



Empowering Churches with Solutions to Simplify
Complex Diocesan and Parish Church Management

ParishSOFT Customer Success Story:

Accounting in Eastern Plains The Archdiocese of Denver

ParishSOFT[®]

Background

The Archdiocese of Denver comprises all of northern Colorado: 40,000+ square miles, 148 parishes, missions and stations. Staffing issues have been noted in many areas of the country, but due to decreased population density, pastors in rural areas find it even more challenging to find and retain qualified staff. A problem compounded by the limited resources of small parishes and missions.

When Robbi Kraus began working at her home parish of Saint Andrew the Apostle in Wray, Colorado, little did she know that her service would blossom to include 6 additional parishes and missions in a territory of the Archdiocese known as Eastern Plains. With unaffected generosity, however, she also assists her parishes and missions with sacrament and census management over and above her accounting responsibilities.

Deanery meetings (meetings of priests within a specific geographic location of the Archdiocese) gave first one pastor, and then several more, the opportunity to share the good news of Kraus' professional competence and kindness.

Eventually pastors in need prevailed upon Kraus to undertake the accounting of not only Saint Andrew, but also Saint Patrick in Holyoke; Christ the King in Haxtun; Saint Peter in Fleming; Saint Mary in Brush; Saint John in Stoneham; Saint Joseph in Akron. However, says Kraus, "It's not overwhelming because of the ParishSOFT system and the way the Archdiocese works with me and makes sure things are done according to best practices."

Accounting for the Church

When Kraus' work began in 1987, instead of a computer, she had an electric typewriter. The typewriter she used to send monthly CDR (Central Data Repository) sheets to the Archdiocese. Kraus observes of that time, "There was no accountability or internal controls, that's just the way it was."

Technology developed rapidly, bringing with it new tools designed specifically for the Church. For many parishes in the Archdiocese, including the seven in Kraus' care, this meant first a transition from pen and ink to a commercial accounting system, such as QuickBooks. Then, in 2008, the Archdiocese of Denver rolled out LOGOS desktop accounting software, a suite of products, built for the needs of the Church, under the ParishSOFT umbrella.

The introduction of an archdiocesan-wide standardized system of accounting opened the door to greater support, collaboration and transparency between Archdiocesan offices and the parishes and missions they serve. Building upon the foundation of a standardized system, the availability of updated technology lead the Archdiocese to again opt for ParishSOFT products, making the choice for web-based ParishSOFT Accounting in 2013.

Cash Method vs. Accrual Method

Included in the transition to ParishSOFT Accounting, was the switch from cash-based accounting to an accrual-based accounting method. According to Non Profit Accounting Basics, "The main difference between the two methods is the ability to budget accurately. Accrual method of accounting allows for better budgeting and planning because it looks at when liabilities are incurred and revenue earned and not when cash is paid."

The Archdiocese and ParishSOFT hosted staff training prior to their transition to the accrual-based ParishSOFT system. Kraus attended the training and observes that regardless of an accountant's academic or professional background, training will always be required to learn a new system. She also appreciates the user guides and how-to videos embedded directly in the software interface, "right there" to walk you through a process or answer questions.

The Impact of Web-based Accounting

The practical ramifications of moving to a web-based system have been significant. "I can do so much more with ParishSOFT!" Kraus says. Citing the online functionality of the software as an important factor – web-access enables her to reach 7 parishes and missions anytime, anywhere. Rather than travel extensively to each location, Kraus has found it helpful to work part-time from her home office.

Similarly, pastors have been known to call and say, "We don't need you here for the finance council meeting, but can you take a look at 'x' expense and tell us what that's about?" Not being limited to a physical location can have a big impact when managing finances for 7 separate entities. Notes Kraus, "Priest are so appreciative of ParishSOFT and the ability to have part-time help."

In addition, Kraus has chosen to maintain 7 separate datasets (one option for managing multiple entities) to help prevent confusion. One login and password enable her to easily switch between organizations once within the application.

Archdiocesan Support

Unlike in former times when there was little accountability to the Archdiocese, and consequently little involvement, Kraus appreciates the increased support and guidance of Archdiocesan staff. She speaks appreciatively of their desire to help parishes; a task aided by their shared accounting platform and the transparency the system offers.

Similarly, regular audits involve several areas of the Archdiocese and help enforce internal controls and best practices. The ability to access reports and real-time financials online also frees the Archdiocese from having to pull staff away from a full schedule to provide reports or run numbers. Instead, questions have become much more straightforward and specific, such as: "Can you provide receipts for 'x' expense?"

Key Features for Eastern Plains

Features of particular benefit to the work of Eastern Plains include the ability to quickly detect mistakes – making it easier to settle bank reconciliations. The ability to double check payroll setup between organizations is also a big plus for setting up new employees. Although Kraus is quick to note that staff do not need to use ParishSOFT checks and forms if they prefer their own, they may want to, as ParishSOFT check setup and functionality is "so cool and extremely easy."

For parishes just getting started, Kraus advises: "Don't be daunted by the amount of accounts available to use, you don't have to activate them all. It's like a department store, just use the ones in your size that fit."

Additional Information

Parish staff like Robbi Kraus are the living stones whose hard work, dedication and little-seen contributions propel the Church forward on mission. Assisting to build the framework is the critical work of dioceses, such as the Archdiocese of Denver, who raises the bar on accounting standards and support for parish staff. ParishSOFT is honored to serve you with the web-based tools for your mission.

Summary

ParishSOFT has helped thousands of parishes and dioceses implement web-based software solutions. For an analysis of your software and service needs, please visit parishsoft.com or call us at 866-930-4774 x6.

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