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ARCHDIOCESE OF DENVER
AND THE PARISHES OF
NORTHERN COLORADO

PARISH FINANCE COUNCIL
WORKSHOP

Winter/Spring 2009

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AGENDA

Overview and Discussion

Section I – Parish Finance Council Guidelines

Section II – Parish Financial Policies and Guidelines

- The Pastoral Handbook – Parish Business Practice (policies and procedures) Manual
- Parish Financial Reporting Requirements
- Code of Conduct, Conflict of Interest, Gift Acceptance Policies and Duties of Professional Care (Whistleblower and Fraud Considerations)

Section III – Internal Control Considerations

- Common Sense Suggestions – Organizational and Individual

Exhibits:

1. Parish Finance Council – Clarification of Roles
2. Sample Parish Finance Council Agenda
3. Required and Suggested Parish Finance Council Tasks – source Pastoral Handbook
4. Fundamental Parish Internal Controls

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OVERVIEW

Objectives of this Workshop

- Help the Pastors in northern Colorado establish and maintain effective Parish Finance Councils which can make a valuable and critically important contribution to the Parish.
- Help Finance Council members understand their important role, both Canonically and pursuant to the protocols of the Archdiocese.
- Activate this important ministry effort that provides for good stewardship of Parish Financial Resources in northern Colorado.

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OVERVIEW (Cont'd)

*Embezzlement Is Found in Many Catholic Dioceses,
N.Y. Times – January 5, 2007*

- Cites Villanova Study completed in December 2006
- “The Catholic Church has some of the most rigorous financial guidelines of any denomination, specialists in church ethics said, but the survey (referring to the Villanova Study) found that the guidelines were often ignored in parishes.”
- 85% of diocese responding (78) had discovered embezzlement of church money in the last five years, with 11% reporting that more than \$500,000 had been “borrowed.”

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OVERVIEW (Cont'd)

*Keeping an Eye on the Collection Plate, The Wall
Street Journal – January 26, 2007*

- “There is also a secondary scandal that continues to afflict the church – this one the scandal of financial malfeasance”
- “Thieves often get caught eventually, since Catholic parishes and dioceses do have accounting systems, however poorly they may function.”

Other related articles in national publications – *Time* magazine (2/15/07) and *USA Today* (2/18/07).

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OVERVIEW (Cont'd)

What about the Archdiocese of Denver and the Parishes in northern Colorado?

- Impact of Parish Internal Audit Program, implemented in the Summer of 2005
- Numerous internal control weaknesses have been noted – key trends and observations
- Involvement of the Parish Finance Council and reaction to weaknesses noted

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OVERVIEW (Cont'd)

Where is the Church today, in terms of Financial Governance?

Canon Law

- Canons 492 – 494 provide for the establishment of Diocesan finance councils, address the preparation of diocesan budgets and the responsibilities of the diocesan finance officer ([Archdiocesan requirement](#))
- Canon 537 provides for the establishment of parish finance councils ([Parish requirement](#))

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OVERVIEW (Cont'd)

Parish Finance Councils

- Canon Law recognizes the extreme importance of a properly functioning parish finance council as it relates to proper parish governance and internal controls
 - Archbishop Chaput and members of his Presbyteral Council (as evidenced by the promulgation of the Pastoral Handbook in October 2007) support the critical role of the Parish Finance Council
- We believe that a properly engaged parish finance council is **THE SINGLE MOST EFFECTIVE INTERNAL FINANCIAL CONTROL** at the parish level, provided it is functioning

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SECTION I:

**PARISH FINANCE COUNCIL
GUIDELINES**

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SECTION I:

Parish Finance Council Guidelines first promulgated by Archbishop Stafford on December 8, 1988.

These guidelines have been revised and amended in connection with the various Promulgations of the Pastoral Handbook since the early 1990s, and most recently on October 4, 2007.

The Pastoral Handbook is considered the particular law of the Archdiocese of Denver.

**EVERY PARISH IN NORTHERN COLORADO IS
REQUIRED TO HAVE A FINANCE COUNCIL.**

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SECTION I: (Cont'd)

COMPETENCE

- The Parish Finance Council is a consultative body that assists the Pastor in meeting these obligations. Consultation is at the heart of the decision-making process – sharing information, listening, contributing to the discussion, and promoting consensus. (See Duty of Care – Pastoral Handbook, Chapter I – 1.2.3.)

