



UMC SUPPORT'S COMPREHENSIVE GUIDE TO
UNDERSTANDING COPYRIGHTS FOR YOUR MINISTRY

 866-367-4232  www.gcfa.org  ConnectionalRelations@gcfa.org

If you know you would like to get started with our Copyright Consulting Service, fill out our [Copyright License Questionnaire](#) to start the process today!

1



Ascertain how you use copyrighted material for your ministry – stream, project, print, record, etc.

2



Read the copyright articles on UMCsupport.org for self-help. Still unsure? Keep reading↓.

3



Complete the [Licensing Needs Questionnaire](#).

4



Check your inbox. You will receive an email from ContractWorks containing a link to the contract for us to help you.

5



Esign the statement of work.

6



Check your inbox. You will receive an email from licensing@gcfa.org with a link to pay your fee.

7



Receive your customized report and gain peace of mind knowing which licensing options are best for your ministry's needs.

Ready to get on the road to Copyright peace of mind for your ministry?
Fill out this [Copyright License Questionnaire](#) and start the process today.

With the growth in virtual worship and digital ministry comes the growth in opportunities for simple mistakes to cause serious issues. Copyright infringement or violations are common issues ministries have faced while transitioning and expanding to digital ministry. The Legal Services team of UMC Support has developed a five-part series to help your ministry understand copyright laws and how to protect your ministry.

Copyright is a form of protection that extends to “original works of authorship fixed in any tangible medium of expression, now known or later developed, from which they can be perceived, reproduced, or otherwise communicated, either directly or with the aid of a machine or device.” Legally, copyright means that a musician, author, or artist has a limited monopoly on anything they create. Copyright does not require registration. Copyright in work arises when an original work of authorship is fixed in the tangible medium (e.g., when pencil touches paper). Copyright law further provides that “[w]orks of authorship include the following categories:

- literary works;
- musical works, including any accompanying words;
- dramatic works, including any accompanying music;
- pantomimes and choreographic works;
- pictorial, graphic, and sculptural works;
- motion pictures and other audiovisual works;
- sound recordings; and
- architectural works.”

Copyright protection may also extend to compilations and derivative works that are created. A derivative work is a work based on or derived from one or more already existing works. If you use a song or other copyrighted work without the owner’s permission, or an appropriate license, you may subject yourself and your organization to substantial fees and legal action.

What are the Rights of a Copyright Owner?

The United States copyright laws grant the owner of copyrighted material six exclusive rights:

- **Reproduction** - reproduce the copyrighted work in copies or on material objects, such as discs, cassette tapes, and compact discs (CDs);
- **Adaptation** - prepare derivative works based upon the copyrighted work;
- **Distribution** - distribute copies or phonorecords of the copyrighted work to the public by sale or other transfer of ownership, or by rental, lease, or lending;
- **Performance** - perform the work publicly in the case of literary, musical, dramatic, and choreographic works, pantomimes, and motion pictures, and other audiovisual works to perform the copyrighted work;
- **Display** - display the work publicly in the case of literary, musical, dramatic, and choreographic works, pantomimes, and pictorial, graphic, or sculptural works, including the individual images of a motion picture or other audiovisual work; and
- **Recording** – perform the work publicly using a digital audio transmission if the work is a sound recording

It is important to note that these exclusive rights are distinct from one another, which means that having the right to use a copyrighted work in one of these ways does not mean you automatically have the right to use that work in all of these ways.

Copyright Notice

A copyright notice is a statement placed on copies of a work to inform the public that a copyright owner is claiming ownership of the work. Copyright notice consists of three elements:

- The copyright symbol © or Ⓒ 134 for phonorecords, the word "Copyright," or the abbreviation "Copr.;" and
- The year of first publication of the work (or creation if the work is unpublished); and
- The name of the copyright owner, an abbreviation by which the name can be recognized, or a generally known alternative designation.

A lack of copyright notice should not be treated as a definitive indication that a work is not copyrighted. For more information visit our [Legal Services YouTube Playlist](#).

