, and enabling,

Speak to cultural norms that promote addiction,

Promote spiritual practices as a means of prevention and healing,

Advocate for public funding and health insurance coverage for prevention, intervention, treatment and recovery, and collaborate with qualified community resources offering these services, and to respond with pastoral care and accountability.; and be it further

Resolved, That The Episcopal Church affirms the need for exercising a healing ministry to all whose lives are affected by addiction and encourages all members of The Episcopal Church to pursue healing in their personal, professional, relational and vocational lives, and to seek help at the first sign of the disease of addiction; and be it further

Resolved, That The Episcopal Church acknowledge that the epidemic of addiction has a severely adverse social, economic, environmental, and spiritual impact on all communities, and presents particular challenges to communities of marginalized people at home and abroad; and be it further

Resolved, The Episcopal Church directs dioceses to work in partnership with The Episcopal Church Medical Trust, Recovery Ministries of The Episcopal Church, and community-based organizations in order to

address most effectively prevention, intervention/diversion, education, advocacy, treatment, and recovery, including developing a list of trained therapists and consultants who are available to assist clergy and laity in this education process.

Resolution Number: 2015-D014

Title: Evaluate Individuals in the Ordination Process for Addiction Concerns

Legislative Action Taken: Concurred as Substituted

Final Text:

Resolved, That Sponsoring Clergy, Vestries, Commissions on Ministry, Standing Committees, and Bishops interviewing and evaluating Nominees, Postulants, and Candidates for Ordination explore directly issues regarding substance use in their lives and family systems; and be it further

Resolved, That Nominees, Postulants, and Candidates who may have addiction issues be offered appropriate resources and referred to qualified mental health, healthcare, and/or addiction professionals for further evaluation prior to proceeding in the ordination process.

Resolution Number: 2018-A189

Title: Create a Task Force on Substance Abuse Screening

Legislative Action Taken: Concurred

Final Text:

Resolved, That a Task Force or similar body be formed to develop a standardized process of screening persons applying for ordination with respect to their history of and experience with alcohol and substance abuse; and be it further

Resolved, That the Task Force identify best practices for dioceses to follow in evaluating issues of alcohol and substance abuse, including

training for Standing Committees, Commissions on Ministry and others involved in the ordination process, as well as training for persons in the ordination process; and be it further

Resolved, That the Task Force prepare a report for the 80th General Convention giving recommendations with respect to alcohol and substance abuse for (1) screening processes for dioceses to employ in the ordination process, including how to best evaluate applicants with a history of addictions who are now living in recovery (2) training for Standing Committees, Commissions on Ministry and others involved in the ordination process, including diocesan staff, and (3) training and other appropriate recommendations for persons in the ordination process; and be it further

Resolved, That the Task Force be composed of three Bishops appointed by the Presiding Bishop, at least two of whom have experience in dealing with clergy with a history of alcohol or substance abuse, and six priests, deacons or lay persons appointed by the President of the House of Deputies, at least 3 of whom have relevant experience in the evaluation and treatment of persons with a history of alcohol or substance abuse and at least one of whom serves as a diocesan Transition Officer who has experience in dealing with clergy who have a history of alcohol or substance abuse. At least three members of this Task Force should be persons living in recovery; and be it further

Resolved, That the Task Force also examine a process for identifying other forms of addiction and their potential impact on ministry; and be it further

Resolved, That the General Convention request the Joint Standing Commission on Program, Budget and Finance allocate \$25,000 to the budget to facilitate the work of the Task Force.

Resolution Number: 2018-D057

Title: Develop Mandatory Clergy Training on Alcohol and Addiction

Legislative Action Taken: Concurred as Amended

Final Text:

Resolved, That the 79th General Convention directs the Executive Council to take the necessary steps to develop a mandatory training program with respect to alcohol and substance misuse and other forms of addiction (to be renewed at designated intervals) for all persons in the process of formation for ordination and for all priests and deacons currently licensed, with the goal that all such clergy would:

Be trained in prior resolutions of the General Convention regarding impairment;

Recognize impairment; and

Provide tools for reporting incidents involving impaired clergy and remove barriers that impede individuals from reporting.

And be it further

Resolved, That the Executive Council consider using training materials through publicly available resources at no cost, such as The Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (samhsa.gov).

Resolution Number: 2018-D058

Title: Recommend a Team to Respond to Substance Abuse Issues

Legislative Action Taken: Concurred as Amended

Final Text:

Resolved, That The 79th General Convention recommends that the Presiding Bishop, drawing on the research of the Commission on Leadership and Impairment, establish a team of advisors or consultants to serve as a resource on alcoholism and substance misuse and other

forms of addiction to provide a rapid response to issues of questionable impairment, to provide clergy or other concerned individuals with confidential advice, and to assist with monitoring and recovery.

Resolution Number: 2018-D059

Title: Evaluate Meeting Policies and Practices on Alcohol Misuse

Legislative Action Taken: Concurred as Amended

Final Text:

Resolved, That the 79th General Convention:

directs the Executive Council, working with a knowledgeable and skilled advisor, to evaluate the policies and practices of its meetings and the meetings of its commissions, committees, and boards to make necessary changes that may contribute to a healthy environment with regard to alcohol and substance misuse and other forms of addiction; and

recommends that the Pastoral Development Committee of the House of Bishops, working with a knowledgeable and skilled advisor, evaluate the policies and practices of meetings of the House of Bishops and recommend changes that may contribute to a healthy environment with regard to alcohol and substance misuse and other forms of addiction ; and

recommends that CREDO develop a program component to help participants explore their relationship to alcohol and substance misuse and other forms of addiction

And be it further

Resolved, That the General Convention request the Joint Standing Committee on Program, Budget and Finance to consider a budget allocation of \$50,000 for the implementation of this resolution.

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CMMR Press is a ministry of the Community of Mary, Mother of the Redeemer, which is an emerging Christian Community of the Episcopal Church open to all genders, all sexual orientations, and all states of life. We feel called as a community to participate in the renewal of the Church and part of that renewal includes working for the formation of the whole person, our Community, and the Church. Our publishing ministry is one of the ways we live attempt to live into this call.

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