

White Paper

SOLO SECRETARY RELIES ON SOFTWARE TO RUN PARISH

Administrators need to be able to manage tasks efficiently so that they have time for parishioners in need.

Effective church software can help a secretary handle all the necessary details of a small parish.

In churches of all sizes, it is not uncommon for one administrator to run an entire parish—answering phones, running end-of-year contribution statements, scheduling ministry volunteers, writing bulletins, coordinating the details of Religious Education Programs (REPs), and managing countless other responsibilities.

Church administrators play a key role in fulfilling the mission of their parishes. They are often the initial point of contact for new members. They interface with parishioners at the most important times in their lives, before marriages, baptisms, and other sacraments; while loved ones are sick or dying; and when they most need pastoral care. Each of those parishioners deserves to be treated with patience and understanding—even when there are dozens of other tasks that need completing, and only one staff member to get them all done.

To keep things running smoothly, these administrators need effective software systems at their fingertips to streamline everyday church business. Once time-consuming tasks are automated and countless hours of recording or communicating information by hand are eliminated, the direct result is more effective ministry for the entire parish family.

One Secretary Does It All

St. Joseph parish, located in the picturesque town of Chester, Connecticut, is run by Liz Tinker, St. Joseph's only office staff. With 650 households, Tinker schedules marriages, registers parishioners, posts Sunday contributions, and records registrations for their 250 student Religious Education program.

Life Before Effective Software

“It used to take me an entire week to put together a three-month liturgical schedule, and send it out,” explains Tinker. “People used to fill out all those little slips of paper...” she adds with an easy laugh, remembering her parish office life before software.

Software should be intuitive and user-friendly so that busy offices can learn it without difficulty.

Parish participation can often be increased with thought out encouragement, and then managed with efficient software.

Two years ago, St. Joseph used a database system from The Catholic Software Company—a company that has since been purchased by ParishSOFT. After the frustrating experience of trying to do her job using technology that was outdated and inadequately supported, Tinker turned to Google and discovered ParishSOFT Church Management Software on the web. She actually visited ParishSOFT a short time later when she happened to be in Ann Arbor, Michigan that summer.

The Change to ParishSOFT

“I was most interested in the Family Directory, but when they demonstrated the other modules for me in person, I was sold [on the suite],” says Tinker. A timely end-of-the-month sale helped to cinch the deal with Fr. Murphy, St. Joseph’s pastor, and Tinker was thrilled. “It was very easy for me to book-learn most of the programs. It speaks for how user-friendly the program is,” says Tinker. Even though the 76-year-old pastor, “did not take any of the training courses, he is still able to navigate the modules he needs with very little coaching from me,” claims Tinker.

The Time & Talent Quandary

In 2005, St. Joseph began a Stewardship Committee to investigate the all-too-common plight of “a few doing a lot” for the parish. The committee came to Tinker not having any idea of who did what at the parish.

As a result the Stewardship Committee decided upon a two-fold approach to increase parish participation. First, they passed out “Time & Talent Gift Cards” for parishioners to sign up for parish needs and ministries. Next, they sponsored a BBQ and Ministry Fair to target the younger families joining the parish. As a result nearly 50 parishioners signed up for ministries—a 30% increase for the parish.

When a parishioner offered to put new ministry volunteer names into a spreadsheet, Tinker said, “Oh no, we’ll just put them into ParishSOFT.” Tinker entered all the new volunteer information into her Time & Talent Module and printed out the results for the Stewardship Committee and the pastor. Creating ministry groups right in the core family and member database made it easy to organize volunteers and their ministry preferences. Lists could then be printed with all the most current volunteer address and contact information coming directly from the database. Emails to volunteer groups could be created to all the right people with just a few clicks. Most importantly, the Committee quickly had all of the contact and ministry information they needed, right at their fingertips.

Catholic-based software can manage those Time & Talent fairs and volunteer information.

Annual Bonanza Fundraiser is a Breeze to Organize

St. Joseph puts on an annual fundraiser each December that draws visitors from not only the local area, but throughout the state. Some 35–40 crafters and vendors are invited to the parish center, and a raffle is given with such enticing gifts as a trip, TV, iPods, or a handmade quilt. Again, Tinker uses the Time & Talent Module to designate which members are *Bonanza* volunteers. She then creates lists quickly, forms committees effortlessly, and notifies volunteers automatically. Last year's profits from the five-hour fundraiser totaled \$20,000.

Her Favorite ParishSOFT Module

Tinker's says the Time & Talent Module is her personal favorite because features like Mail Merge and the Liturgical Scheduler help her tackle her many time-consuming tasks more easily. She notes however, that reports such as end-of-year statements, CCD and DRE lists, and contribution reports for the pastor are also indispensable. Even with all she does with her software, she knows there are ParishSOFT features she has yet to try; and Liz Tinker looks forward to further streamlining her busy days in the office at St. Joseph and creating even more opportunities to serve the people of her parish.

About ParishSOFT

Founded in 1998, ParishSOFT offers a complete suite of church management software and web services that streamline operations, increase stewardship, foster collaboration, and improve communications. ParishSOFT currently serves the technology needs of 4,000 churches and 25 Catholic arch/dioceses across the United States.

For more information or a product demonstration, please visit www.parishsoft.com.

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