

Best Practices Of Parish Finance Councils

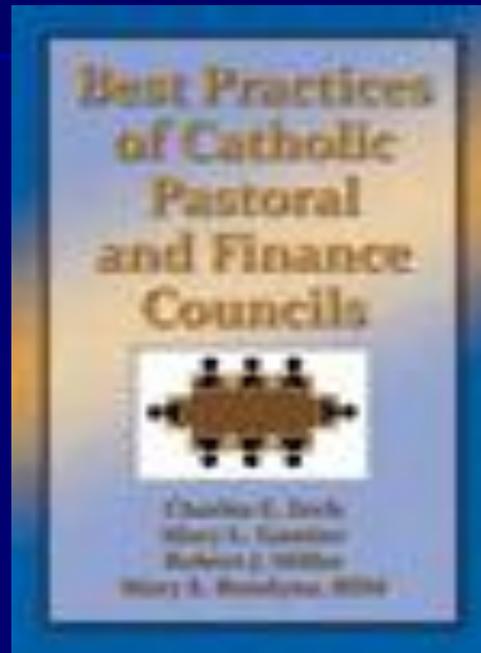
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Center for Church Management & Business Ethics

- **Located Administratively in the Villanova School of Business**
- **Generate/Disseminate Knowledge**
 - **Quarterly Newsletter sent electronically to 1100 US parishes**
 - **Variety of Educational Programs**
 - **One day workshops**
 - **Three day conference**
 - **On-site programs**
 - **Certificate program offered via webinars**
 - **On-line Masters Degree in Church Management**
- **<http://churchmanagement.villanova.edu>**

Presentation Based On Research

- **530 Parish Finance Councils**



- **Emerging Models of Parish Leadership Study – National Sample of PFC Members**

Giving as a Percent of Income by Denomination

Unitarian-Universalist

Christian Science

Catholic

ELCA Lutheran

Episcopal

Disciplines of Christ

Methodist (Main)

Conservative Lutheran

United Church of Christ

Black Methodist

Presbyterian (Main)

Liberal Baptist

Black Baptist

Jehovah's Witnesses

Presbyterian (Other)