Copyright law is a complex legal subject, and we hope we have given you a solid foundation. We have two more articles in this series; stay connected with UMC Support through [Facebook](#), [Twitter](#), [Instagram](#), [LinkedIn](#), and our [Collaborator Newsletter](#) to get the latest updates.

When your church uses creative media like music, lyrics, images, and videos in your worship services, we want you to be protected against legal actions due to copyright infringement. Here are some guidelines for the proper usage of creative content that has a copyright. This is the first of a five-part series from the Legal Services team of UMC Support about Copyright Law.

Video Licenses

1. [CVLI – Church Video License + ScreenVue](#)

- Provides a license for churches and organizations to publicly show motion pictures, such as church movie nights or movie scenes, to enhance a sermon. ScreenVue provides access to thousands of movies to choose from.
- Obtaining this license also gives the church permission to show scenes from feature films on YouTube as long as the video is uploaded by the copyright owner or someone authorized by the owner to do so.
- Pricing depends on activities and congregation size. Annual and event licenses are available.

2. [Lifeway Church Movie and Video License](#)

- Provides churches licensing for specific movies that are not typically included in the blanket licenses for music and media. You can browse their selection and purchase an Event Kit that provides the necessary permissions for a specific movie and event.

Images

Does the church use image in its bulletins, emails, website, or other church communications? You need licenses to use these images as well. You cannot, for example, use most images found through a Google search without permission. Some companies specialize in creating “web crawlers” that track and investigate illegal image uses based on Google search hits and website owner data. Stay safe and ask permission or use public domain images on sites like the first two websites below. These sites allow users to upload photos for others to use for free, and take precautions to prevent users from downloading others’ protected content. Using these sites is not without some risks. While this information is the result of thorough research on this topic, GCFA strongly recommends that you do your due diligence before selecting and using images found on the Internet.

1. [Morguefile](#)

This site offers a collection of royalty-free stock photos for commercial use. With images found on this site, you have the right to adapt the work, use the work for commercial purposes, and accompany the photos with other content under the following conditions:

- You cannot sell, license, sublicense, rent, transfer, or distribute the images exactly as it is without alteration.
- If you don’t alter the image and leave it exactly as it is, you must credit the photographer to use it. (Suggested credit byline: Photo by <photographer’s username> at Morguefile.com)
- You may not claim ownership of this image in its original state.

2. [Creative Commons](#)

This site contains openly licensed works freely available for legal use, sharing, repurposing, and remixing. Millions of people worldwide have made their photos, videos, writing, music, and other creative content available for any member of the public to use as long as the license conditions set by the copyright owner, such as proper attribution, are followed. For a list of the Creative Commons License Options and the limitations associated with each, see [here](#).

3. [Shutterstock](#)

This subscription-based website allows you to use its content based on the purchased plan. The website offers two Image License options:

- A Standard Image License grants you the right to use images as a digital reproduction, including on websites, social media, mobile advertising, software, e-publications, email marketing, and online media, including video-sharing services such as YouTube and Vimeo. This license allows you to print in physical forms, such as on letterhead and business cards. It enables you to incorporate images into film, video, or other audiovisual productions for distribution. Please note that this license has limitations on the number of reproductions, impressions, and budget for the project in which it is intended to be used, which you can review in further detail [here](#).
- An Enhanced Image License grants you the right to use images in any manner permitted under the Standard Image License without any limitation on the number of reproductions, impressions, or budget for the project in which it is intended to be used. The license further grants permission to incorporate images into merchandise you plan to sell or distribute, including in your wall art for commercial space decorative purposes and images in elements of digital templates for sale or distribution.

For Shutterstock's complete License Agreement, please see [here](#).

There are other sites, such as unsplash.com and pexels.com that offer images for free and provide you an opportunity to donate to the artists.

We recommend that you thoroughly review our [Copyright Guidelines for Churches page](#) first to have an understanding of the U.S. Copyright Law and how it pertains to your church before reviewing the licensing options here. It's important to remember that this shouldn't be considered as legal advice.

