

**NAVIGATING 11 LEGAL
MINEFIELDS TO LAUNCH
YOUR CHURCH
SUCCESSFULLY**

THE CHURCH PLANTER'S

FIELD GUIDE

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LAUNCH,
GROW,
AND
PROTECT

YOU
WANT TO
CHANGE
THE WORLD.



WE WANT TO HELP.

Planting a church can be one of the most rewarding experiences for a leader, but it's also a journey filled with hidden legal dangers.

Reynolds Law Group, PLLC ("RLG") developed *The Church Planter's Field Guide* to serve as legal roadmap to that first service, helping church planters avoid pitfalls along the way.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'SRG'.

Glenn S. Reynolds, D.Min, J.D.
Managing Partner
Reynolds Law Group, PLLC



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"Glenn's experience in pastoral ministry and talent as an attorney uniquely positions him to serve ministries, churches, & pastors with excellence..." -
Michael Hernandez, Former Dean, Regent University School of Law



ELEVEN STEPS TO AVOID LEGAL MINEFIELDS AND LAUNCH YOUR CHURCH SUCCESSFULLY



1. Prioritize Children Over Everything Else

As a new church, it's likely that your goal is to reach young families. That means you want to build a children's ministry parents can trust. For that to happen, you'll need more than great curriculum—you'll also need secure check-in systems, trained workers, a safe environment, and policies that protect children and volunteers.

Every volunteer should consent to background checks, be trained in how to prevent and report any suspected abuse, and agree to follow guidelines that keep children and volunteers safe.



2. Incorporate the New Church

Before you sign a contract or host any event, you need to make sure your new church is incorporated; otherwise, you may be found personally liable for any obligations, accidents, or mishaps.

Plus, incorporation eases the church's ability to enter contracts, provides organizational stability, and eliminates the need to obtain permission of courts regarding the purchase and sale of real property.

To incorporate the church, you'll need to file Articles of Incorporation with the appropriate state agency because nonprofit incorporation is a function of the state government, not the Internal Revenue Service. If your church is not part of a larger church organization that is tax exempt, pursuant to Internal Revenue Service § 501(c)(3), your church will also need to submit forms to the IRS to obtain a tax exemption letter.

3. Draft the Church's Constitution and Bylaws

Who hires the staff? Who approves the budget? Who can fire the lead pastor? Who votes on what? Who elects the leaders? The Constitution and Bylaws answers all of these questions and so much more. Don't wait until you're in trouble to think about these issues; instead, draft the answers before you are faced with the questions.

Your Constitution and Bylaws establishes the church's doctrinal beliefs, prescribes the church's governance model, and protects the church's ministry and leaders. In many ways, these governing documents determine how the church interacts with its members and how the members interact with each other.



4. Conduct an Initial Meeting of the Board of Directors

After the church is incorporated, it's time to have the first meeting of the Board of Directors. While many churches may refer to this group as elders, deacons, or by other biblical terms, as far as the corporation is concerned, these folks serve as the directors of the corporation, overseeing all the corporate affairs of the church. This first meeting fulfills the legal requirements and corporate formalities to establish the corporation, including adopting the constitution and bylaws, appointing officers, and setting other business practices in motion.

5. Obtain Your Federal Employer Identification Number

Even churches have to work with the IRS. You'll need a Federal Employee Identification Number to open a bank account, pay employees, and more.

6. Adopt Key Policies to Protect Your Church

Policies simply say this is how we handle things in this church. Unlike the bylaws, which normally require congregational approval to revise, policies are the work of the pastor and directors. There are several policies every new church needs before getting started.

Have you thought about these? Cash handling policy? Counseling policy? E-Communication policy? Confidentiality policy? Benevolence policy? Housing allowance policy? Transportation policy? Every new church needs these types of policies and more to start on the right foot.



