

7 Myths about the Religious Service Exemption



Myths about the Religious Service Exemption

From Christian Copyright Solutions (CCS)

The religious service exemption in the US copyright law is vital for churches. But church leaders are often confused and find it hard to understand what the exemption covers and what it does not include. There are a lot of myths when it comes to the religious service exemption, so let's break it down into simple terms and address these common myths.

The exemption states:

"...performance of a non-dramatic literary or musical work or of a dramatico-musical work of a religious nature or display of a work, in the course of services at a place of worship or other religious assembly shall not constitute infringement of copyright."



CHRISTIAN COPYRIGHT SOLUTIONS

We help you do music right.

MYTH

1

All music played at a church function is exempt from copyright licensing.

TRUTH:

The religious service exemption only applies to actual religious services.

Music played in the context of your church service is in fact exempt from copyright responsibilities. **Outside of religious services, though, the exemption does not apply.** A church then has the same requirements as any business, restaurant or stadium. This means for social events, fundraisers, children's or youth programs, coffee shops, wedding receptions, on-hold music, vacation Bible school, etc. you must have the proper licensing in place.

MYTH

2

Churches must have a separate license for secular music played in a church service.

TRUTH:

The religious service exemption applies to any type of music played in the service.

As long as it takes place within the context of an actual church service, **churches can perform any type of music without risk of penalty**, whether that's a live performance or playing prerecorded music. The only exception is what would be considered a "dramatico-musical" work of a non-religious nature, like secular operas or plays, which would need separate licensing.

MYTH

3

The religious service exemption allows me to stream my church's services and performances of copyrighted music on our church's website.

TRUTH:

The exemption does not extend to the retransmission or streaming of a service.

If a church service is live-streamed, the church will require an **internet performance license** (or internet streaming license) if performing copyrighted songs.

MYTH

4

The religious service exemption allows my church to broadcast services on T.V. or radio.

TRUTH:

Any retransmission of the service is not included in the exemption, including T.V. and radio.

The exemption only covers copyrighted works used in the context of a live, on-site worship service. **Any retransmission or playback of the service is not a part of this exemption.** If the service is broadcast on T.V. or radio, those stations will need to have performance licenses.

MYTH

5

Our church can post our services, music and other copyrighted works on YouTube and stream via Facebook Live without a license.

TRUTH:

Video uploads and any type of streaming, even through Facebook, are not covered in the exemption.

Many churches are exploring outreach ideas by using new platforms so they can stream their media and music. Two of the most popular services are YouTube and Facebook Live, a live video streaming service that lets anyone broadcast from their mobile devices straight to their Facebook news feed.

The religious service exemption doesn't cover video uploads to services like Facebook Live and YouTube, because it doesn't provide for any performances retransmitted outside of the place of worship site. Plus, both of these sites may take down your video at their discretion for various reasons.

MYTH

6

Our CCLI Church Copyright License covers performing music outside of church services.

TRUTH:

The Church Copyright License by CCLI does not grant performance licenses. It grants a specific group of rights, primarily covering copying and derivatives.

THE CCLI CHURCH COPYRIGHT LICENSE INCLUDES:

- Making slides, overhead transparencies or utilizing electronic storage and retrieval methods for the visual projection of songs
- Printing songs in bulletins, liturgies, programs and song sheets*
- Translating songs into another language where no other published version is available*
- Printing songs in bound or unbound songbooks compiled by the church*
- Printing customized vocal and/or instrumental arrangements of songs where no other published version is available
- Recording songs in church worship services either by audio or audiovisual means*

**Note: the quantity of copies that may be created is limited based on the "church size" of the licensee. For additional information on the limitations, church responsibilities and additional restrictions on rights granted, refer to the Church Copyright License terms of agreement provided by CCLI.*

MYTH

7

Performance licenses are difficult and expensive to obtain.

TRUTH:

Getting the right coverage is simple and affordable.

[Christian Copyright Solutions](#) (CCS) offers two licenses that cover more than 25 million songs across the catalogs of the three performing rights organizations: ASCAP, BMI and SESAC. It's easy to sign up and get started, and CCS is happy to answer any questions you have along the way.

The [PERFORMmusic Facilities License](#) provides churches and ministries with a license for the performance of any live and prerecorded music in their facilities, including satellite campuses.

The [WORSHIPcast Streaming License](#) allows churches and ministries to webcast or stream any copyrighted music on their websites.

Purchase both as a bundle and you'll not only **save 10% on your first year's license**, but you can rest easy knowing you're totally covered both onsite at your facilities and online for streaming.