

Introduction to Copyright

1. What is copyright?

Simply put, copyright is about who has the right to copy something. Authors own the exclusive rights to their compositions. This is called copyright, and it means that the composition is protected for many years—even if the copyright is never registered with a copyright office. A composition is considered “intellectual property.” The copyright may be sold, transferred, or inherited—but the copyright still endures.

A copyright protects the creative works of a person’s mind and spirit. U.S. copyright law grants copyright owners exclusive rights for a specific period of time or term.

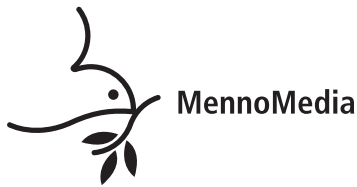
- For works published between 1924 and 1978, the creator maintains the copyright for 95 years post-publication.
- For works published after January 1, 1978, copyright is given to the creator for their lifetime plus 70 years.
- Upon expiration of a work’s copyright it becomes public domain (see Public Domain below for details).
- Works published before January 1, 1924, are in the public domain (see Public Domain below for details).

U.S. law grants the copyright owner exclusive rights to their work; they are the only one with the right to reproduce their work. Anyone else must obtain permission to reproduce the work from the copyright owner. Musical compositions and texts are often referred to as “intellectual property”; thus, we treat the owner’s property respectfully, just as we do our neighbor’s house.

The Canadian Copyright Act generally ensures that copyright lasts for the life of the author, the rest of that calendar year, and then another 50 years after the end of that calendar year. Therefore, protection will expire on December 31 of the 50th year after the author’s death.

Anytime we use another person’s property (or music), we must get permission to

- Make photocopies
- Print bulletins, songbooks, or song sheets for worship, Bible studies, or home prayer groups
- Make a transparency, a slide, or an electronic file for projection
- Make a photocopy for accompanists or soloists



- Make audio recordings of worship services
- Make videos of worship services or special musical presentations
- Livestream a worship service via YouTube, Facebook Live, Zoom, or other similar web streaming services

It's always better to ask permission beforehand. Do not wait to ask forgiveness if caught afterward. Plan as far ahead as possible since most publishers will not be able to respond immediately. When the volume of requests is high, some publishers may require as much as four to six weeks to respond. Also bear in mind that you will usually need to send requests in writing.

2. What are CCLI and One License?

These are the major licensing agencies for church music, and they simplify the permission-seeking process. Purchasing a license for your congregation gives you the ability to reprint or project the hymns and songs that are registered with the respective licensing agency without seeking permission for individual songs. For their guidelines and a list of the songs they cover, visit their websites. If you plan to reproduce hymns in bulletins, to project words or words and music, or to use music for livestream church services, we recommend that your church obtain these licenses.

Websites:

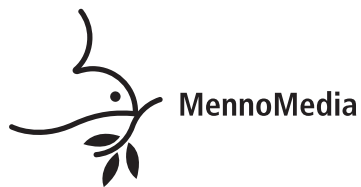
<http://www.ccli.com/>

<https://www.onelicense.net/>

3. Who is going to care (or catch me) if I don't follow the law? Why should I adhere to copyright law?

Many churches have been fined over the years for flouting copyright laws. Penalties for infringement range from \$500 to \$100,000. It is much easier, and much cheaper, to follow the law and secure the necessary permissions than to defend a lawsuit from a rights holder or legal charges from a government agency.

Obtaining copyright permission is also good stewardship and practices a basic commandment: "You shall not steal." Adhering to copyright law honors and respects the work of composers, writers, and publishers, and ensures they can continue to share their gifts and resources with the church.



Public Domain

What is public domain?

Public domain refers to material that is no longer under copyright because of its age or other factors. You do not have to ask for permission to use public domain material.

All compositions that are not protected under copyright law are said to be in the public domain. If both the text and music are in the public domain, you can reproduce and project them without any formal requests or permissions. However, if only the text is in public domain, you must get permission to use the music before reproducing or projecting the musical piece. If only the music is in public domain, you must get permission for the text.

1. How can I tell if the text or music in *Voices Together* is in the public domain?

Please check the information beneath the song or worship resource you are interested in. The ascription at the bottom has details regarding the music and text. If you see the word *copyright* or the copyright symbol (©), then some or all of the material is protected by copyright. You can also check the Index of Copyright Holders. Every song or worship resource under copyright is listed in that index. If you don't see any indication of copyright, the item is public domain.

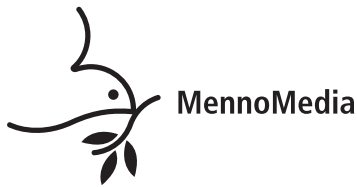
2. If the music or text I need is not public domain, whom should I contact?

Voices Together includes many works owned and copyrighted by individual composers and other publishers. MennoMedia does not have the right to grant permission for their works. Refer to the Index of Copyright Holders and then make your requests directly to the copyright owner.

