

Scam Alert: Parish Directory Phishing Attempt

We've been made aware of a **phishing attempt** targeting churches. The scam involves an email that appears to come from a trusted parishioner — often someone in a leadership role, like a **Finance Council member** — requesting a **PDF of your parish directory**. If you receive a suspicious message, **do not respond or send any information**. Delete the email.

- **Always verify unexpected requests** for sensitive information like directories or financial data.
- **Do not reply directly**. Instead, contact the person through a known, independent method like their phone number or official email).
- **Hover over the sender's email address** to confirm it matches the one you have on file — scammers often spoof names but use unfamiliar addresses.

Why Scammers Want Parish Directory Data

1. Targeted Phishing (Spear Phishing): With names, emails, and relationships, scammers can craft **highly convincing emails** pretending to be:

- The pastor or church staff
- A fellow parishioner
- A ministry leader asking for donations or favors

2. Social Engineering: They can use the directory to:

- Pose as someone in need ("Hi Mary, it's John from choir — can you help me with a gift card?")
- Trick people into revealing more personal or financial information
- Build trust by referencing real names and roles

3. Credential Stuffing or Account Takeover: If email addresses are reused across services, scammers may try to guess or phish passwords to access:

- Church management systems
- Personal email accounts
- Online giving platforms

4. Phone Scams: With phone numbers, they can:

- Call pretending to be from the church or diocese
- Ask for donations, credit card info, or personal details
- Use caller ID spoofing to appear legitimate

5. Mail Fraud or Identity Theft: Physical addresses can be used to:

- Send fake donation requests by mail
- Attempt identity theft or credit fraud with enough additional data

 **Bottom Line:** Even basic contact info can be weaponized when it's tied to a trusted community like a parish. That's why it's so important to **treat directories as sensitive data** and verify any requests to share them — even if they seem to come from someone you know.