Overview

There are essential licenses that fit most churches' use of copyrighted materials. However, several supplemental licenses exist that grant permission for more specific services such as rehearsals, live streaming, podcasts, videos, and video clips. As mentioned on our Copyright Guidelines for Churches articles, it is essential to note that if your church obtains permission to use copyrighted material for one activity or exclusive right, it doesn't mean you have permission with that same license for another exclusive right. For example, for musical works, it is essential to remember that you will need a license to both the musical composition (the music notes on the page) and the lyrics. Not all licenses provide permission for both.

As you will see below, there are basic licensing options available that may grant the necessary permissions to cover all your church's activities and needs. But it is vital that you thoroughly understand all the six exclusive rights – reproduction, adaptation, distribution, performance, display, recording – the license includes and how each right included in the license applies to your church's activities to avoid unintentional copyright infringement. For instance, most basic church licenses do not have permission to livestream; you would need to purchase an additional license on top of the underlying license for consent to livestream copyrighted material. Most licensing companies require purchasing a basic license package before you can obtain the license to livestream.

Additionally, when a license is purchased, you typically have access to a catalog of songs included in that particular license. You should always confirm that the songs your church wants to use are included with the license before using. If they are not, then the church should obtain written permission directly from the copyright holder.

One-time use, weekly use, and annual licenses are available. Reporting usage of a song to the licensing company is often a requirement of the license. It is essential to keep good records of the works use to be accurate in your licensing payments and minimize any claims by the copyright holder or its representatives that you have not paid sufficient amounts.

Options

Below, we have compiled various licensing options to assist you in meeting the copyright needs of your church. If you find looking through this information too time-consuming or overwhelming, we would be happy to provide you with some recommendations. Please click on the pop-up you see on this page and complete the questionnaire. We will review your church's common uses, recommend licenses that will cover those uses, and provide direction on obtaining the license(s) and any other pertinent information you need to know about them. This service is provided for \$250-\$350, based on the complexity of your church's needs. Please review the full questionnaire linked to the pop-up for more information on this service and the process.

1. CHRISTIAN COPYRIGHT LICENSING, INC.

- [Church Copyright License allows for:](#)
 - o Reproduction of song lyrics is found in hymnals, websites, chorus books, and similar publications for use by/for the congregation. This includes electronically storing, retrieving, and utilizing song files on computers, presentation software, and similar resources to enable visual projection of songs.
 - o Distribution of song lyrics in bulletins, liturgies, programs, song sheets, and songbooks compiled by your church. This also includes distributing lyrics by overhead transparencies and slides.
 - o Recording songs in your live worship services, including meditations, preludes, postludes, interludes, fanfares, handbell, and vocal and instrumental specials by either audio or audiovisual means, provided that 1) accompaniment tracks are not reproduced, and permission is obtained directly from the producer, 2) such recordings are for your church and its activities, and the quantity distributed does not exceed 15% of the church size of the license, and 3) to offset the cost of production, you may charge up to a specified amount for each copy duplicated.
 - o It does NOT cover song language translation, selling recordings or lyrics outside of church functions, or streaming and broadcasting.
 - o Currently, song reporting is required to be submitted online once every 2.5 years.

- [Streaming and Podcasting License allows for:](#)
 - o Streaming participating songs from your church's proprietary website, a hosted website, or a streaming service.
 - o Live streaming and retransmitting songs performed in your church services in audio and/or video form.
 - o Distributing audio or video files of songs performed in your church services to personal computers, portable media players, or a similar device capable of receiving such files.
 - o Does NOT cover charging a fee or receiving compensation for any of the above permissions, authorize any third-party to stream songs, stream artist or record label recordings of songs, or stream songs at church events where a financial charge, including donations, is required to attend.
 - o Please note that this license is considered an add-on option to the CCLI Church Copyright License, which must also be purchased. Also, there are two licensing options available for streaming, and that the information here is for the basic license. For more information on the specifics of both licensing options for streaming, please visit the [website](#).

