The Right Reverend Don E. Johnson

Dear Friends,  

February 4, 2016

At last year’s General Convention, a resolution was passed that read in part as follows:

“We... 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 are about renewal, justice, wholeness, and healing. We affirm the Recovery Ministries of The Episcopal Church has long been and continues to be a valuable resource for this work; and...

General Convention also encouraged all dioceses, congregations, ... schools, young adult ministries and affiliated institutions to update their policies on the use of alcohol and other substances with the potential of misuse.” (GC 2015 -A158)

The Bishop and Council has responded by establishing a sub-committee of the Council to review the details of the proposed template policy adopted by General Convention. Bishop and Council has considered a revision to the alcohol use policy of the Diocese based on the recommendations of the sub-committee of the Council and, at its meeting on January 28, adopted the attached policy as the Alcohol Use Policy of The Diocese of West Tennessee. Please note that this policy will be effective as of May 1, 2016 for the Diocese as a whole.

The Bishop and Council chose the May effective date to allow all parishes, missions and other affiliated organizations an ample opportunity to take whatever actions may be necessary in their setting to comply with this new policy in an orderly manner. However, we encourage cooperation with this policy’s implementation no later than its effective date.

Please inform vestries, mission councils, staffs and other individuals or groups who will need to know of this policy change. Thank you.

Sincerely,

The Rt. Rev. Don E. Johnson