Church of Christ

Southern Baptists

Nazarene

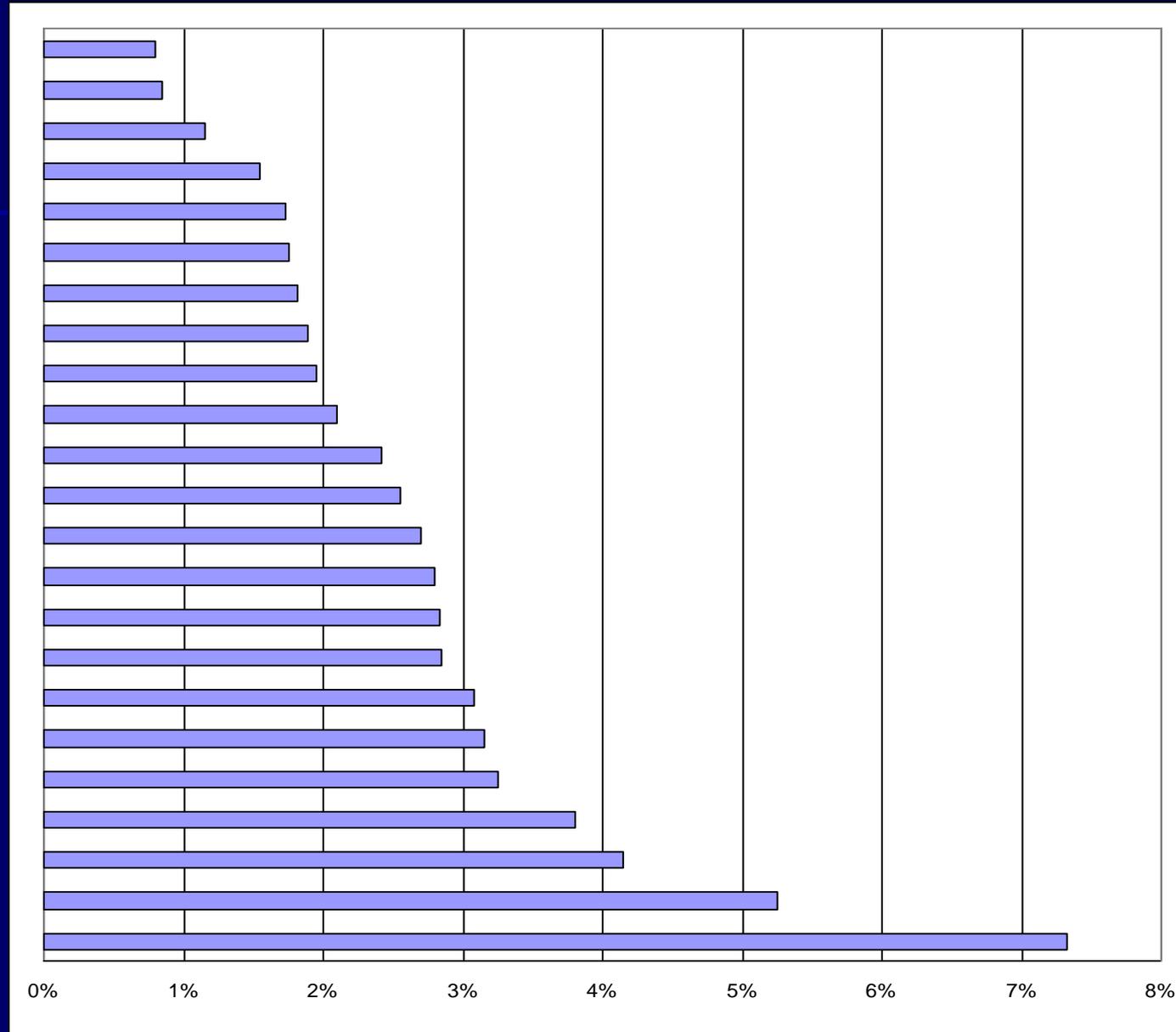
Reformed

Church of God

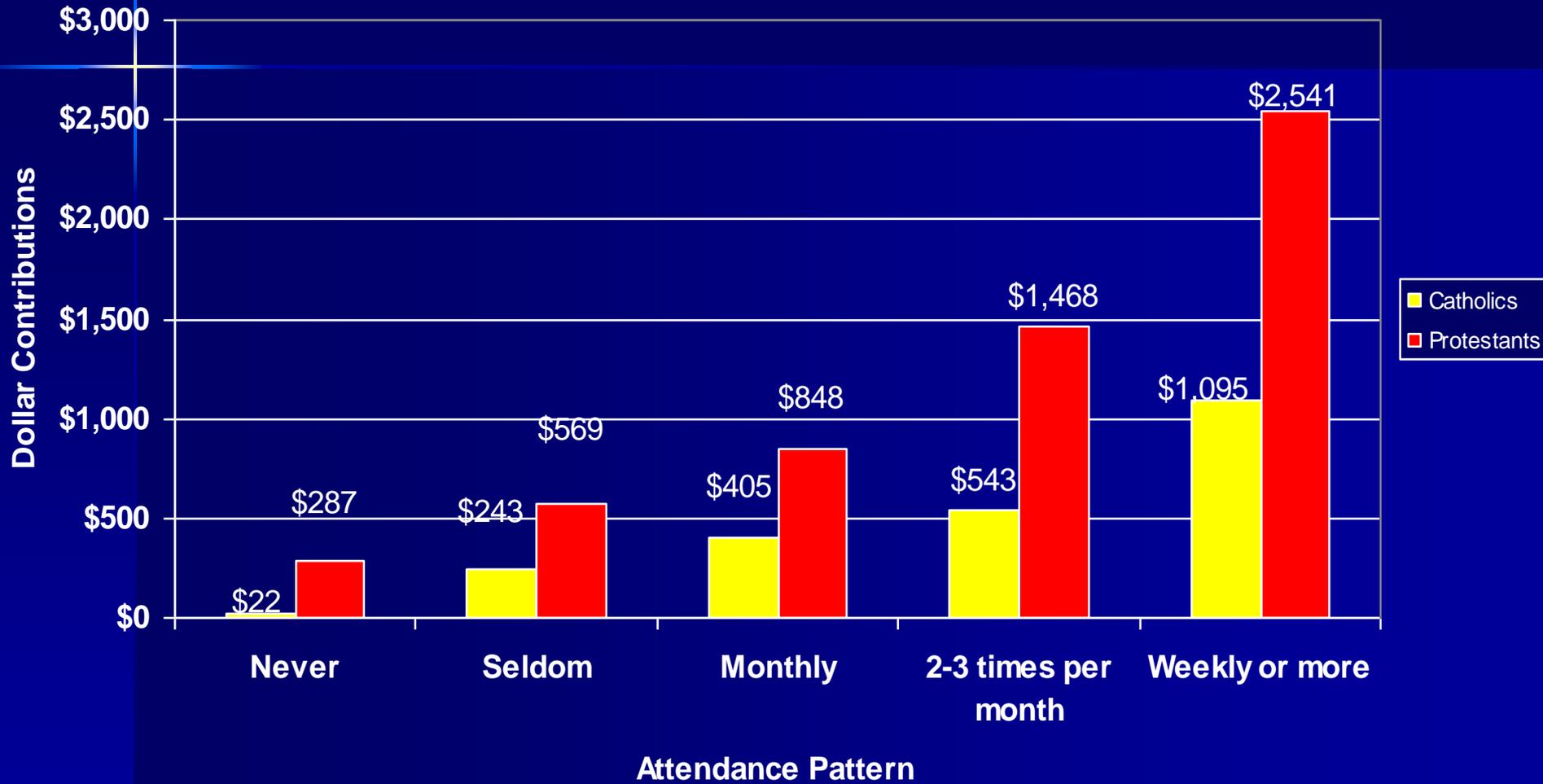
Adventists

Assemblies of God

Latter-day Saints



Religious Contributions by Attendance Pattern



Parish Pastoral Councils vs. Parish Finance Councils

- **Many differences**
- **But also many similarities**

Differences

■ Canon Law

- Parish Finance Councils are mandated by canon law, parish pastoral councils are not

■ Purpose and Functions

Mark F. Fischer refers to the two types of knowledge recognized by **Aristotle** in his *Nicomachean Ethics*

- **One type of knowledge is scientific knowledge, knowledge that is always and everywhere true.**
- **The other type of knowledge is practical wisdom, knowledge sought through means of dialogue.**

- **Parish pastoral councils are concerned with practical knowledge**
- **Parish finance councils deal with scientific knowledge.**

The two councils not only search for different kinds of knowledge, but they use different methods in their search

- **Parish pastoral councils are more inclined to consult with fellow parishioners**
- **Parish finance councils are more likely to be influenced by less subjective professional standards.**

■ Membership

– Number of Members

- PPC – 10-15

- PFC – 5-8

– How Selected

- PPC

- Discernment, election, council of ministries
 - Some ex officio

- PFC

- Appointment by Pastor

- Recommendation by current PFC members

– Background

- PPC – knowledgeable parishioners**
- PFC – financial background, various business background**

■ Parishioners allowed to submit agenda items

- PPC – Yes**
- PFC – No**

■ Need for conflict of interest guidelines

Similarities

■ Consultative to Pastor

- John Paul II, *Christifideles Laici*, --
Local ecclesial authorities should seek “adaptations of the parish structures according to the full flexibility granted by canon law, especially in promoting participation by the lay faithful in pastoral responsibilities”.

– Benedict XVI, in a 2009 address at the Basilica of Saint John Lateran, speaking on the topic of Church Membership and Pastoral Co-Responsibility

“It is necessary to improve pastoral structures in such a way that the co-responsibility of all the members of the People of God in their entirety is gradually promoted... This demands a change in mindset, particularly concerning lay people. They must no longer be viewed as ‘collaborators’ of the clergy but truly recognized as ‘co-responsible’, for the Church's being and action, thereby fostering the consolidation of a mature and committed laity.”