- [Church Rehearsal License allows for:](#)
 - o Streaming commercial audio and/or video recordings with your worship leaders, musicians, and vocalists from your church's website, a hosted website, or a streaming service.
 - o Digitally distributing by downloading recordings such that the audio part is captured, saved, and/or stored on a personal computer or similar device, including distributing them on a CD, flash drive, or similar device.
 - o Does NOT cover things like, but is not limited to, charging a fee for recordings, recording your adaptation of the songs, and retaining copies of recordings for personal use. They are intended as temporary audio reference copies for learning and rehearsing.
 - o Please note that this license is considered an add-on option to the CCLI Church Copyright License, which must also be purchased.
 - For a list of songs included in these CCLI licenses, please see [here](#).

2. CHRISTIAN COPYRIGHT SOLUTIONS

- [WorshipCast Streaming License allows for:](#)
 - o Streaming live or on-demand performances of copyrighted music, including worship services and special events, from your church website.
 - o This license is not limited to worship service performances but covers concerts, weddings, funerals, youth and holiday arrangements, and studio recordings for worship teams outside the church.
 - o This license does NOT cover downloading music or webcasting of master recordings or accompaniment tracks, which would require additional licensing.
 - o Song usage must be reported if weekly church attendance is over 5,000.

- [PERFORMmusic License allows for:](#)
 - o Live and pre-recorded music performance outside of religious services, such as vacation bible school, free concerts, on-hold music, retreats, picnics, graduations, dances, fundraisers, conferences and seminars, and adult and youth group gatherings.
 - o This license does NOT cover streaming or broadcasting the event.
 - o Song usage reporting is not required.

3. ONE LICENSE

- [Reprint License \(Annual, Event, or Single-Use\) allows for:](#)
 - o Reproduction of, printing, and showing on-screen lyrics and music used by a congregation in a religious service, such as bulletins, programs, worship aid, song sheet, songbook, transparency, or via an electronic storage and retrieval system for projection of words or music or both.
 - o Reproduction does NOT include choir parts, accompaniments, complete scores, and instrumental parts of any kind.
 - o Annual licenses cover consistent usage throughout the year for the church and congregational gatherings hosted or sponsored by the church, such as youth groups, small groups, etc.
 - o Event licenses are available to cover retreats, conventions, and conferences no more than seven days in duration.
 - o Single-Use licenses are available for one-time events, including weddings and funerals. You must purchase a single-use license for each event.
 - o Reporting is required weekly and must be submitted online.

- [Limited Podcast Streaming License allows for:](#)
 - o Streaming worship services containing covered songs. Content can be distributed to your organization's website or through other platforms such as YouTube, Facebook, Zoom, Vimeo, and Instagram and allows you to stream to members who may be homebound, traveling, or serving in active duty.
 - o It does NOT allow your organization to archive your services until the end of the duration of the license.
 - o Reporting is required weekly and must be submitted online.

- [Practice-Track License allows for:](#)
 - o Reproducing and Distributing practice track recordings provided by publishers and CD's or MP3s for choir and ensemble members.
 - o Recording your versions of covered songs for the ensemble.
 - o Does NOT include commercial master recordings for use within live worship service.

For a complete list of member publishers who participate in the One License options, see [here](#).

The options below are subscription-based options that grant you the necessary permissions to stream music through its website anywhere publicly.

- [Soundtrack Your Brand](#)
Provides your church rights to stream music in an outside venue, such as a rented space for events with a subscription-based plan. The subscription offers both streaming license rights and public performance license rights.
- [Pandora For Business](#)
Provides your church rights to stream music in a commercial venue with a subscription-based plan. This is a fully licensed subscription service for businesses with no contract requirements.

Using popular worship songs in your ministry can help your members engage in worship, but there are some risks. A simple Google search would provide you with a plethora of articles about copyright laws, but we all know you can't trust everything you read on the internet. While some of the information is correct, the Copyright Services team at UMC Support hopes to clear up some of the common misunderstandings that we've encountered.

Myth #1: "Churches are exempt from music performance licensing."

Truth: [The religious service exemption](#) states that churches do not need a performance license to play or perform Christian and secular music in worship services. Only musical works (music and lyrics) and non-dramatic literary works (like poems, prose, short stories, books, periodicals) are exempt. It is essential to understand that this exemption only covers two of the six rights – performance and display – specifically "during services at a place of worship or other religious assemblies." The exemption does not cover performance activities at a place of worship for social, educational, fundraising, or entertainment purposes. Your church will need a license for these other types of religious activities.