7. Create Your Church Budget

The budget isn't only about dollars and cents. It's about mission and values, and it's an essential tool to keep your corporation legal and protected. As a church, you'll likely be receiving designated funds—to missions, a guest speaker, building fund, etc. You'll need a budget and an ability to track all of those contributions to make sure everything goes where it's supposed to.

8. Create Systems to Receipt Your Donors

Your donors will want tax credit for their giving to your new church. You'll need a system to track that giving and make sure donors are receipted in a timely manner. Plus, it helps them keep on giving. The church is required to provide a report to each donor in January of each year, but it's wise for the church to report contributions to donors on a more frequent basis in order to keep them connected to the mission and provide them with ongoing opportunities to contribute to the cause.

9. Get Permission to Use Everything

Want to play that movie clip? Display those song lyrics? Use that other church's materials? It's fun to say, "It's easier to get forgiveness than permission." But, that's not always true. Your church has an obligation to obey copyright laws or risk the consequences. **Fortunately, it's a simple matter to obtain permission through Christian Copyright Licensing International at www.ccli.com.**



10. Obtain the Right Insurance

Your new church is going to need a variety of insurance policies, including general liability, sexual misconduct liability, directors and officers liability, employment liability, professional and counseling liability, workers' compensation, non-owned vehicle liability, business auto, and additional umbrella coverages. It's important to select an agency with a Best's Rating of A- or higher and that understands the unique coverages churches require.

11. Launch!

The road to launching your church is full of pitfalls, roadblocks, and minefields. But, with the right help, launch Sunday can be right around the corner.



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"Every church planter could benefit from not only Glenn's legal experience, but his church planting experience, too..." - Pastor Rich Greene, Founding Pastor of Life Church



CHURCH LAUNCH

YOU HAVE A DREAM.
WE WANT TO HELP.

RLG has partnered with the Southern Baptist Conservatives of Virginia to help your church launch right. Church Launch is simple, affordable, respected, and relational.

WHAT CHURCH LAUNCH PROVIDES

- Drafting and Filing Articles of Incorporation
- Customized Church Bylaws
- Keeping Them Safe—a turn-key program to train your volunteers to prevent and report abuse of minors.
- Church Protection Plan—44 key policies and forms your church needs to get started. All you have to do is plug and play.
- *27 Questions Every Pastor and Board Member Should be Asking, But May Not Even Know to Ask* by Glenn S. Reynolds
- One-year membership in Your Church Attorney, providing access to RLG for legal inquiries through phone and email and a reduced rate for legal services. This membership renews at a rate of \$1200 per year.

WHAT CHURCH LAUNCH COSTS

Church Launch is provided for a flat fee of \$1,900.00 to SBCV church plants; however, the SBCV pays \$750.00, leaving only \$1,150.00 plus the government fees for each church. Online church incorporation services charge nearly \$2,500.00 for only incorporation, 501(c)(3) status, and bylaws. Those groups don't include services like Your Church Attorney, Keeping Them Safe, or Church Protection Plan.

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“Dr. Reynolds is a strategic thinker with the ability to come alongside pastors and leaders on a variety of church-related topics. I believe you’ll find their resources to be relevant and tailor-made for your situation in ministry.” -Rev. Tom Jacobs, Superintendent, Iowa Ministry Network (A/G)

ABOUT GLENN S. REYNOLDS



Glenn S. Reynolds earned his Juris Doctor from Regent University School of Law, graduating as a member of the Honors Program. In addition to his JD, Glenn earned a Doctor of Ministry in Redemptive Leadership and Organizational Development from Gordon-Conwell Theological Seminary, where he also graduated with Honors.



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In addition, Glenn served as the lead pastor of a church plant that grew from fifteen to over 600 people, as well as the lead pastor of a church that grew from 1,500 to over 2,500 during his tenure.

Glenn views the practice of law as a calling that demands effective and ethical lawyers who serve clients and society.



YOU CAN REACH GLENN REYNOLDS AND THE REYNOLDS
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