



Strategic Communication
Integrated Marketing & Design
Relationship Management

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Protecting Trust: Crisis Readiness for Churches and Faith-Based Nonprofits

Introduction: Why Crisis Readiness Matters

For churches and faith-based organizations, trust is not just important—it is foundational. It shapes relationships, sustains communities, and reflects the integrity of the ministry itself. Yet in today's environment, reputation can be tested with little warning and issues can escalate rapidly through digital and social channels. What once unfolded over days now develops in hours.

In these moments, how a church responds—quickly, clearly, and with aligned leadership—can either reinforce trust or erode it. **Crisis readiness, therefore, is not simply a communications exercise.** It is an essential component of faithful, responsible leadership grounded in the wisdom that strong plans are formed through preparation, clarity, and the presence of trusted counsel.

What follows is a concise, practical overview designed to help you think clearly about crisis readiness. Rather than an exhaustive guide, this outline highlights the key scenarios, principles and steps every church should have in place, so your leadership team can respond with clarity alignment and confidence when it matters most.

Is your organization prepared to handle...

Leadership & Governance

- Moral or ethical failures (pastoral misconduct, abuse allegations)
- Leadership transitions under tension
- Board conflicts or governance breakdowns

Finance & Operations

- Misuse of funds or financial transparency concerns
- Donor distrust or funding declines
- Misalignment between mission and spending

Culture & Theological Pressure

- Public stance on social/political issues
- Internal division within congregations or stakeholders
- Doctrinal disputes becoming public

Reputation & Public Scrutiny

- Negative media coverage
- Social media amplification of criticism
- Viral incidents or misstatements

Legal & Compliance Issues

- Abuse allegations and institutional accountability
- Employment disputes
- Regulatory scrutiny

Digital & Communication Risks

- Inconsistent messaging across platforms
- Unauthorized or harmful internal leaks
- Poor response timing in crisis moments

Yes Not Sure No

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BUILDING YOUR
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Learning. Thinking. Creating. Collaborating.



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Yes Not Sure No

Totals _____

Consider the Cost of Being Unprepared

- Delayed response
- Conflicting leadership voices
- Loss of narrative control
- Long-term reputational damage



Our Crisis Response Framework

Phase 1: Assess • What happened • Who is impacted • What is known vs. unknown	Phase 3: Communicate • Internal first • External messaging • Media response
Phase 2: Align • Leadership alignment • Legal and communications coordination • Decision authority	Phase 4: Stabilize • Ongoing updates • Stakeholder reassurance • Narrative correction

Our Messaging Principles for Christian Organizations

- ✓ Truth and transparency (without speculation)
- ✓ Humility and accountability
- ✓ Pastoral tone vs. corporate tone
- ✓ Alignment with mission and Biblically-informed values



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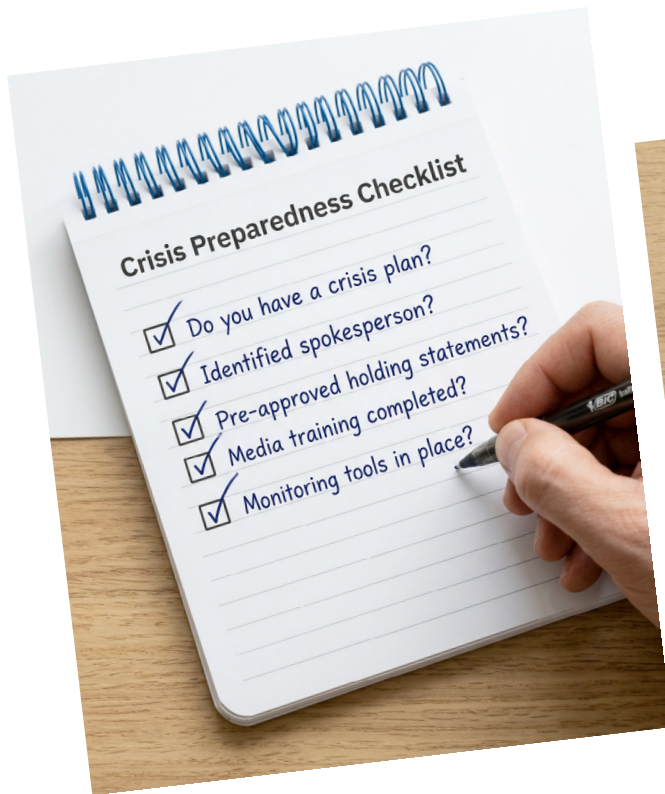
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Conclusion

Crisis readiness is ultimately about stewardship of trust, leadership and the people you are called to serve. With thoughtful preparation and clear guidance, even the most challenging moments can be navigated with integrity and confidence. The goal is not simply to respond well, but to lead well—when it matters most.

If your church would benefit from a more tailored approach, we invite you to schedule a **complimentary one-hour consultation** to walk through your current readiness and identify practical next steps. For those seeking a deeper level of preparation, a customized Crisis Communications Toolkit can provide the structure and clarity your leadership team needs before a crisis ever arises.

Email us at... toni@riggscg.com

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