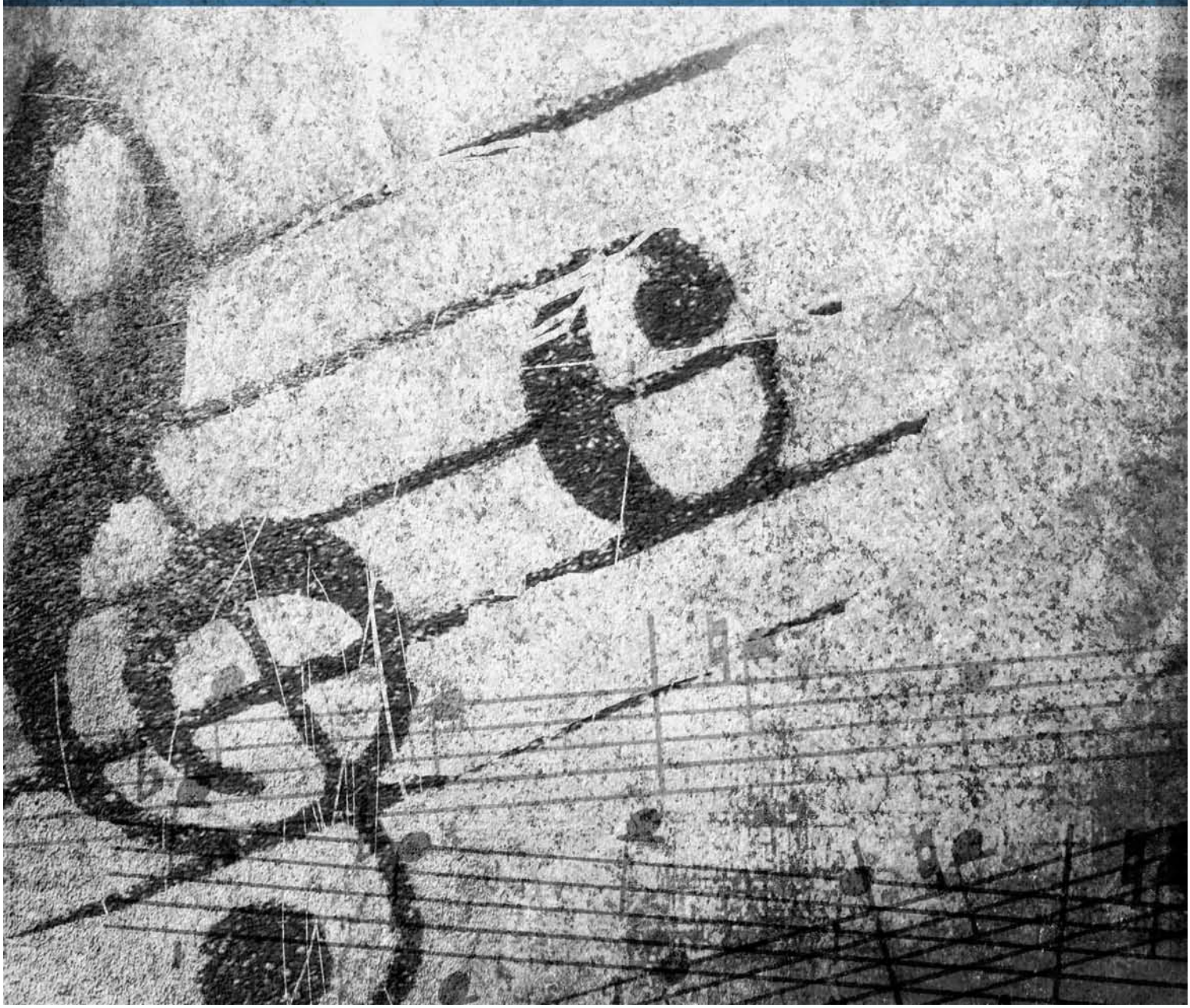
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Copyright Issues for Webcasting Services



Copyright Issues for Webcasting Services

By CCS

Many churches are taking advantage of inexpensive webcasting technologies.
It is important to keep in mind the copyright issues associated with webcasting.

Religious services are the most prevalent form of church webcasting.
Each type of copyrighted work used within these services have specific rules around them.