Myth #2: "The religious service exemption allows us to broadcast my church's worship service."

Truth: While the exemption allows churches to perform activities such as singing copyrighted music and reciting poems in sermons without first obtaining permission, this exemption does not extend to retransmitting a service containing copyrighted material. The Congressional history shows that exemption does not extend to broadcasts or other transmissions to the public, even if the product is sent from a religious entity. If the church broadcasts, webcasts, livestreams, podcasts, or records worship services that include copyrighted material, it will need a streaming license or written permission from the owner for each work used.

Myth #3: "We don't copy anything. We just project lyrics during worship service. We are safe."

Truth: Interesting point! Especially since the display is exempted under the religious service exemption. But a copyright issue arises when someone has first entered those lyrics into a computer or has written them down on transparency. That's an act of reproduction, which is not exempt under the religious service exemption. Therefore, if your church reproduces lyrics in any form and projects the copied version during worship service, your church will need a license that grants the reproduction right, or written permission from the owner to reproduce, for any copyrighted work used in this way.

Myth #4: "My church does not perform music outside of worship services, so we are covered."

Truth: This is very rarely the case. With some reflection, you may recognize that your church is playing music outside of the worship services, including activities like retreats, picnics, conferences and seminars, Vacation Bible School, camps, youth group gatherings, weddings, on-hold music, music played before and after worship service, community events, and in the daycare setting. None of these activities are considered part of a worship service and would not be exempt under the religious service exemption. Any copyrighted material used in

these church-related activities would require appropriate licensing depending on how the material is being used during the event.

Myth #5: "We only use the hymnal in our services, we never project the lyrics, and we don't stream our services. We don't need a license."

Truth: Great! If that's 100% true, all the time, without exception, then you are fine. But considering the realities of church music ministries, it's usually not the case. Sooner or later, someone will probably want to use a song, not in the hymnal, and they may wish to project lyrics on the screen. Or other sub-ministries of the church may need to create a song sheet. Or retreats and camps may need a custom songbook. Weddings and funerals may require a special insert into the program. And if any of these events are recorded, churches will run into copyright issues of reproduction, recording, and distribution.

Myth #6: "If it's in the hymnal, it is free to use however we choose."

Truth: Hymnals are also copyrighted, and there are limitations on how the material may be used, even if your church has purchased the hymnals. Hymns that are listed in the hymnal as being in the public domain may be reproduced without permission. Lyrics from copyrighted hymns may be reproduced in the worship bulletin and displayed on a screen if the church has published hymnals for the congregation and if the reproduction is done following the copyright requirements in the hymnal. One typical requirement is to correctly note the copyright information in the bulletin or on the screen. Consult the hymnal and any related license for proper use of the copyrighted songs in a hymnal.

Myth #7: "We can show a video and/or lyrics using YouTube."

Truth: YouTube videos can be shown in your church, provided the video is on an official channel, and you have permission from the copyright owner. An official YouTube channel is considered a channel owned and operated by the owner of copyrighted material. YouTube's [Terms of Service](#) specifies that content on the site should only be accessed for "personal, non-commercial use" except where "prior written permission is obtained from YouTube and, if applicable, the respective rights holders [the copyright owner]" of the content. Meaning, you must have written permission from the owner of the material or have an appropriate license that grants the necessary permissions based on how you want to use the material. It is also important to note that the material must be original work, not derivative if your license does provide permission to show the material. For example, if your license grants permissions to reproduce, distribute, and display the song "Great Are You Lord" by David Leonard, and you find the music on YouTube, but it is not labeled as the "official video," then you do not have permission to use that version. You need to contact the owner of that version and obtain written permission to use it as your church intends or continue searching for the official video. This also applies to lyric videos. Often these videos are uploaded to the publisher's YouTube channel and/or embedded on the publisher's website with details of how they permit them to be used. It is considered consent if the description indicates that they intend to be used in a church service. As a general rule, it is recommended that you do not use YouTube to show videos, including lyric videos, without the copyright owner's explicit permission.

