

Faith-Based Organizations



Comprehensive legal counsel for faith-based organizations navigating complex legal, regulatory, and constitutional challenges.

Faith-based organizations increasingly face complex legal challenges involving governance, employment law, regulatory compliance, and constitutional protections. At the same time, the U.S. Supreme Court and lower federal courts continue to reshape the law governing religious liberty, institutional autonomy, and the rights of faith-based organizations.

Holtzman Vogel's Faith-Based Organizations Practice Group provides comprehensive legal counsel to religious institutions, churches, ministries, faith-based schools, and mission-driven nonprofits. Our attorneys combine nationally recognized constitutional expertise with deep experience advising nonprofit and mission-driven institutions, offering counsel that understands both the evolving legal landscape and the mission-driven nature of our clients' work. We advise clients from formation through litigation, helping faith-based institutions maximize institutional security while minimizing risk and controversy.

Our Clients

We represent a broad range of faith-based institutions and stakeholders, including:

- Churches, denominations, religious orders and societies, and congregational networks
- Faith-based K–12 schools, universities, and seminaries
- Religious nonprofits, charities, and ministries
- Faith-aligned private foundations and philanthropic organizations
- Mission-driven businesses and affiliated entities
- Governing boards and institutional leadership

What We Do

- **Nonprofit Formation, Tax-Exemption & Governance:** We advise on entity formation, 501(c)(3) and 501(c)(4) status, IRS compliance, and governance documents and structures for churches, ministries, schools, and affiliated nonprofit networks.
- **Mergers, Acquisitions, and Transactions:** We help structure acquisitions of church properties, advise on mergers, combinations, and divisions of religious nonprofit organizations, and counsel on other kinds of transactions involving all kinds of assets, including intellectual property.
- **Religious Liberty & First Amendment Protections:** We counsel institutions on free exercise rights, the ministerial exception, compelled speech claims, and developments in Supreme Court and federal appellate religious liberty precedent.
- **Employment Law & Internal Policy Development:** We develop mission-consistent employee handbooks, advise on Title VII and Title IX compliance for religious institutions, and counsel on employment decisions involving

ministerial roles and religious exemptions.

- **Compliance, Risk Management & Crisis Response:** We conduct regulatory compliance reviews, guide institutions through government investigations and enforcement actions, and advise on strategic responses to public controversies and internal governance disputes.
- **Strategic Mission-Aligned Advisory Work:** We advise boards and leadership teams on donor relations, grant-making, multi-entity structuring, and maintaining theological consistency as organizations grow and expand their programs.
- **Church & Denominational Counseling:** We advise churches and denominational networks on governance models, clergy employment, property and trust matters, and disputes involving religious autonomy and ecclesiastical abstention doctrines.
- **Faith-Based Schools Advisory Practice:** We serve K–12 Christian schools, parochial academies, and religious universities on governance and compensation, statements of faith, Title VII and Title IX compliance, student life policies, sponsorships, fundraising, and giving, and evolving federal education law.

How We Help

- **Proactive Risk Management:** Identify legal vulnerabilities early through thorough audits of existing policies, employment practices, and governance structures before they become enforcement actions.
- **Independent Investigations:** Provide an impartial, privileged review of current practices and internal governance concerns.
- **Strategic Defense:** Anticipate government enforcement trends and build strong preemptive strategies to protect institutional autonomy.
- **Constitutional Expertise:** Leverage nationally recognized First Amendment and religious liberty litigation experience at every level of the federal and state judicial system, including the U.S. Supreme Court.
- **Mission-Sensitive Counsel:** Provide legal advice that respects the theological identity, ecclesial tradition, and institutional mission of each client.
- **Thought Leadership:** Educate and advise clients on U.S. Supreme Court and federal appellate developments affecting religious organizations through ongoing client briefings and educational programming.