Overview

Webcasting offers churches and ministries a dynamic new communication vehicle with which to reach their congregations and the broader public. Many churches are already harnessing robust and inexpensive webcasting technologies to put a public face on their church. While churches increase visibility online, they also risk vulnerability with potential costly copyright infringement.

The most common use of webcasting is featuring church services, which are often broadcast live and sometimes archived for viewing at a later date. Prior to the availability of inexpensive digital video cameras and the widespread penetration of broadband, these webcasts were usually audio-only. The broader availability of these items has led to more churches offering video webcasts.

U.S. copyright law provides a religious service exemption which allows performance and display of certain copyrighted works in a religious service without permission or royalty payments. This exemption does not extend to webcasting. When it comes to webcasting, churches and ministries have no special rights over companies or private individuals.

There are generally fewer copyright issues involved with the webcasting of the sermon or message part of the service, although permission may be required from the pastor who presents the sermon. For this reason, many churches limit their webcasts to these parts. As demand grows for access to the entire service, churches are finding the need to become educated about the copyright issues that impact the webcasting of the complete service.

There are four types of copyrights that are commonly used in a church service: songs, sound recordings, images and video. Here is an overview of the issues surrounding the use of these copyrighted works.

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Webcasting Copyrighted Songs

Copyrighted songs are used in worship services in several ways. Each use of songs has its own particular copyright issues that need to be addressed.

Songs are performed by the worship team and the congregation

This is the most common usage of copyrights in services. For a church to legally webcast its performances, it must secure an internet performance license from song owners. Christian Copyright Solutions (CCS) offers a one-stop annual internet performance license for churches and ministries called **WORSHIPcast**. The **WORSHIPcast** License allows churches and ministries to webcast their performance of every song licensed by ASCAP, BMI and SESAC, representing more than 17 million Christian and secular songs.

CCLI also now offers the church streaming/podcasting license, which allows churches to stream or podcast their performances of about 300,000 Christian songs. The license is limited to worship services only. You must have a basic CCLI license to get the streaming license, but no additional reporting is required. Annual fees are calculated on several tier levels based on your congregation's size.

Song lyrics are shown on a video screen

It is common practice to put song lyrics up on a screen during song performances. The CCLI license allows churches to make copies of the lyrics required to do this, but does not cover the webcasting of these lyrics. Permission is required from the song's owner to webcast these lyrics. Many churches avoid the problem by keeping their lyric screens out of frame when recording the service.

Recordings of songs are played

Commercial sound recordings are often played during services. These recordings might be background music on animations or professional split tracks. In order to webcast these recordings, permission must be obtained from the owner of the recording. There is currently not a simple blanket license or mechanism for securing these licenses, but some record labels will issue licenses for webcasting their recording. This can be a complicated process, particularly with weekly activity. As a result, it is probably best for webcasting churches to avoid using commercial song recordings. They should also ensure that internet rights are included for split tracks they purchase.

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Webcasting Copyrighted Images

Churches frequently use photos and drawings to illustrate points during a sermon or to provide a backdrop to a performer. It is important to secure permission to webcast any copyrighted image. If the image is provided by a church member, be certain to get a release form signed by them. To ensure that your images can be webcast, stick to royalty-free catalogs like iStockPhoto and Getty images.

Webcasting Copyrighted Videos

Video and animations are also commonly featured in services. Video clips from popular culture are often used to highlight points in sermons. While the CVLI license allows churches to play or perform many of these videos on the church premises, it does not allow editing, reproduction or webcasting the videos. While it is possible to get permission for webcasts from movies studios, it can be very time consuming and expensive. It is recommended that churches avoid commercial video clips if they want to webcast their services.

Many churches are now using animations to “jazz up” their services. These animations take the form of “service starting” countdowns and transitions between segments of the service. Be certain to confirm that you have permission to webcast these animations if you use them as part of your service. The contracts that many animation distributors have with their filmmakers often do not allow for webcasting.

Christian media companies, like Igniter Media, SermonSpice and WorshipVue offer a variety of still images, countdowns, loops and mini films. The purchase of these products does not usually include permission to reproduce, edit or webcast their material. Licenses can often be obtained to legally stream the material, and royalty fees can be very reasonable. The key is to request permission from the companies prior to using the material in any way that is not detailed in the terms and conditions that come with the purchased product. CCS offers preapproved licensing for some Igniter Media products.

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