Guidelines for Worship Use of Material Under Copyright

Overview:

1. Copyright applies to churches.
2. Churches need permission to print, stream, project, and record copyrighted material.
3. Access to material is separate from permission to use it.
4. Ask permission and report usage, including:
   a. Hymns
   b. Liturgies
   c. Artwork
5. Licensing companies such as ONE LICENSE and the publishers themselves are the best sources for obtaining permission.

Introduction

Many resources used in worship are copyrighted. When using content from Augsburg Fortress or other publishers and creators, please be certain that permission has been obtained to use the content, not just access to it.

Permission can come from purchase of printed material (this permission will be noted in the resource), from the direct purchase of a license from the rights holder, through a licensing body like ONE LICENSE (onelicense.net), or in response to a direct request to the rights holder.

Below are FAQs and a table of resource types showing what access and permissions each type of resource grants.

General Questions

What is copyright?

Copyright is used to protect the rights of content creators by giving them control over the reproduction of any kind of intellectual property, including music, text, or visual arts. It grants legal protection to the creator of the intellectual property and gives that creator control of their creation. Honoring copyright is also an issue of justice, ensuring that creators are both paid and credited for their work. Publishers often manage copyright on behalf of content creators, so requests for permission often go through the publisher.

What is the public domain?

Works in the public domain are no longer subject to copyright restrictions, usually because enough time has passed since the work's creation or since the death of the work's creator. That time period is different across various countries and has changed over time. For works created today, the guideline is 70 years after the death of the creator.

Does copyright apply to churches?

Yes. Churches are both legally and morally responsible for obtaining permission and paying any fees when they reproduce works under copyright.

How do we know if a hymn is under copyright?

Start by looking at the bottom of the page; publishers are required to note who owns the copyright on any material they reproduce in a hymnal. If you're not sure, other resources to check are:

- SundaysAndSeasons.com, using the "Copyright Information" tab when clicking on a hymn
- OneLicense.net
- Hymnary.org
- CCLI.com

What if we have copies of the hymnal in our pews?

Purchasing hymnals gives you both **access** and **a performance license (permission)** to sing anything from the hymnal. This performance license is for **live, in-person worship only.** The publisher pays royalties on every copy sold to the correct rights holders.

However, even if a church has hymnals in its pews, the church needs to **obtain permission** to make additional copies of copyrighted material, such as:

- Printing a hymn text or music in a bulletin or service folder
- Projecting a hymn text or music on a screen or slide
- Recording, livestreaming, broadcasting, or digitally archiving the service

Each of these and other uses adds to the number of "copies" of a hymn out in the world, and thus it calls you to consider if you have the right to make copies and to obtain the necessary permission if not.

What if we are deluxe subscribers to sundaysandseasons.com?

The web resource sundaysandseasons.com gives you **access** to the graphics of nearly every hymn and song in Augsburg Fortress hymnals and worship books (as long as the rights holder gives Augsburg Fortress permission to make it available). However, sundaysandseasons.com does not necessarily give you permission to **reproduce those graphics.** To reproduce the content, you need permission from the rights holder. That's why the graphics include a line reminding you to report usage under a valid license, such as ONE LICENSE.

Why do we have to pay for both access and permission to reproduce?

The people that make and maintain the files available for download and the people who track usage are different. Most publishing companies are small and it takes staff time to keep track of self-reported data that churches submit each week. This reported data helps publishing companies know how to divide payments among the composers and authors whose songs were sung in worship. Instead of every publisher having their own reporting requirements, it is beneficial for us all—both publishers and churches—to have collective licensing organizations such as ONE LICENSE and CCLI that can manage all of the reporting and tracking. Augsburg Fortress licenses our worship music through ONE LICENSE, as do the vast majority of other rights holders represented in our hymnals. Permissions requests would cost churches much more if every rights holder had their own fees and needed to have staff devoted to reporting and tracking. A sundaysandseasons.com deluxe subscription pays for the work of creating, maintaining, and distributing the graphic files, and reporting their usage on onelicense.net pays the authors and composers for their work.

If I download a hymn graphic, do I also have to report its usage?

Yes. Downloading a graphic from a site like sundaysandseasons.com doesn't necessarily mean that the graphic has been duplicated in a bulletin or displayed on a live stream. Reporting should be based on actual usage, including printing, streaming, projecting, or recording copyrighted material.

