

1/26/07 – Letters, THE ADVOCATE

To the editor:

The announcement of financial mismanagement at St. Michael Church in Greenwich and the resignation of the pastor, Michael R. Moynihan, prompts one to ask: Who will be next?

In the last decade, two local priests of the Diocese of Bridgeport have been accused of misappropriating parish funds: Charles Stubbs of St. Mary in Greenwich and Jude Fay of St. John in Darien. Both have been removed from pastoral ministry.

These examples point up the lack of accountability and effective financial controls at both the diocesan and parish levels. Bishop William E. Lori showed a failure of oversight and negligence in not certifying that recommendations made in 2004 were implemented at St. Michael.

In each of the three parishes, the parish finance council, a small group of parishioners appointed by the pastor, was shown to be an ineffective curb on unwarranted use of parish funds.

There are two problems here. First, the bishop, together with the three vicars general, the pastor, and two lay trustees appointed by the pastor, form the corporation in each of the 87 parishes. Parishioners as a whole have no say in the expenditure of their contributions or the disposal of parish assets.

Second, bishops and priests, who have final authority over the use of diocesan and parish money, as a rule have no training in financial management.

The time has come not only to devise new guidelines for the administration of parish and diocesan finances, but to give the laity, through elected diocesan and parish finance councils, full authority and independence to make all decisions concerning the expenditure of the money that they contribute.

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