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SECTION I: (Cont'd)

COMPETENCE

- The Pastor is not obliged to follow the recommendations of the Finance Council, the Pastor should not act against such advice, especially when there is consensus, unless there is an overriding reason.
- When acting contrary to the Council's recommendations, the Pastor must provide an explanation to the Finance Council regarding the reasons for his decision.

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SECTION I: (Cont'd)

RESPONSIBILITIES OF THE PARISH FINANCE COUNCIL

Required

- I. Advise the Pastor on all acts of extraordinary administration, before he seeks the approval of the diocesan Bishop (e.g. - diocesan norms require the Pastor to consult with the Parish Finance Council and request diocesan approval for all commitments of parish resources of \$25,000 and above.)

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SECTION I: (Cont'd)

RESPONSIBILITIES OF THE PARISH FINANCE COUNCIL

Definition: Particular Law of the Archdiocese

- Within the Archdiocese the Particular Law is contained within the Pastoral Handbook which was promulgated by Archbishop Chaput in November 2007 – PARISHES ARE REQUIRED TO FOLLOW THE HANDBOOK.

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SECTION I: (Cont'd)

RESPONSIBILITIES OF THE PARISH FINANCE COUNCIL

2. Pastors Authority – Ordinary & Extraordinary Administration

- Pastors are granted authority to manage their parish
 - They have authority over Ordinary Administration
 - Ordinary Administration are those routine actions that do not require approval
 - Paying bills, staff, maintaining buildings, collecting funds and donations, managing the parish funds, developing budgets

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SECTION I: (Cont'd)

RESPONSIBILITIES OF THE PARISH FINANCE COUNCIL

2. Pastors Authority – (Cont'd)

- Canon Law and Particular Law define Extraordinary administration
 - Extraordinary Administration requires approval
 - All such items defined within the Pastoral Handbook as Extraordinary
 - » For example, buying land, incurring debt, capital projects in excess of \$25,000, spending exceeding budget by 2% of offertory

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SECTION I: (Cont'd)

RESPONSIBILITIES OF THE PARISH FINANCE COUNCIL

3. Assist and participate in developing the annual parish budget and recommend the final budget for approval to the Pastor.
4. Review the interim (at least quarterly) financial statements of the parish. The Finance Council should address significant revenue and expense variances* from the approved budget.

* Defined as greater than 2% of the estimated annual parish offertory revenues.

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SECTION I: (Cont'd)

RESPONSIBILITIES OF THE PARISH FINANCE COUNCIL

5. Annually (within 60 days of year-end and no later than August 30th) each parish is required to send its Annual Report to the Archbishop that is signed by the Pastor and each finance council member.
6. Certification within the Annual Report that:
 - The previous fiscal period-end report is accurate and complete to the best of members' knowledge
 - The Council reviews and discusses the budget and financial statements
 - The Parish is in compliance with Chapter 10 of the Pastoral Handbook.

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SECTION I: (Cont'd)

RESPONSIBILITIES OF THE PARISH FINANCE COUNCIL

7. Assist the Pastor in keeping the Parish financial obligations (accounts payable and other parish borrowings) current.
 - Review any indebtedness of the parish and assist in developing and monitoring the plan for repayment. The Council must approve any debt request before it is submitted to the Archdiocese for consideration.

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SECTION I: (Cont'd)

RESPONSIBILITIES OF THE PARISH FINANCE COUNCIL

8. Review the parish's internal controls and accounting procedures.
9. Advise the Pastor in the assessment of offertory giving levels and the effectiveness of existing fund-raising programs.
10. Advise the Pastor on hiring and evaluating a business manager, accountant or similar position. Assist the Pastor in monitoring and establishing just, fair and non-discriminatory salaries and benefits.

