

Copyright Compliance: What Churches Need to Know

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Top Ten Tips for Avoiding Copyright Infringement

- Remember that copyright infringement is 100% preventable.
- Owning a copy of the work doesn't give you the right to copy a work!
- Purchase the appropriate blanket license or licenses for your church's music licensing needs and follow the terms of those licenses.
- Be cautious and attentive to licensing concerns when considering use of videos.
- Contact authors or publishers to obtain licenses to use poetry, speeches, or other literature in your worship services and other events, whether in-person or live-streamed.
- Do not post photographs that you find on the internet on your church's website. Use photographs that are owned by the church. Keeping infringing materials off your website and social media platforms is one of the best ways to reduce your risk of infringement.
- Hyperlinking on websites and in emails and using the share functions on social media are ways to share the works of others without copyright infringement. Don't copy and paste!
- Attribution is necessary when using the works of others, but not enough to avoid infringement. Get a license.
- Do not ignore a takedown notice or you might waive important rights.
- Remember that compensation for use of a creative work is a justice issue.

Additional Resources

U.S. Copyright Office: <https://www.copyright.gov>

Information on the Copyright Small Claims Board: <https://www.copyright.gov/about/small-claims/>

Music Licensing Companies for Churches:

I do not personally endorse these companies nor are they affiliated with the United Church of Christ. Read the terms of the license carefully to make sure that it gives the appropriate license for the activity.

- OneLicense, <https://onelicense.net>, offers a reprint license and a license that allows the broadcast of pre-recorded video/audio content as well as live-streaming. OneLicense deals with published church music.
- CCLI, <https://us.ccli.com>, offers a reproduction license, streaming license, and other licenses. CCLI deals with published church music.

- Christian Copyright Solutions, <https://christiancopyrightsolutions.com>, offers performance and streaming licenses. CCS focuses on secular, popular, and classical music used within worship services.

Creative Commons: <https://creativecommons.org/faq/#what-is-creative-commons-and-what-do-you-do>

Public Domain

- University of Montana: <https://libguides.lib.umt.edu/c.php?g=275362&p=1836631>
Provides public domain resources.
- Cornell University: <https://copyright.cornell.edu/publicdomain> A chart to help determine whether a work is in the public domain.
- New York Public Library: <https://www.nypl.org/research/collections/digital-collections/public-domain> Digital resources in the public domain.

Fair Use

- Fair use for teaching and research <https://copyright.universityofcalifornia.edu/use/fair-use.html>
- Summary of fair use cases <https://fairuse.stanford.edu/overview/fair-use/cases/>
- Fair use tutorial <https://ohiostate.pressbooks.pub/choosingsources/chapter/what-is-fair-use/>