Using Grok Bot Safely in Church Ministry

A Quick Guide for Pastors

From the "Leading the Church in an Age of AI" workshop · Holly Skalberg, Alliance New England

AI helpers can give you back hours each week for prayer, people, and preaching. Like any tool in ministry, they are best used with wisdom and care. Here are simple habits to protect your people, your church, and yourself.

1 Start small

- Begin with one or two bots for low-risk tasks: your calendar, drafting emails, sermon research, and newsletters.
- Get comfortable before you connect anything sensitive.

2 Guard pastoral confidentiality

- Keep counseling notes, confessions, and prayer requests shared in confidence out of your bots, or limit them to one private bot.
- **Why:** people haven't consented to AI reading what they told their pastor.

3 Know your high-risk data

- Giving and donor records.
- Children's ministry and background-check information.
- Member contact lists. Handle these with extra care, or leave them out.

4 Use church accounts, not personal ones

- Connect the church email and calendar, not your personal accounts.
- Keep personal and church work in separate bots.
- Make sure accounts are owned by the church, not by one person.

5 Know who approves connections

- Your church's Microsoft 365 or Google Workspace admin may need to approve the connection. Loop them in early.

6 Watch for pastor-impersonation scams

- "Pastor needs gift cards" emails and texts are common. Warn your staff and volunteers: you will never ask for gift cards this way.

7 How Grok Bot protects you, and your part

WHAT GROK BOT DOES

- **Privacy Mode** keeps your data out of AI training. Turn it on in account settings.
- **You press Send.** Bots draft emails; nothing goes out until you send it.
- **Approval cards** appear before risky actions. Read them; don't rubber-stamp them.
- **The vault** is where passwords and cards go, never in chat.
- **Hidden instructions** in emails or web pages are treated as content, not commands.

YOUR PART

- Use strong, unique passwords.
- Turn on two-step sign-in (authenticator app or passkey) for Microsoft, Google, and Apple.
- Keep phones and laptops locked.
- Disconnect services you don't use.

8 Church directories and databases

For example, apps built in Lovable

- **Sign-in for everything,** with individual staff accounts (no shared logins).
- **Turn on row-level security** in the database so data is checked on the server. Hiding pages isn't enough.
- **Use roles** so giving data is visible only to the pastor and treasurer.
- **Keep backups and a change log.**
- **When a bot adds information,** use an approval step before saving.
- **Give the bot only the access it needs:** no bulk delete or export.

9 Giving statements with AI

- **Use a separate private bot** for giving data, used only by the treasurer and the pastor, not a shared team bot.
- **Upload the spreadsheet only when statements are due,** and delete the uploaded files afterward.
- **Never include** Social Security numbers or bank or card numbers.
- **Have the treasurer review every statement.** Deliver them as drafts, never sent automatically.

Each statement needs

- Donor's name and address
- Gift dates and amounts
- The IRS statement that no goods or services were provided in exchange

Your church should confirm its own wording with its accountant.

10 Adopt a simple church AI policy

- **Tell the board** how you're using AI.
- **Decide what's off-limits** (for example, counseling and confidential care).
- **Decide when to disclose AI help,** for example on newsletters or sermon outlines.

Quick checklist

- ☐ Privacy Mode is turned on in account settings
- ☐ Bots are connected to church accounts, not personal ones
- ☐ Giving data lives only in a private treasurer-and-pastor bot
- ☐ Staff have been warned about gift-card impersonation scams
- ☐ The board knows what's off-limits and when you'll disclose AI help
- ☐ Two-step sign-in is on for Microsoft, Google, and Apple
- ☐ Counseling notes and confidential prayer requests stay out of shared bots
- ☐ Directory app requires sign-in, row-level security, and roles
- ☐ Unused connections are disconnected

Start small, go slow, and keep people first. Questions? Reach out to Holly Skalberg at Alliance New England.