Guidelines for Permissions

1. How can I simplify the process of obtaining permissions?

Purchasing a copyright license from One License, CCLI, or another licensing service allows you to use thousands of pieces of music. This saves the time and effort of contacting many individual rights holders; however, not every piece of music is covered under these licenses. Confirm that the specific piece is covered by your license. If your request is not covered by the license, be sure to contact that separate rights holder. (For more information on licensing agents, see #2 in Introduction to



Copyright above.)

Some pieces of music are in the public domain. These texts and tunes may be freely copied without anyone's permission; their time of copyright protection has expired. Out-of-print items may not be in the public domain, however. If they are not, permission must be granted by the copyright owner before any duplication, projection, or streaming. (For more information, see Public Domain above.)

2. How can I avoid asking permission?

Physically singing together or reading from the pew edition of *Voices Together* never requires permission. Reproducing, projecting, recording, or streaming public domain hymns does not require permission, either.

3. How many copies do I need to buy before I have permission to duplicate the material?

Purchasing copies, regardless of the quantity, does not give one permission to duplicate copyrighted material. You can always reproduce public domain material without permission.

4. How many copies do I need to buy in order to project the text?

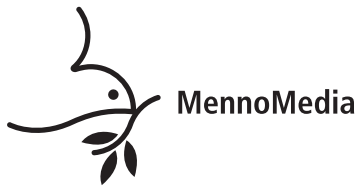
Purchasing copies, regardless of the quantity, does not give one permission to project copyrighted material. You can always reproduce public domain material without permission.

5. How many copies do I need to buy before I have permission to stream congregational singing?

Purchasing copies, regardless of the quantity, does not give one permission to broadcast copyrighted material via streaming services such as Facebook Live, Zoom, or YouTube. You can always stream public domain material without permission.

6. If I own the hymnal, do I need permission to copy its contents? Even if it is just for the choir to carry while processing?

Owning the hymnal does not give one permission to reproduce copyrighted material, regardless of the use. You can always reproduce public domain material without permission.



Working with Copyright Holders

1. Are all the pieces covered by the same copyright holder?

No. The material in *Voices Together* is covered by approximately 150 copyright holders. Please see the complete Index of Copyright Holders. We have also provided a list of Addresses of Copyright Holders.

The two main licensing agencies (see #2 above under Introduction to Copyright) do license the rights to the majority of these songs, making it easier for you to obtain permissions.

2. Does MennoMedia grant permission for us/congregations to copy things from the hymnal?

MennoMedia only grants permissions for the pieces in the hymnal that are controlled by MennoMedia and its predecessor organizations, Faith & Life Press, Mennonite Publishing House, and Mennonite Publishing Network. These are indicated in the copyright line beneath each hymn or worship resource and in the complete Index of Copyright Holders.

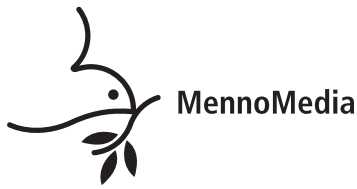
3. What is MennoMedia's fair use policy for material it owns or administers?

Under our fair use policy, congregations may reproduce hymns or worship resources for use in a worship bulletin, special program, or lesson resource provided that (1) the song or worship resource bears a copyright from MennoMedia or its predecessor organizations or is in the public domain; (2) the copyright notice shown beneath the song or worship resource is included on the reproduction; and (3) *Voices Together* is acknowledged as the source.

MennoMedia controls only a small number of items in *Voices Together*, and other publishers have their own interpretation of what constitutes fair use. Please check with them regarding their policies.

4. How do I get permission for material licensed by MennoMedia and not covered under fair use policy?

Please submit requests in writing at www.mennomedia.org/permissions. Please allow 1–2 weeks to process your requests.



Copyright with Electronic Products

1. If I purchased the projection edition, do I still need to ask for permission to project during worship?

While the projection edition includes files for projecting the contents of *Voices Together*, the songs under copyright still require your congregation to have permission to project. (Such permissions are typically granted through licenses. CCLI and One License base their licenses on the size of the congregation. In addition, congregations have to report to the licensing service what songs are sung, so MennoMedia is unable to secure those on behalf of congregations.) Please see the projection edition's Index of Copyright Holders.

2. Why do we need permission to record or stream our own worship services?

Under U.S. copyright law, recording any performance of a copyrighted work requires the permission of the rights holder, regardless of the type of performance. Performing a work live without recording is allowed under the "religious services exemption" in U.S. copyright law, provided that the work is performed in the course of services at places of worship or at religious assemblies. However, performance licenses must be obtained from the copyright owner for any musical performance outside of a specific "worship service," including concerts and special musical programs, and streaming licenses must be obtained from the copyright owner for any songs streamed during a worship service.