

FAQ ON UNDERSTANDING COPYRIGHT

The following is based on the Copyright workshop presented by the Ontario Conference Communication and Media Department. For more details watch the original video on the Communication and Media Page on the Ontario Conference Website.

GENERAL

Q: Why is copyright important for churches?

A: Copyright protects the rights of content creators and gives them exclusive control over their work's reproduction, display, distribution, and performance. Churches have both moral and legal obligations to respect these rights.

Q: Are churches exempt from copyright laws?

A: Churches have very limited exemptions:

- Live performances during religious services are exempt in Canada.
- This exemption does not extend to streaming, recording, or online distribution.
- All other uses require proper licensing.

MUSIC AND PERFORMANCE

Q: Do we need a license for songs used during livestreams?

A: Yes, a streaming license is required for any copyrighted music used during livestreams, even for religious services.

Q: Are all songs covered by CCLI licenses?

A: No, not all songs are covered by CCLI. You should check the CCLI database to verify if specific songs are included in your license.

Q: If a praise team performs live during service, do we need a license?

A: For live performances within a religious service, there is a religious exemption in Canada. However, if you're streaming or recording the service, you need appropriate licensing.

Q: What about using backing (background music) tracks?

A: While backing tracks can be used during live services under religious exemption, streaming or recording services with backing tracks requires proper licensing.

Q: Can we play music from streaming services (like Spotify) during service?

A: You can play music from these services during live services under religious exemption, but you cannot stream or broadcast this content online.

PUBLIC DOMAIN AND LICENSING

Q: When do songs enter the public domain?

A: In Canada:

- For works created before 2022: 50 years after the creator's death.
- For works created after 2022: 70 years after the creator's death.

Note: Even if a song (lyrics) is in the public domain, the instrumental recording may still be copyrighted.

Q: If we purchase a song or track, can we use it in our livestream?

A: No, purchasing a song or track doesn't automatically grant streaming rights. You need specific streaming licenses.

ONLINE AND DIGITAL USAGE

Q: Can we play music while waiting for people to join online meetings?

A: No, playing copyrighted music during online meetings, even in waiting rooms, requires proper licensing.

Q: How do copyright holders find violations?

A: AI technology is being used to scan websites and livestreams to identify copyrighted material, including:

- Music tracks and recordings.
- Images.
- Other copyrighted content.

DENOMINATIONAL CONTENT

Q: Can we freely use Adventist-created content found online or produced by a member from another church or conference?

A: No, don't assume content is free to use just because it was created by the denomination. Always check usage rights or seek permission.

IMAGES AND VIDEOS

Q: Can we use images from Google in our church presentations?

A: Images from Google are not automatically free to use. Always verify the licensing of the image and provide attribution when required. If in doubt, use royalty-free image websites or obtain explicit permission.

Q: What about AI-generated images?

A: AI images come with unique copyright considerations:

- If you create an image with minimal prompts, it's less likely to raise copyright issues.
- If another person spends significant time refining prompts to create a specific image, they may claim rights to it.
- To stay transparent, credit the tool used (e.g., "Generated using [tool name]").

Q: Can we use video clips in sermons or presentations?

A: Yes, but only under these conditions:

- The clip must be short and used for educational purposes.
- Always attribute the source and ensure it doesn't impact the original creator's market.

RADIO AND BROADCASTING

Q: Do we need a special license to host a church radio show?

A: Yes, radio shows require performance licenses. In Canada, SoCan is the main performance licensing entity.

SOLUTIONS AND RESOURCES

Q: What licenses should churches consider?

A: Key licenses include:

1. CCLI Church Copyright License: Covers reproduction of lyrics, chord sheets, and sheet music for over 6,000 publishers worldwide.
2. CCLI Streaming License: Covers streaming of worship services.
3. SongSelect: Provides access to lyrics, chord sheets, lead sheets, and vocal sheets for worship planning.

Q: How do we obtain a CCLI license?

A: Visit CCLI's website and:

1. Search for the "Church Copyright License."
2. Enter your church's size to receive pricing.
3. Purchase the appropriate license for your needs.

Q: How does SongSelect work?

A: SongSelect is a sheet music distribution platform. With a subscription, churches can:

- Download lyrics, chord sheets, and sheet music.
- Transpose songs to desired keys.
- Access free public domain content by signing up for a free account.

Q: Does SongSelect apply to digital lyrics or is it just for praise teams?

A: SongSelect provides lyrics for both digital projection and praise teams. When a church has the Church Copyright License (a prerequisite for SongSelect), it grants access to over 600,000 songs for projection or printing. SongSelect adds value by offering additional sheet music formats like chord sheets, lead sheets, and vocal sheets for an additional cost.

Q: What's the difference between the CCLI Streaming License and Streaming Plus?

A: The basic CCLI Streaming License covers live performances of songs distributed online. Streaming Plus is required if your church includes backing tracks, full master recordings, or stems/multi-tracks during services. Streaming Plus ensures these recordings are licensed, but you must verify that the specific recordings are registered with CCLI by checking their database.

Q: How should we handle licensing for livestreamed songs?

A: Always check the CCLI database to confirm if a song is covered. For recordings not covered by CCLI, contact the track owner for permission. Ensure you include your CCLI license information in the description section of your YouTube or Facebook streams. However, platforms like YouTube may still flag content due to automated algorithms. If matched, accept the claim to allow rightful monetization by the content owner.

Q: What should we do if a song or version is not covered by our license?

A: Research the song's original writer and owner. If it's not covered by your license or in the public domain, contact the owner for permission to use it in your stream or service. Demonstrating good faith and attempting to secure permissions shows respect for copyright law and protects your church from potential legal issues. If you cannot find the owner use another song.

Note: for Audio visual teams you MUST check a track of music being played BEFORE the performance to ensure it is covered by your church licence. Playing a track not covered by licence places the church in a liability position.

Q: Can the Conference obtain a licence or discount on the local church's behalf?

A: The Communication and Media department is currently in negotiations with CCLI on this issue. Stay tuned for more information.

Q: What are some final tips for staying compliant?

1. Always provide attribution when using copyrighted material.
2. Use public domain or properly licensed content whenever possible.
3. Consult with licensing organizations like SoCan or CCLI for specific needs.
4. Educate your church staff and volunteers about copyright basics.

By understanding and adhering to copyright laws, churches can ensure they operate ethically and avoid legal risks.