What about liturgies?

The texts of the liturgies published in an Augsburg Fortress worship book and the music embedded in those liturgies, as well as selected independent liturgies and service music items under Augsburg Fortress copyright, are not included in ONE LICENSE. Instead, Augsburg Fortress offers a Liturgies License, which is included in a subscription to sundaysandseasons.com or is available separately.

To help simplify permissions work for churches, Augsburg Fortress does not require churches to report usage of Augsburg Fortress–administered liturgy texts and liturgical music.

What about artwork?

Art, like any expression of an idea, can be under copyright. To reproduce art that is under copyright requires permission from the rights holder. Artwork found on sundaysandseasons.com is available for churches to use for local, non-sale worship use. For other uses, contact copyright@augsburgfortress.org.

What if a church makes their own hymn graphics with notation software?

Check to ensure that the file does not contain any content that is under copyright. If it does, permission must be requested from the rights holder regardless of the method used to create or copy an image.

Steps to Reproduce Material Under Copyright

1. Research and obtain permission.

1. Start as early as possible, and make a list of items to be used in worship.
2. Determine what elements are under copyright.
    a. Copyright is associated with individual texts and tunes, not with the book or hymnal in which they are published. Check the bottom of the page, the copyright page, or a list at the back of the book.
    b. The publisher and the copyright holder might not be the same.
    c. There might be multiple copyright holders: tune, text, arranger, translator, etc.
3. Contact the creator or their publisher if there is doubt whether a license allows for reproduction of that content.

2. Cite all the relevant information in a copyright notice.

What information should be in bulletins/projections and videos/streams?

The church's license number(s) and specific copyright information about individual elements should be present in all bulletins and streams.

License Number

License numbers, such as a ONE LICENSE number and Augsburg Fortress Liturgies License number, should be included once in each bulletin or projection/video/stream, usually at the end.

Below are some samples of appropriate wording. Replace the placeholders (xx's) with the church's unique license number.

Sundays and Seasons (liturgical elements from Augsburg Fortress)

From SundaysandSeasons.com. Copyright 20xx Augsburg Fortress. All rights reserved.
Reprinted by permission under Augsburg Fortress Annual License #xxxxx.

ONE LICENSE/CCLI

Reprinted/Podcast/Streamed with permission under ONE LICENSE #A-xxxxx. All rights reserved.

Specific Copyright Information

Credits for all copyrighted elements should appear in bulletins, projections, streams, and video descriptions of past services, listing the content creator and the copyright holder. Ideally these are placed on the same page as the graphics, but the information can be moved to the beginning or end of a bulletin if needed.

Hymns and Songs

"Title" text and tune: Name of person © YEAR copyright holder's name
"Title" text: Name; tune: Name; text and tune © YEAR copyright holder's name
"Title" text: Name © YEAR copyright holder's name; tune: Name © copyright holder's name

Liturgical Elements

If a church has an Augsburg Fortress Liturgies License and that church is only using Augsburg Fortress liturgical items that are covered, listing the individual liturgical elements is not needed. These are covered by the copyright statement above.

If using elements not covered by an Augsburg Fortress license, obtain permission or check to see if they are covered under your ONE LICENSE or CCLI license. They need to be listed individually using a format like that outlined for hymns and songs, adding "Used by permission." to the end of the copyright notice.

Examples:

> Liturgy / Holy Communion Setting Four copyright © 2024 Augsburg Fortress. All rights reserved. Reprinted by permission under Augsburg Fortress Liturgies Annual License #SASxxxxx.
>
> "Earth and All Stars" text: Herbert F. Brokering; tune: David N. Johnson. Text and tune © 1968 Augsburg Publishing House.
> "When Jesus Came to Jordan" text: Fred Pratt Green © 1980 Hope Publishing Company; tune: Public Domain.
> "Come to Me, O Weary Traveler" text: Sylvia G. Dunstan © 1991 GIA Publications, Inc.; tune: William P. Rowan © 1993 Selah Publishing Co., Inc.
>
> Hymns reprinted under ONE LICENSE # A-XXXXX
>
> New Revised Standard Version Bible Updated Edition, copyright © 2022 National Council of the Churches of Christ in the United States of America. Used by permission. All rights reserved worldwide.

3. Report the usage.

If a copyrighted hymn or song is covered by a license such as ONE LICENSE, report that usage to ensure the creator of that element gets paid.