Myth #8: "I can just use Google to find images for Sunday's bulletin."

Truth: Wrong! UNLESS you have received permission to use the image first, it is a violation. The rule of thumb here is to assume that any image you find online is copyrighted material, and you must obtain written authorization from the creator before using the image.

Myth #9: "The fair use law means that I can use the image I found online without permission from the creator since we are considered nonprofit."

Truth: Fair use is probably not what you expect and is rarely available in a church setting. Whether or not you are within the boundaries of fair use depends on your situation and a balanced application of the law's four factors:

- 1) the purpose of use,
- 2) the nature of use,
- 3) the amount and substantiality used, and
- 4) the market effect.

The fair use exceptions may be available when a church, including a Sunday School class, uses a copyrighted work or a part thereof for teaching or comment purposes. In the educational context, the U.S. Copyright Office has published a [helpful advisory circular](#) containing guidelines for fair uses of copyrighted works.

Infringement occurs when you violate one or more of the exclusive rights of a copyright owner. Infringement is a serious matter that may result in a claim of copyright infringement against the person who violates the exclusive rights, as well as against the local church. If you are accused of copyright infringement, the penalties can be significant.

An infringer could be responsible for paying the actual dollar amount of damages and profits they obtained, or they can be accountable for statutory fees ranging from \$750 to \$150,000 "as the court considers just" per infringement, depending on whether the infringement was unintentional or willful. With certain caveats or exceptions, a copyright owner may elect statutory damages instead of actual damages or profits of the infringer. That is especially likely in cases where the infringement generates no real damage or profit.

When in doubt about whether a work is copyrighted or a particular use would constitute infringement, the church should always seek appropriate advice. To comply with federal law and avoid a claim for copyright infringement, it is best practice for the church to obtain a license or written permission from the owner, or a representative of the owner, for the work it wants to use.

HELPFUL THINGS TO KNOW:

What does Public Domain mean?

When a work is in the public domain, it's free for use by anyone for any purpose without restrictions under copyright law. You can arrange, reproduce, perform, record, publish and use or sell it commercially in any way you like. Essentially, the public owns these works instead of an individual, and anyone can use a public domain work without obtaining permission, but no one can ever own it. There are four common ways that pieces arrive in the public domain:

1. The copyright has expired.

U.S. copyrights eventually expire, and the owner no longer has exclusive rights. As of December 31, 2020, copyright expired for works published in the U.S. in and before 1924. These works are in the public domain. At the end of 2021, works published in 1925 will expire, and so on. For works published after 1977, the copyright will not expire until 70 years after the author's death due to a change in the law.

2. The copyright owner failed to follow copyright renewal rules.

Thousands of works published in the U.S. before 1964 fell into the public domain because the copyright was not renewed in time. If you plan to use a work published before 1964, you should research the records of the [Copyright Office](#) to determine if a renewal was filed to determine if the work is considered public domain. Even so, you should always obtain documented proof of this determination before using the material.

3. The copyright owner deliberately places it in the public domain, known as "dedication."

If, upon viewing a work, you see words such as, "This work is dedicated to the public domain," then it is free for you to use. This type of dedication is rare, and unless there is express authorization placing the work in

the public domain, do not assume that the work is free. If in doubt, contact the copyright owner to verify the dedication.

4. Copyright law does not protect this type of work.

Copyright law does not protect the titles of books or movies, nor does it protect short phrases such as "Break the ice," "Love is blind," or "Show me the money." Copyright also doesn't cover facts, ideas, or theories. You are free to use these without authorization.