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SECTION I: (Cont'd)

RESPONSIBILITIES OF THE PARISH FINANCE COUNCIL

Additional Advisory Responsibilities - Suggestions

- I1. Provide assistance in the formulation and communication of the Annual Financial Reports to the parish community
- I2. Provide advice on the use of undesignated bequests or other unbudgeted revenue.
- I3. Assess Parish needs and assist with development of long-range financial plans

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SECTION I: (Cont'd)

RESPONSIBILITIES OF THE PARISH FINANCE COUNCIL

Additional Advisory Responsibilities - Suggestions

- I4. Review fundraising activities, such as raffles, bingo, and concession sales for compliance with diocesan policies, including cash deposit procedures, the obtaining of required licenses, required documentation for tax filings, and the actual tax filings.
- I5. Monitor the management of parish funds and banking arrangements.

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SECTION I: (Cont'd)

RESPONSIBILITIES OF THE PARISH FINANCE COUNCIL

Additional Advisory Responsibilities - Suggestions

- I6. We recommend that one member of the Finance Council assist the Pastor in reviewing the bank reconciliations, bank statements and cancelled checks for all parish bank accounts at least four times per year.
- I7. The Finance Council and/or its chairman should also be aware of restricted gifts and advise the Pastor as to whether or not the parish can accept the restriction and, once accepted, that the funds are spent consistent with the donor restriction(s). {CONFIDENTIALTY}

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SECTION I: (Cont'd)

RESPONSIBILITIES OF THE PARISH FINANCE COUNCIL
Additional Advisory Responsibilities - Suggestions

18. The Finance Council should assist the Pastor in planning for repair, replacement, or service of property and equipment to ensure that the parish buildings and property are adequately maintained.

- Review maintenance and utility costs seeking to minimize costs through preventative maintenance, energy conservation, and the implementation of risk management programs and recommendations.
- Inspect the buildings at least annually.
- Assist with capital project planning, bid solicitation and project supervision.

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SECTION I: (Cont'd)

RESPONSIBILITIES OF THE PARISH FINANCE COUNCIL
Additional Advisory Responsibilities – Suggestions (Cont'd)

19. Review the activities and financial reports of all parish auxiliary groups. Insure compliance with diocesan policies and reviewing the activities of the auxiliary groups to ensure that they are not jeopardizing the tax-exempt status of the parish.

- Ensure compliance with diocesan policies
- Review the activities of the auxiliary groups to ensure that they are not jeopardizing the tax-exempt status of the parish.

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SECTION I: (Cont'd)

RESPONSIBILITIES OF THE PARISH FINANCE COUNCIL
Additional Advisory Responsibilities - Suggestions

20. Provide advice on what the parish needs to do to comply with both parish / Archdiocesan policies with respect to Conflicts of Interest Policy, Gift Acceptance Policy, protection of whistle-blowers and fraud detection, reporting and prevention.

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SECTION I: (Cont'd)

MEMBERSHIP

1. Representation - Members should be selected from the parish community and reflect its diversity. Skill sets to consider include business management, law, accounting, finance/investments and communications.
2. Number of Members – Membership should consist of no less than three members who are not employees of the parish.
3. Chairperson – The chairperson is to assist in setting the meeting agenda with the Pastor and business manager and in soliciting new members to the Council.

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SECTION I: (Cont'd)

MEMBERSHIP

4. Preclusion to Membership – Parish Finance Council members owe the parish a duty of loyalty. The duty of loyalty requires a Parish Finance Council member to avoid conflicts of interest that are detrimental to the parish.
5. Role of Parish Employee –Staff should provide the Finance Council with relevant and timely information, including financial reports to review.

The parish Business Manager (accountant or bookkeeper) should attend meetings in a consultative, non-voting capacity.

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SECTION I: (Cont'd)

MEMBERSHIP

6. Term: Members are to be appointed by the Pastor for fixed terms of three years, and may be reappointed to a second term or terminated in this role by the Pastor at the Pastor's discretion.* Serving beyond six years requires the Pastor to consult with the Vicar for Clergy.

* Only for extraordinary reasons and after consulting with the Dean or Vicar for Clergy.

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SECTION I: (Cont'd)

MEETING PROTOCOL

I. **Scheduled Meetings:** Meetings should be scheduled in advance for a specified period, typically a year. Meetings must be held no less frequently than once a quarter, but preferably monthly. The Pastor must be present at all Parish Finance Council meetings.