What if I can't find a piece on ONE LICENSE?

Augsburg Fortress is a member publisher of ONE LICENSE, which means that material for which we own or administer the copyright is covered if you report it to ONE LICENSE

However, not every piece of content that is covered by ONE LICENSE is listed at ONE LICENSE, since their database is generated by ONE LICENSE users over time. If a piece is not listed there that should be covered, please create a manual submission, referring to sundaysandseasons.com for the latest copyright information and ONE LICENSE for their manual submission process. The publisher will review the submission and either find the right entry, create a new entry, or pass the submission to the proper rights holder.

Please note that not every publisher is a member of ONE LICENSE or allows Augsburg Fortress to administer their material on their behalf. Depending on whom sundaysandseasons.com lists as holding the copyright, it may be necessary to contact the publisher or rights holder directly. But if in doubt, start with a ONE LICENSE submission.

When creating submissions for instrumental music based on a hymn, please include the hymn tune name (tip: search for the tune name on sundaysandseasons.com before creating a submission). Most hymn-based organ music is listed by tune name on ONE LICENSE.

What about CCLI?

CCLI (Christian Copyright Licensing International; ccli.com) is similar to ONE LICENSE in that it grants churches a license to use covered content in the context of a worship service. CCLI focuses on covering a more contemporary, band-led style of hymns. CCLI is essential for churches that have a praise band and/or use other contemporary music and resources.

What if I have questions?

Email copyright@augsburgfortress.org or call our rights management team at 612-330-3530 for assistance.

Useful resources:

Augsburg Fortress: augsburgfortress.org/info/permissions
Sundays and Seasons: sundaysandseasons.com
ONE LICENSE: onelicense.net
Hymnary.org
CCLI: ccli.com

Acknowledgments

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Please note that this is not a legal document. Congregations requiring legal advice should consult with a lawyer specializing in copyright law.

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This version was published in November 2025 and may be updated as needed.

Access and permission summary by type of resource

Green indicates access or permission to use Augsburg Fortress content.
Orange indicates no access or permission to use Augsburg Fortress content.

Type of resource	Access	Permission	
	Hymns and Liturgy *(Music graphics; text files; artwork within S&S.com)*	**Hymns** *(With one or more copyrighted elements)*	**Liturgy** *(Liturgical text; liturgical music graphics; artwork within S&S.com)*
Printed hymnal	The book itself is the access.	You have permission to sing anything in the book in worship (but no reprint, projection, streaming)	You have permission to sing anything in the book in worship (but no reprint, projection, streaming)
S&S.com *Standard* *This includes an AF Liturgies License (see below)*	View and download access to all S&S.com text material, artwork, planning resources, essays, liturgy music graphics; hymn graphics are view-only	None. A third-party license such as One License or CCLI, OR the permission of the rights holder is required for print, projection, livestream, and podcast.	Permission granted for reprint, projection, and podcast/ streaming of downloadable content including AF liturgy music graphics
S&S.com *Deluxe* *This includes an AF Liturgies License (see below)*	View and download access to all S&S.com content including hymn graphics	None. A third-party license such as One License or CCLI, OR the permission of the rights holder is required for print, projection, livestream, and podcast.	Permission granted for reprint, projection, and podcast/ streaming of downloadable content including AF liturgy music graphics
Augsburg Fortress Liturgies License *(When purchased without S&S.com)*	No access to content	None. A third-party license such as One License or CCLI, OR the permission of the rights holder is required for print, projection, livestream, and podcast.	Permission granted for reprint, projection, and podcast/ streaming of all content listed in the license document
One License Reprint *(A license and reporting service available separately from OneLicense.net)*	Limited access to music graphics from some publishers other than AF	Permission to reprint most hymn texts and tunes in AF hymnals, including copyrights held by AF and many other major publishers	Permission to reprint liturgy music from some publishers other than AF
One License Podcast/ Streaming *(Add-on to One License Reprint)*	Limited access to music graphics from some publishers other than AF	Permission to podcast and stream most hymn texts and tunes in AF hymnals	Permission to podcast and stream liturgy music from some publishers other than AF
CCLI *(A license and reporting service available at ccli.com; focus is on Christian Contemporary Music [CCM])*	Access to music graphics from some publishers other than AF	Permission for hymns and songs from some publishers other than AF	Permission for limited liturgical song content (no AF, GIA, OCP)