

Taking the Crisis Out of Crisis Communications

Organization

Real Life
Christian Church

Location

Clermont, FL

Industry

Religious,
Non-Profit,
Congregation

Website

real.life

■ The Crisis

A beloved member of our community was suddenly in the news for a very serious legal matter. This issue, which he had kept a secret, took everyone by surprise. His mugshot was on every social media feed and mainstream local media. We had no time to brace for it. It was a gut punch for us personally.

More than that, we immediately felt the collective weight of grief our church would experience. **Like in any crisis, “information” was moving at breakneck speed but we felt like we were in slow motion.**

■ The Reality

We called in a trusted source with experience to help us.

Kem Meyer coached us on the importance of truth and timing in a situation like this. We learned that when organizational trust is collaterally wounded like this, leaders must recognize the very real injury and not exacerbate it with a misguided attempt at damage control. Kem brought industry insight on the pitfalls organizations face when the PR strategy sidesteps difficult truths or stonewalls reasonable questions. *We had to balance the difficult tension between transparency and responsibility.*

Together we constructed an approach that took all the legal, personal, and sensitive information into consideration and built a response plan guided by integrity and empathy.

■ The Response

We've learned leaders cannot guide people through these kinds of situations in an information fog. At the same time, not all information is legally available and we will never know the entire story. No matter what role we have in an organization, someone will ask us hard questions. So we took some prep time to anticipate FAQs from those inside and outside our organization and coached our teams on how to keep conversations healthy for everyone's sake.

It required a fast turnaround in the midst of collective shock and grief. But, with help, we were able to build the right anchor tools to steady our team, prevent the drift toward emotionalism, and eliminate the temptation to make assumptions. We created a timeline that kept us focused on making progress. We equipped our entire stakeholder team with a talking points fact sheet to respond to questions *and* provide appropriate channels of care.

■ The Result

We know emotional stakes are high when the news is difficult and quickly spreading. **We rarely get to brace for a shock like this. But we can be prepared with a response framework so that when it happens, we're not frantically trying to figure out the next step or reinvent the approach.**

Getting a plan and toolkit in place provided us with much needed headspace and eliminated any panic response that could cause subsequent pain for our people.
There's always a crisis around the corner, but our response doesn't have to be one.

**Mark Montemayor, Executive Pastor
& Sally Whitemore, Communications Director**



Do you need help with your brand reputation
or crisis response communications plan?
We can help you through the information fog.

Send us a note or schedule a 30 minute zoom call – no charge.

Let's Go