–In other words, parish advisory councils are established to help our priests carry out their stewardship of the parish's temporal assets.

–But

Pastors may not consult their councils about faith, orthodoxy, moral principles, or laws of the universal church

- **Neither the PPC nor the PFC Supervise Parish Staff or Ministries**
- **Leadership Shared**
 - Pastor presides, but does not chair
 - Agenda setting shared
- **Agenda Setting**
 - Prayer, Faith-Sharing
- **Term Limits**

Relationships

Parish Business Manager

“Contact the finance council before any major expenditures. Please, no surprises. This includes personnel issues that might impact the parish’s finances”.

“Provide minutes of the pastoral council and any other committee that might impact the finance council”.

“Effective communication is essential, including educating finance council members about their role.”

Parish Pastoral Council

- **Important to work with (cross-membership)**
 - **Comments from focus group**
 - **“No direct interaction. Only indirect interaction through the pastor”**
 - **“One joint social meeting in June to welcome new members and thank those who are leaving”**
 - **“I know several members of the pastoral council”**

– About a quarter of the participants described a formal relationship between the pastoral council and the finance council

- “I serve as the finance council liaison to the pastoral council so that the finance council can track the activities of the pastoral council. As the resources of the parish are limited, they need to be directed to support the pastoral plan”**
- “Parish finances are discussed fully with the pastoral council to be certain that we are on the same page”**

- **“We are linked through the finance council chair. Agendas and minutes are shared. The pastoral council is visionary – the finance council deals more in present and with existing constraints (money)”**

Parishioners

“Contact information to finance council exists on our parish website. Parishioners can send us emails and we answer them”.

“We hold open meetings. Finance council reports are kept in writing and given from the pulpit”.

“Our finance council holds an annual town hall meeting”.

