



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

ParishSOFT Customer Success Story:

Our Lady's Immaculate Heart
The Diocese of Des Moines

ParishSOFT®

Challenges

“Everyone is Welcome!” the website boldly proclaims. And the online doors swing open. Our Lady’s Immaculate Heart’s (OLIH) mission statement references “community” no less than three times: warm reception and engagement rank high in the parish’s priorities.

The hospitable parish is committed to staying current and finding new ways to welcome the newcomer, better support parishioners, and enable ministry. Dedicated efforts include a technology committee to track changes and advise in the areas of technology and social media. A recent study on website design led to a reinvented website more receptive to possible guests, dovetailing with a parish app to strengthen communication with parishioners. But creating and maintaining parishioner connection is a feat for any parish, particularly one with over 2500 families.

How Our Products Helped

OLIH fully transitioned from ParishSOFT Desktop to ParishSOFT Family Suite in 2013. Initially, they almost overlooked the online parishioner portal, My Own Church (MOC), amidst the other applications of their complete, web-based software. The parishioner portal empowers parishioners to stay connected with the parish. By creating a profile, parishioners are able to update census and ministry information, and track their giving and payment history – which includes access to end-of-year giving statements. But with end-of-year looming in 2015 the parish recognized in MOC an opportunity that could not be missed.

Instead of preparing a few thousand year-end giving statements, parish staff decided it was time to modernize the process by asking parishioners to access their giving statements online. As business manager, Becky Robovsky ruefully notes, “[With 2500 families] We are always looking for ways to lighten the load – and MOC is an amazing way to do it!”

Decision made, they needed to get their parishioners on board. MOC was (and still is!) clearly promoted on the parish website, in the bulletin, and in their weekly email newsletter. High visibility and simple explanations, instructions and reminders, went a long way in spurring parishioner sign up. However, Robovsky is quick to point out, “Teaching our people [to use My Own Church] was practically effortless.” A gentle invitation and explanation of the benefits of MOC for parishioners and parish staff has paid off, and hundreds of families quickly registered!

With over 800 families signed up for MOC, end-of-year preparation looks vastly different than in years past. Families are now able to login and print out their own statements. If a parishioner needs a statement printed out, they have to call and request it from the parish. Robovsky estimates that this year they only printed about 50 statements!

But OLIH didn’t stop there. Building upon the initial foundation from year-end, promotion for religious education a few months later was another opportunity to encourage new families to sign up or make sure their family record was up-to-date. The program includes over a thousand children and Robovsky stated that the resulting updates, “Helped out a lot in keeping information current.”

Results and Future Plans

Updating census information and accessing financial records is vital, but it's not the only thing that OLIH uses MOC for. MOC is also an online pictorial directory. Parish users can opt to publish their information (picture and contact information) as part of an online parish directory available to other MOC users. OLIH was of course quick to highlight this handy feature over the holiday season – helpful for connecting over the break, or getting necessary information for Christmas cards and holiday parties!

Says Robovsky, “There is no reason you shouldn't do it, it's a piece of cake... I don't think people get how easy it is!” Addressing potential questions about data integrity with parishioners entering and updating their own information, Robovsky observes that best practices for gathering and recording accurate data are essential, regardless of how the information gets into the system. In addition, the application requires parish staff to approve parishioner registrations and updates – meaning parish staff maintains control over data integrity. Her word of encouragement for other parishes: “Just turn it on and let parishioners decide!”

As sincere as their mission, OLIH is a parish that makes room for adaption and creativity to better serve their community. Their heart of hospitality continues to lead them to discover innovative ways to connect people with the parish and ease administrative burden for parish staff. ParishSOFT is grateful for their witness, encouraged by their example, and humbled to be their mission partner. Thank you Our Lady's Immaculate Heart!

Additional Information

ParishSOFT has helped thousands of parishes and dioceses implement ConnectNow solutions. For an analysis of your software and services needs, please visit parishsoft.com or call us at 866-930-4774 x 6.

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