

Faith-Based Organizations

Taft's Faith-Based Organizations team serves a wide array of churches, church denominations, dioceses, synagogues, church extension funds and foundations, faith-based educational institutions, mission organizations, faith-based social service providers, and international relief and development entities. Our attorneys provide responsive and well-informed counsel focused on the unique needs and objectives of our faith-based clients.

OUR DIFFERENCE

Our team has broad experience working with faith-based and other nonprofit organizations. Our team members possess a nuanced understanding of the legal issues and challenges specific to faith-based organizations. Just as importantly, we know their cultures, and we understand their callings, their language, and their goals. Drawing on these insights, we help each of our faith-based organization clients identify its distinct legal challenges, and we craft practical solutions for each client that incorporate available legal protections, ensure compliance with applicable laws, and facilitate the activities that nurture its character and accomplish its mission.

Members of our Faith-Based Organizations team are also active as board members, speakers, writers, and advisory council members of many entities that serve faith-based organizations, including Christian Legal Society, Christian Leadership Alliance, Evangelical Council for Financial Accountability, and Missio Nexus.

OUR APPROACH

Our team includes lawyers who work primarily with faith-based organizations, including chancellors for certain denominations, and who focus on corporate, tax, governance, employment, constitutional, international, fund-raising, and common operational issues. The team also includes lawyers who practice in other areas of law and possess a clear understanding of how their areas uniquely apply to faith-based organizations. As a result, our team is able to provide sophisticated guidance on every aspect of a faith-based organization's operation, helping each organization navigate its distinct legal landscape as it works toward accomplishing its mission.

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OUR SERVICES

We assist our faith-based clients with:

- Corporate formation, governance, reorganizations, and dissolutions;
- Tax-exempt status issues and planning;
- Employment law issues and volunteer liability;
- Employee benefits;
- Crisis and risk management, including child protection policies;
- First Amendment challenges and religious accommodations;
- International structure, operations, registrations, and immigration;
- Trademarks, copyrights, patents, and other intellectual property matters, including licensing, publishing and media activities;
- Real estate acquisitions, mortgages, leases, and environmental compliance;
- Planned giving, donor advised funds, charitable pledges, gift agreements, working with donors, and advising on endowments;
- Mergers and acquisitions, affiliations, disaffiliations, partnerships, joint ventures, cooperatives, commercial co-ventures, and other strategic alliances;
- Insurance coverage and disputes;
- Fundraising matters and government funding;
- Debt issues, tax-exempt bond financing, and other loan transactions;
- Litigation and alternative dispute resolution proceedings; and
- Data protection, transfer, and privacy strategies.

OUR REPRESENTATIVE EXPERIENCE

- Filed amicus briefs before the U.S. Supreme Court and other appellate courts on behalf of more than 75 national faith-based organization clients;
- Crafted policies to strengthen religious exercise protections in employment and activities for many organizations nationally;
- Assisted more than 60 clients with obtaining classification by the IRS as churches, conventions or associations of churches, or religious orders;
- Advised numerous faith-based organizations regarding legal compliance and corporate structure for carrying on their international activities, including strategies for operating in restricted and closed countries;
- Formed a new Protestant church denomination;
- Obtained religious property tax exemptions for churches, camps, and conference centers nationally;
- Led the merger of two large nonprofit organizations, each with more than 1,000 employees and annual budgets exceeding \$150 million;
- Advised, and litigated on behalf of a number of church denominational bodies and other church organizations on church property disputes, and facilitated more than 300 church disaffiliations;
- Represented borrowers in multiple tax-exempt financing transactions; and
- Advised on various matters involving ecclesiastical law.