

FaithLeaks launched to root out corruption in religious groups

The web portal's creators hope others will submit documents on church finances, policies and procedures, and sexual abuse case settlements.

by [Yonat Shimron](#) in the [March 14, 2018](#) issue



Redacted documents from a congregation's sex abuse investigation. Images from [FaithLeaks.org](#).

A new website called FaithLeaks aims to bring transparency to the workings of religious congregations and denominations by publishing documents and data provided by anonymous sources.

The web portal was founded by Ryan McKnight and Ethan Dodge, two former Mormons who gained access to documents that shed of light on the inner workings of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints.

Recently the two founders published 33 letters and documents detailing an internal investigation of alleged sexual abuse within a congregation of Jehovah's Witnesses.

The pair hopes to entice others to submit documents that shed light on three main areas: congregational finances, church policies and procedures, and sexual abuse case settlements.

"Our goal is to reduce the amount of deception and untruths and unethical behaviors that exist in some facets of religion," said McKnight, an accountant who lives in Las Vegas. "If someone is in possession of documents they feel deserve to be made public, we're simply here to help facilitate that."

For would-be whistleblowers, the attraction of FaithLeaks is its security features. The site uses a software platform designed to receive documents from anonymous sources, meaning those documents cannot be traced back to the sender, according to its founders.

Boz Tchividjian, a former chief prosecutor of child abuse and the founder of Godly Response to Abuse in the Christian Environment, said he has mixed feelings about the new portal.

"As an advocate who wants to bring truth to the surface, I see that this type of site could help empower survivors and advocates to come forward and do so with supporting documentation," he said.

But he hopes it won't be used to bully, extort, or intimidate.

"One of the sad things is we are living in a society where abuse victims aren't free to step forward and even provide supporting documentation without being attacked or criticized," he said.

FaithLeaks and MormonLeaks—a similar portal created by McKnight and Dodge—are projects of the Truth and Transparency Foundation, a nonprofit the two men formed.

McKnight hopes to see more light shed on church finances. "If they don't ever publish their financials, then who holds them accountable?" he asked. "You're giving your money and hoping for the best. We find that to be not only a position of inequity for the donor [but] an unethical position to be in because there's nobody providing any checks and balances." —Religion News Service