
COPYRIGHT: AVOIDING PLAGIARISM IN CHURCH MUSIC

Ross Langmead, School of Ministry elective, July 2009

Unless a song is in the public domain, we need permission to

Photocopy music or words from a song book

Project words on a slide

Print words in an order of service

The usual way is to buy an **annual licence** for your church. (Special events such as carol services or combined events need a one-off licence.)

Christian Copyright Licensing International (CCLI) covers mainly Protestant evangelical music (www.ccli.com.au).

LicenSingOnline tends to cover the music of what might be labelled mainstream or ecumenical churches, with some Catholic music (www.licensingonline.org).

Word of Life International mainly covers Catholic music (www.freelink.com.au).

There are many **licence options**, but they usually require you to record what you use and then report it, perhaps online. A photocopy licence allows you to buy one copy of a book and then photocopy pages for the band.

Performing music recorded by an artist—or playing it on a CD/tape/DVD—in public requires a licence from the Australia Performing Right Association (APRA) (www.apra-amcos.com.au). Performing covers congregational singing and items. But APRA allows the performing of music during a church service, wedding or funeral without having to seek permission, if the music is on the APRA list. This also covers worship in home groups, but doesn't cover concerts. (APRA has a free downloadable brochure on *Copyright and Churches*, at www.apra-amcos.com.au/downloads/file/MusicConsumers/churches_2006.pdf).

Queries about **copyright in general** can be answered at the Australian Copyright Council's web site (www.copyright.org.au), where an e-book called *Churches and Copyright* can be purchased for \$15 online. Worth having in every church.

We need to **attribute every song** in every format. So, a paragraph in the corner of a PowerPoint slide for the last verse of "Here I am, Lord" might be:

Words & music by Dan Schutte.

© 1981 OCP. All rights reserved.

Used by permission. LicenSingOnline #A1032.

(Who wrote it?)

(Copyright held by whom?)

(Permission details)

If you want the **sheet music** of a song you can either buy the book of songs or download the song at a price from a group such as Music Notes (www.musicnotes.com) or SongSelect at CCLI. These days you can get sound samples, video clips, chord charts and so on—the resources have exploded in the last ten years. But don't assume that just because someone has put music or words on the web they are in the public domain.

If you look around on the Internet you will find many composers offering their music to be used freely (e.g., www.rosslangmead.com).

Did you know?

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- We may make a tape or digital recording of a church service which includes musical works without seeking permission as long as it is distributed only to shut-ins without a fee. (AMCOS, www.apra-amcos.com.au, licenses this.)
- Normally we need permission to play background recorded music at a public event (wedding, dance, concert, social function), but PPCA does not require it when the event is in aid of a not-for-profit group, so this covers worship services, fetes and fundraisers for the church. (Phonographic Performance Company of Australia, www.pcca.com.au.)
- Making a photocopy, overhead transparency or digital slide of lyrics or music amounts to reproduction and needs a licence.
- Making an arrangement of a copyrighted piece of music requires permission.
- Works enter the public domain fifty years after the death of the author/composer. But a musical arrangement might still be copyrighted.
- To show a video in worship we need permission from the film distributor, unless the film has been hired or borrowed from a group that licenses non-theatrical use, such as the Australian Centre for the Moving Image (ACMI, www.acmi.net.au). If we show a video for educational instruction, such as in Sunday School, permission is not required.
- We may show a small video clip, as long as it is not a 'substantial proportion' of the film.