

White Paper

CATHOLIC, FAMILY-BASED SOFTWARE IS THE BEST CHOICE FOR PAX CHRISTI

Using non-denominational software to run a Catholic parish has its disadvantages.

Catholic-designed software provides data screens for sacraments, liturgical scheduling, and meets many other Catholic parish needs.

Managing a Catholic parish with non-denominational software can pose difficulties when attempting to address specific parish needs such as recording sacraments or scheduling liturgical ministers. This may especially be true if the software is based on individual member records rather than families. In such a system, individual member records can become disconnected, duplicated, or even lost in the shuffle.

Family-based records keep the essential connection between parents, children, and all other members of a single household. And if the software is Catholic-based, sacramental data and religious education records for each member of a family can be stored right at your fingertips. Now, integrate all of these records through a common database, and parish efficiency and communication with your families and members can increase dramatically.

Switching to Catholic, Family-Based Software

One Catholic parish in Minnesota replaced their Shelby System non-denominational management and accounting software with ParishSOFT Church Management Software in June 2005. Pax Christi Catholic Community in Eden Prairie, Minnesota (southwest of Minneapolis) has nearly 4,000 registered members and is the fifth largest parish in the Archdiocese of St. Paul's 223 parishes.

Financial Development Associate, Barb Didier, is just one member of the twenty-person team of lay people who help the pastor and associate manage the parish.

Didier found that the Catholic-designed and family-based ParishSOFT Church Management Software works better for them than their previous individual-based software. "I like ParishSOFT for its ease of use," says Didier, who prefers the quick and easy menu navigation of ParishSOFT, but still finds the same available options

A good Liturgical Scheduler automates the Time & Talent process, incorporates individual scheduling preferences, and saves hours of staff time.

Catholic parishes need software that records all the sacramental details accurately and completely.

as the non-denominational version. Family information can be added, changed, or deactivated in just a few simple steps. “I like how I can see our family membership base at the touch of a button,” says Didier, yet data is hidden (but stored for deactivated families) and restored at the touch of a button if a family returns.”

Managing Volunteers and Formation

Recording volunteer preferences and setting up schedules is a rigorous task, but good software can make this task easier. The Time & Talent Module by ParishSOFT automates the process with a liturgical scheduler that stores individual scheduling preferences. Labels and lists can be created for families, and duplicate mailings are eliminated if a household has two or more members in the same ministry. Didier likes that this feature shows up throughout the software in other reporting areas as well.

Volunteer activity can be tracked in a way that Didier describes as having “endless capabilities,” for formation management. “We have many Faith Formation options available here at Pax Christi, and the program allows us to track each one separately, while giving us a collective overview of all program participants,” says Didier. “And the Religious Education Module provides all the classroom reports we need, such as class lists, teacher rosters, and mailing labels.”

Recording Sacraments

Recording sacraments is probably the place where non-denominational software falls most short. Didier likes that ParishSOFT’s Catholic-designed software provides accurate and complete sacramental registry information, modeled after Catholic Canon Law, for each family member. Staff can print professional-looking template or custom certificates directly from the database. Special fields allow each sacramental record to be cross-referenced with parish registry, volume, and page number. Best of all, those sacrament records are tied directly to the individual member; so as children grow into adulthood and register their own families in the parish, their sacramental information remains intact.

Using Reports in Access

Analyzing financial and demographic reports is a crucial requirement for many parishes, but not every church management software system out there today has an open architecture or Access database that allows the user to create custom reports in Access. ParishSOFT does, but knowledge of Access is an important prerequisite. Didier likes to create her own, custom reports from her ParishSOFT data,

Seamless integration with Microsoft Office is essential to make Mail Merge, Excel exports, and email as fast and easy as possible.

“It’s so quick and easy to get data into Excel, and it’s nice to be able to customize existing queries and reports [in Access].”

Integrating with Microsoft Word

Didier creates address envelopes and labels exactly the way she wants in ParishSOFT, and she finds it easy to group families or members into particular Workgroups for email or letter communication. And most importantly, Didier has found that ParishSOFT integrates data into Microsoft Office programs better than any other software she’s used in the past.

Getting Timely Support is a Must

Didier noted that the responsiveness and knowledge level of the ParishSOFT support team is exceptional. She found that her emails were quickly answered, proving it to be an efficient way to get answers in a hurry.

Why She Chose ParishSOFT

Didier discovered that she’s not the only one who finds ParishSOFT easy to use. A newly hired employee was able to get “up and running with [ParishSOFT] the same day because it is so intuitive,” stated Didier.

“I like ParishSOFT for its ease of use...[it is]much more logical and understandable [than previous software]. “ParishSOFT is a very easy and comprehensive software package. It has the potential to meet any need, and the data is all there. It can only get better and better!”

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.

ParishSOFT

825 Victors Way
Suite 200
Ann Arbor, MI 48108-2830

Web: www.parishsoft.com
Email: support@parishsoft.com
Phone: 734.205.1000 main
866.930.4774 support
Fax: 734.205.1011

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