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SECTION I: (Cont'd)

MEETING PROTOCOL

2. **Use of Agendas and Review Materials –** Meeting agendas should be prepared in advance of the meeting by consultation between the Pastor, Parish Finance Council Chair, and, if warranted, the Parish Business Manager. See Exhibit II

* The agenda and relevant handouts should be sent to the Council no less than 7 days in advance of the meeting.

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SECTION I: (Cont'd)

MEETING PROTOCOL

3. **Minutes –** Minutes must be recorded and circulated among the members for their review and officially accepted by majority vote. They should be archived as part of the parish permanent record.

4. **Confidentiality –** Members should maintain confidentiality on those matters designated as confidential, including employee salaries and parishioner contributions.

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SECTION I: (Cont'd)

MEETING PROTOCOL

5. Visitors/Communications – Parish Finance Council meetings can be open to the broader parish community at the sole discretion of the Pastor.
6. Record Retention – The following should be retained: meeting minutes, agendas, handouts, reports, and materials reviewed during the meeting – for future reference by either internal or external parties.

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SECTION I: (Cont'd)

SUBCOMMITTEES – The Finance Council should consider if subcommittees are necessary. For example, such subcommittees could include the following:

1. Budget Subcommittee
2. Investment Subcommittee
3. School Advisory Committee (SAC)
4. Facilities and Maintenance Subcommittee
5. Financial Planning and Development/Fundraising Subcommittee

(If a parish establishes such subcommittee(s), it is recommended that at least one of the members be a member of the Parish Finance Council)

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AGENDA

Overview and Discussion - Completed
 Section I – Parish Finance Council Guidelines - Completed

Section II – Parish Financial Policies and Guidelines

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- Parish Financial Reporting Requirements
- Code of Conduct, Conflict of Interest, Gift Acceptance Policies and Duties of Professional Care (Whistleblower and Fraud Considerations)

Section III – Internal Control Considerations

- Common Sense Suggestions – Organizational and Individual

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SECTION 2:

**ARCHDIOCESAN-ISSUED
FINANCIAL POLICIES AND
GUIDELINES**

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SECTION 2: (Cont'd)

***ARCHDIOCESAN-ISSUED FINANCIAL POLICIES
AND GUIDELINES***

- Pastoral Handbook – Chapter 10 “Parish Business Practices within the territory of the Archdiocese”
- Financial Reporting Requirements
- Code of Conduct, Conflict of Interest, Gift Acceptance, Duties of Professional Conduct (Whistleblower and Fraud Considerations)

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SECTION 2: (Cont'd)

FINANCIAL REPORTING REQUIREMENTS

- To Parishioners
 - * Annual budget (at beginning of the fiscal year)
 - * Year-end financial reports, including the Balance Sheet and Statement of Revenue and Expenditures – actual vs. budget

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SECTION 2: (Cont'd)

FINANCIAL REPORTING REQUIREMENTS

- To the Archbishop
- * Year-end financial reports, (see slide #19), including a signed Representation Letter by members of the Finance Council.
 - ♦ Annual Parish Reports due within 60 days of the year-end or not later than August 30th

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SECTION 2: (Cont'd)

CODE OF CONDUCT

- Addresses principles of ethics and integrity for all personnel working for the Church of northern Colorado
- Stipulates required conduct and guidelines for working with minor children
- Addresses background checks
- Addresses proper education – Safe Environment Program
- Addresses reporting procedures – both external and internal

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SECTION 2: (Cont'd)

CONFLICT OF INTEREST POLICY

Applies to: Pastor, Members of the Parish Finance Council, Parish Business Manager and/or other staff with significant financial responsibilities.