“Most parishioner input is gathered outside of finance council meetings. Parishioners are welcome to attend the early part of each finance council meeting to present issues”.

But...

“Most parishioners don’t know that we exist or why”.

“Parishioners are invited to contact finance council members but rarely ever do”.

Diocese

“The diocese assists the finance council to ensure good operating practices. They are consultative and supportive”.

“We educate ourselves to their policies and work in harmony with them”.

But...

- **“Keep them away! They provide no value added. They require us to comply with things that distract us from our activities”.**
- **“The diocese is a one-way street. They tell us what they want and demand it be provided. There is little or no return from the diocese as to parish needs and no cooperation with parish requests”.**

What would you tell diocese?

“We want to work with you and you with us. We want you to be honest and genuine”.

“Do live Web-x on-line training in a coordinated manner at least once every three months so that all finance councils are on the same page.”

“Provide support, such as do’s and don’ts, and statistics on how other parishes are doing”.

“Have bulletins specially dedicated to the finance council that can be passed along at the monthly meetings”.

- **Council functions as an “Effective Group”**
 - **Goals are structured cooperatively so that all members are committed to achieving them**
 - **Communication is two-way, and the open and accurate expression of ideas and feelings is emphasized**
 - **Participation and leadership are distributed among all council members**

– Ability determines influence and power; power is shared

– Structured controversy in which council members advocate their views and challenge each other's information and reasoning is seen as the key to high-quality, creative decision-making

- Conflicts are resolved by agreements that maximize outcomes and leave all members satisfied**
- Cohesion is advanced through high levels of inclusion, affection, acceptance, support, and trust**
- Decision-making procedures are matched with the situation; different methods are used at different times; consensus is sought for important decisions**

■ **Use Consensus Decision-Making Process for important issues**

- **What is consensus? A group process for decision making when all come to a common understanding and agree to support the decision of the whole.**

- **Role of Council Members Between Meetings**
 - **Listen, take the pulse of the parish**
 - **Clarify, share accurate information**
 - **Provide helpful feedback to church staff and other leaders**
 - **Impede disease processes or “viruses”**

- Encourage people to speak for themselves**
- Take stands**
- Stay connected with those who disagree**
- Think “US”, not “THEM”**

- **Need for Support from Diocese**
 - **Need for Familiarity with Diocesan Policies and Guidelines**
- **Parish-Level Education**
- **Need for Self-Evaluation**
 - **Each Meeting**
 - **End of Year**

■ **End of Meeting Evaluation**

- Did the meeting accomplish its goals? Was there movement on the agenda?**
- Were Council members truly listening to one another? Responding?**

- How were decisions made? Did council members feel good about them?**
- Were prayer and reflection integral to the meeting?**
- What is the Holy Spirit calling us to be and do as a result of our meeting?**

■ **Last Meeting Formal Evaluation**

- What decision making processes do we use? How well do they work?**
- Do we receive enough information to make wise decisions?**
- As a result of council decisions, have we become more centered on the mission of Jesus and gospel values?**

- Are we living up to our mission statement? Where are we with our pastoral plan?**
- As a council, do we have a compelling vision for the future of the parish?**
- As a council did we manifest real accountability to the parish or did we tend to be “leadership elite”? Are we truly servant leaders?**

- What method do we use to select council members? Does this method result in capable leadership? New leadership?**
- What contributions have we made to diocesan goals during the past year?**
- How did we as parish leaders help the parish make an impact on the community? Did we set an example for welcoming, evangelizing behavior**

- How well do we work together and support one another? Do we celebrate our accomplishments as a team?**
- Are we aware and attentive to the needs and desires of other councils and committees?**
- Are the policies and procedures that we rely on helpful in accomplishing our tasks?**
- What should we have done differently?**

Source: Marliss Rogers, "Council Effectiveness Evaluated" in Arthur X. Deegan II, *Developing a Vibrant Parish Pastoral Council*

Recommendations for Parish Finance Councils

- 1. Leadership should be shared.**
- 2. Need to be accountable and transparent to parishioners**
- 3. Establish Group Norms, such as Council By-laws.**
- 4. Maintain Close Relationship with Other Advisory Council**

5. Provide Parish-Based Education/Formation Programs for Members.

6. Operate as an Effective Group

7. Employ consensus decision making

8. Familiarity with diocesan policies

9. Be active between meetings

10. Take Evaluation Seriously

11. Include Prayer and Faith Sharing as Part of the Agenda at Every Meeting.

"Unless someone like you cares a whole awful lot, nothing is going to get better. It's not."

—Dr. Seuss, *The Lorax*

Exercises

- **What was the most significant thing you heard today?**
- **What would you like to know more about?**

QUESTIONS?