

Are We Violating Copyright Law?

Take this quiz to make sure you're staying within the guidelines.

Worship music and websites are two places where churches may infringe on copyright law if they're not careful. Use this checklist to gauge how your church is doing at following good guidelines. If you answer "no" to any of these questions, we recommend you take corrective action.

HOW ARE WE DOING	YES	NO	ACTION STEPS
Are we a member of CCLI and do we follow their guidelines for using songs and words?			
Are we members of CVLI and do we follow their guidelines regarding the use of movies and videos?			
Do we have written policies and are staff members and volunteers aware of the legal use of copyrighted material?			
Do we have a person within the church that monitors the use of songs, movies and copyrighted materials?			
Do we forbid the use of unauthorized pictures, videos, and other materials on our church web site?			
Do we prevent personal data from appearing on our website (prayer concerns, addresses, pictures and names of children) and do we get signed release forms from those pictures we do use?			
Have we registered our domain name and other similar names to protect the integrity of our congregation and keep it from being pirated?			
If we allow third-party uploading of information onto a church site (chat rooms, bulletin boards, etc.) do we have a notice that the web owner is not responsible for the content being uploaded?			
Do we have a policy regarding transmitting intellectual or copyrighted material via email?			

Do we conduct software audits and have a system to prevent unauthorized use or illegal downloading of software?		
Have we consulted with legal counsel and drafted policies regarding ownership of works created by pastors and other staff members?		
Do we have legal counsel regularly view our entire policy and actions regarding intellectual property and copyright?		

There are two primary areas churches may need to consider when it comes to intellectual property and copyright issues.

Music

The first and most common relates to music usage. Many churches like to record their worship services, project words on an overhead, or create their own songbook. Without the proper license, all of these activities are illegal.

Most of us have heard of or are members of CCLI, Christian Copyright Licensing International. As a member, you have permission to use over 150,000 songs in the context of ministry. A license will allow you to:

- Record worship services
- Project words on a projector or overhead
- Print words in the bulletin or on a handout
- Create a songbook
- Create a database of songs on a computer
- Audio or videotape a wedding or special service

Therefore, without the license, participating in any the above is a copyright violation.

The bottom line is ownership. Those who write and own the songs have a right to benefit from their use. The cost of license is based on the size of the church. For more information, go to www.ccli.com/US.aspx.

Videos

The second primary area involves video use. In essence, the FBI warning at the beginning of a rented video states that it is for home use. Showing a complete video outside of the home is considered a violation of the law.

Some have challenged this law citing the “Fair Use Clause” allowing nonprofits to use the video for educational purposes. However, it is smart to look into purchasing an annual license from Christian Video Licensing International (CVLI) and following their guidelines for usage (www.cvli.org).