- Requires reporting of potential or real conflicts of interest
- Prohibits finance council members from soliciting business or favors, and from voting on decisions that may constitute a conflict of interest

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SECTION 2: (Cont'd)

CONFLICT OF INTEREST POLICY (Cont'd)

- Prohibits finance council members from influencing any activity that could confer a benefit on such member or anyone in the member's family or business
- Gift Acceptance Policy – Prohibits acceptance of gifts and favors greater than \$100.00 in value that could influence, or be construed as influencing a decision or obligation in the performance of one's duties

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SECTION 2: (Cont'd)

DUTIES OF PROFESSIONAL CONDUCT (7.1.6)
(including Whistleblower Considerations)

- Requires Church personnel to perform their duties and act in a professional and courteous manner.
- Employees are responsible to maintain ethical standards in all decision making.
- Addresses Professional Confidentiality.
- Addresses reporting protocols when there is suspicion of fraud, theft or misuse of funds.
 - * Stipulates that all reports will be treated in confidence as much as the Archdiocese's duty to investigate allows

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SECTION 2: (Cont'd)

DUTIES OF PROFESSIONAL CONDUCT (7.1.6)
(including Whistleblower Considerations) (Cont'd)

- * Prohibits retaliation against a person who makes a complaint or provides information regarding any reasonably perceived reportable activity.
- * Outlines reporting and investigation procedures.
- Also addresses the need to "Act in Good Faith."

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AGENDA

Overview and Discussion - Completed

Section I – Parish Finance Council Guidelines - Completed

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Section III – Internal Control Considerations

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SECTION 3:

**INTERNAL CONTROL
CONSIDERATIONS**

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SECTION 3:

***FINANCE COUNCIL MEMBERS – YOUR PASTORS
AND PARISHES NEED YOUR ASSISTANCE!***

- Rash of incidents reported not only across the country, but here within northern Colorado.
- Most of these incidents could have been prevented, detected earlier, or the risks could have been reduced by simply following good internal control procedures outlined in the Pastoral Handbook.

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SECTION 3:

Parish #1 – Grocery Certificates

- What happened? Cash, checks, and scrip were stolen.
- How? Safe containing these cash equivalents was not affixed to the floor or any structure.
- Consequences
 - Police report and investigation
 - Staff interrogations
 - Impacts to Pastor, Business Administrator, staff, parishioners, parents, parish reputation.
- Corrective Action
 - All safes are now secured to structures/floors

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SECTION 3 (Cont'd):

Parish #2 – Offertory

- What happened? Offertory was stolen. The counters discovered several bags were cut open, and one bag was stolen. Based on subsequent discoveries the theft had likely been taking place for at least a year, on a regular basis.
- How? Someone opened the safe, took out the bags, cut them open, placed them back in the safe and locked it. All staff members, volunteers, and former staff had access to a common area containing the key to the safe.

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SECTION 3 (Cont'd):

Parish #2 – Offertory (Cont'd)

- Consequences
 - Distrust among staff
 - Parishioner dissatisfaction
 - Parish incurred costs in re-keying not only the safe, but certain rooms
 - Police Investigation
- Corrective Action
 - Safe keys/combinations continually changed
 - Access further restricted

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SECTION 3 (Cont'd):

Parish #3

- What happened? Offertory theft.
- How? An usher was left alone with the Offertory for just a few minutes.
- Consequences
 - Mistrust
 - If usher had not confessed, who would be our suspects? The Business Manager, the Pastor, who ever else was alone with the money or who had access to it.
- Corrective Action
 - Ensure that no one is left alone with the offertory or other cash receipts

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SECTION 3 (Cont'd):

Parish #4

- What happened? Theft at a Fundraising Event.
- How? An individual was allowed to bring in a tote bag into a counting room. After the money was counted, it was placed on a table with only one individual. Although there was a room of people, this individual's activity was not visible to others at all times, and the individual was left alone long enough to take a substantial amount of money each year for at least 3 years. Internal Control procedures over the event and count were not documented. Since the Parish did not carefully reconcile count sheets to bank deposit records, the theft was not detected timely and continued for 3 years.

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SECTION 3 (Cont'd):

Parish #4 (Cont'd)

- Corrective Action
 - Personal bags are no longer allowed in the count room; a security guard stands at the door and doesn't allow bags inside.
 - Money is sealed in tamper-evident bags after it is counted
 - Procedures were documented and the Finance Council became more active in the review of the internal controls

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SECTION 3 (Cont'd):

SOLUTIONS – IMPLEMENT PROCEDURES
CONTAINED IN THE PASTORAL HANDBOOK

- Safes should be in a discrete location and attached to a structure so that they are not easily moved.
- Offertory should be in the possession of more than one unrelated person during collection, counting, and deposit. . .count teams should have at least three unrelated people.
- Access to safe(s) containing cash and checks should be restricted to only those individuals who require such for valid business purposes.