You should use a public domain composition only if you have proof of public domain from a legitimate source, such as a tangible copy of the work with a copyright date old enough to be in the public domain or otherwise stated. If you do not have a legitimate source in your possession, there is no way you can be confident that the work you use is in the public domain, and you could be stuck paying substantial fees. A church should not assume that something is in the public domain simply because copyright information is not on the face of the work. In addition, the fact that one version of a work is in the public domain does not mean that a new copyrighted arrangement of the work can be used without a license or written permission from the copyright holder. Please also note that even if you conclude that a work is in the public domain in the United States, this does not necessarily mean that you are free to use it in other countries. Every nation has its laws governing the length and scope of copyright protection, and these apply to uses of the work within that nation's borders. The current duration of copyright protection for published musical works in the U.S. are as follows:

- Works Published Before 1926 – Maximum copyright protection of 95 years has expired – works are in the public domain
- Works Published 1926 through 1978 – Maximum Copyright Protection of 95 years from year published
- Works Published After 1978 – Life of the longest surviving creator plus 70 years – earliest possible public domain date is 1/1/2049.

Furthermore, it is possible for a work to be in the public domain, but not a specific performance of the work. For example, the works of William Shakespeare were created prior to copyright laws, and can be used without seeking permission, but this does not mean that all performances of Shakespeare's plays are in the public domain.

What does "Royalty-Free" mean?

Royalty-Free refers to the right to use copyright material without the need to pay royalties or license fees for each use, per each copy or volume sold, or some period of use or sales. These licenses are typically cheaper than most, but contrary to the term, this does NOT mean the works are "free" to use. Generally, it means that you can purchase the music and use it in multiple settings, often for commercial purposes, and not have to pay based on the volume you use.

In the photography and the illustration industry, royalty-free refers to a copyright license where the user can use the picture without many restrictions based on a one-time payment to the licensor. If you buy a license for a particular image on a royalty-free website, please be sure to check the restrictions specific to the purchase.

Church Public Domain Resources

- [Piano accompaniment recordings](#) offered by Discipleship Ministries is a good resource for public domain tunes from the United Methodist Hymnal and The Faith We Sing.
- [Hymnary.org](#) is an ecumenical resource with songs from many hymnals across the denominations. Please be sure to pay attention to the copyright notice on each work for more information on usage and restrictions.

- [The Cyber Hymnal](#) offers hymns and gospel songs from many denominations and languages, including lyrics, sheet music, audio, pictures, biographies, and history. Please be sure to read the website's Copyrights page in its entirety before using its material in any way.

United Methodist Book of Worship and Hymnal Ritual Resources

The United Methodist Book of Worship (1992), owned by The United Methodist Publishing House, is available [here](#). Congregations and other worshiping or church-related educational communities are free to reproduce these resources for worship, and educational purposes, provided the copyright statement included at the end of each piece is included in its entirety. For all other proposed uses, including but not limited to posting these resources on other websites or having them in any item for sale, you must contact permissions@umpublishing.org.

Further, the United Methodist Publishing House is waiving the need to ask permission to livestream and/or record worship services that read, perform, or display liturgical text from the U.M. Book of Worship. UMPH encourages churches to purchase and utilize streaming licenses to stream copyrighted service music from The United Methodist Hymnal. Many items appear in the U.M. Hymnal by permission of the copyrighted holders, and UMPH cannot give blanket permission to use their intellectual property. No additional permission is required for any United Methodist congregation to reproduce the liturgical text in the context of an online or physically gathered worship service or, during the COVID-19 crisis, to livestream worship services and/or record and post them on a private site extending through December 31, 2021. This permission does not extend to events other than worship services or events where admission is charged, or registration fees are collected. For more information on this, see [here](#).

Still confused? We understand - it is a lot of material ... and unfortunately the stakes are high! For a small fee, you can engage our copyright services specialty team to help you figure out which license(s) are right for you ministry. If you wish to have our team work for you, simply fill out the [Copyright License Questionnaire](#) to begin the process. A valued member of our team will be in touch and get you on the road to copyright peace of mind!

Disclaimer: While the information provided in these articles may assist a local church with its licensing needs, it is not a substitute for legal advice by an attorney with knowledge of copyright law or the written approval of specific copyright holders. If there is any doubt as to whether a particular use or practice violates copyright laws, the local church should seek the written advice of a lawyer or specific written approval of the particular use by the copyright holder or licensing agent. Similarly, the Licensing Report generated using GCFA's services is simply a recommendation based on GCFA's knowledge of available licensing options and does not constitute legal advice.