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SECTION 3 (Cont'd):

SOLUTIONS – IMPLEMENT PROCEDURES
CONTAINED IN THE PASTORAL HANDBOOK

- Safe combination/key locks should be changed periodically, especially when there is staff turnover or someone who had access no longer requires access.
- Parishes should reconcile receipts from fundraising events (to deposits and financial records).

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SECTION 3 (Cont'd):

- Protect against theft at your parish. If your parish does not follow good internal control procedures as outlined in the PH, there is a strong possibility that you will experience theft or inappropriate financial activity at your parish at some point in the future.
- Review the Parish Review Reports periodically to ensure that corrective action is taken to reduce risks.
 - The Parishes rely on your expertise to guide them in the oversight of Internal Control procedures.

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SECTION 3 (Cont'd):

RED FLAGS – COMMON SENSE SUGGESTIONS

Organizational Indicators

- One person controls the books and the money, without mitigating internal controls or an engaged Finance Council
- Parish staff operate without keeping the Pastor informed.
- Non-existent or ineffectual Finance Council – see page II.
- Pastor overly dependent on 1-2 people for information. Pastor and/or Finance Council accepts explanations without examining other evidence.
- Parish staff operates with minimal supervision and oversight.
- Findings from Parish reviews repeat in subsequent reviews.

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SECTION 3 (Cont'd):

RED FLAGS – COMMON SENSE INDICATORS

Organizational Indicators

- Financial Reports from activities are not presented to the Pastor and/or Finance Council. Unusual activity cannot be explained.
- Poor Financial Reporting
- Expenses are submitted without documentation and/or approved properly.
- Bank reconciliations are not completed monthly
- Pastor does not formally authorize salary adjustments and new hires in writing

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SECTION 3 (Cont'd):

RED FLAGS – COMMON SENSE INDICATORS

Individual Behavioral Indicators

- “Thou doest protest too much” – An individual going to extreme efforts to avoid being questioned or having his/her activity reviewed by a third party.
- Overly controlling individual. Often to the point of intimidating so that the Pastor or members of the Finance Council will not ask or follow-up with detailed questions.
- Parish employee with access to cash and checks lives above his/her means (i.e. driving expensive cars on a minimal salary).
- Person has to work late consistently to produce routine information
- Person is overly protective of information and is unwilling or reluctant to share information or produce detail

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SECTION 3 (Cont'd):

RED FLAGS – COMMON SENSE INDICATORS

Individual Behavioral Indicators

- "Person feels mistreated or treated unfairly"
- Person is reluctant to change according to the recommendations from a CPA review or internal audit recommendations
- Parish employee frequently talking about money problems and trying to borrow money from the Church. (BORROWING IS NOT PERMITTED)

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CONCLUSION

Let's Revisit the Objectives and Goals of this Workshop

- Assist Pastors in establishing and maintaining effective Parish Finance Councils that can make valuable and important contributions.
- Help Parish Finance Council members better understand their critical role, both Canonically and from an Archdiocesan perspective.
- Activate the Parish Finance Council Members in their ministry to their respective Parishes to ensure good stewardship of the Parish financial resources.

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QUESTIONS?

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References

- **USCCB Finance and Internal Controls:**
<http://www.usccb.org/finance/internal.shtml>
- **Establishing Internal Controls – Specific Practices, Procedures, and Techniques:**
<http://www.usccb.org/finance/internal.shtml#techniques>
- **Internal Financial Controls in the Catholic Church (Villanova Study):**
<http://www.villanova.edu/business/assets/documents/excellence/church/catholicchurchfinances.pdf>
- **Why Churches Aren't Immune to Fraud and Embezzlement— and How to Reduce the Risk of Either Incident Happening at Yours:**
<http://www.churchsolutionsmag.com/articles/551Pest1.html>
- **Pastoral Handbook (Chapter 10 is applicable to parish finance):**
<http://www.archdioc.org/index.cfm/10/11/Pastoral-Handbook/> 64
