



Copyrighted Christmas Songs



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Planning Christmas programs is an exciting time for your church, but it's not without stressors. Determining which Christmas songs are copyrighted and which are public domain is often at the top of this list. So how do you know the difference?

Public Domain Songs vs. Copyrighted Songs

Public domain songs are those you can use *without the need to obtain permissions, pay royalties, or credit the original author*. However, this does not apply to copyrighted arrangements of a song in the public domain.

Copyrighted songs require permission, licensing, or exemptions.

While there are traditional Christmas carols, songs, and hymns that fall in the public domain and can be used without permission in various settings, many modern arrangements and contemporary songs are copyrighted and owned by secular music publishers. The commonly held misconception that all Christmas songs are available for use without permission could prove costly to churches.

For example, public performances of Henry Wadsworth Longfellow's "I Heard the Bells on Christmas Day," written in 1863, can be sung during a Sunday morning service, streamed live online, or performed publicly.

However, Casting Crowns' rendition of "I Heard the Bells on Christmas Day," released in 2008, is a copyrighted musical arrangement requiring appropriate licensing.

What about the Religious Service Exemption?

The [Religious Service Exemption](#) in U.S. Copyright law allows churches to play and perform copyrighted music during religious services; however, this exemption does NOT apply to music outside of services. The exemption also doesn't cover streaming services that include copyrighted music.

The Christmas season allows for a wide variety of opportunities outside of services to connect and engage with your congregation. From traditional Christmas programs to lighted walks through Bethlehem and synchronized music to children's performances. These types of special events and programming are not covered under the Religious Service Exemption.

To receive permission to use copyrighted songs, your church has two options:

- Go directly to the publisher or performance rights organization to obtain permission.
- Purchase a blanket license that covers the use of a catalog of songs (Note: Currently there is not a blanket license for sound recordings).

Blanket Licenses and Christmas Songs

The [PERFORMmusic Onsite Facilities License](#) provides churches and ministries within the US and its territories with a license for live performances and playing prerecorded music throughout their facilities, including satellite campuses.

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

These blanket licenses give your church or ministry the ability to have the worship team play, perform, or stream from your church website millions of songs, including new arrangements of favorite Christmas classics and new songs by artists such as:

- Carrie Underwood - My Gift
- Lynda Randle - White Christmas
- Jim Brickman - Soothe Christmas
- Dolly Parton - A Holly Dolly Christmas
- Pentatonix - A Pentatonix Christmas
- Lauren Daigle - Behold: A Christmas Collection
- Chris Tomlin - Christmas Day
- Idina Menzel - Christmas: A Season of Love
- Josh Groban - Noel
- Amy Grant - A Christmas Album

And so many more! Including, but not limited to:

- A Baby Changes Everything
- A Baby Will Come
- A Carol at the Heart of Every Christmas
- A Carol for Today
- A Christmas Creed
- A Christmas To Remember
- A Christmas Wish
- A Classical Christmas
- A Holly Jolly Christmas
- A Merry Carol of the Bells
- All Hail King Jesus
- All I Want for Christmas is My Two Front Teeth
- All I Want For Christmas Is You
- Alleluia Emmanuel
- Angles Are Rejoicing
- Baby Jesus
- Baby King
- Baby Medley
- Beautiful Scandalous Night
- Blue Christmas
- Calling All Angels
- Can You Hear The Angels Sing
- Can You Hear The Bells
- Candlelight Medley
- Carol of the Bells
- Celtic Christmas Celebration
- Changed By A Baby Boy
- Charlie Brown Christmas
- Chestnuts Roasting On An Open Fire
- Child In The Manger
- Christ Be Born In You
- Christmas All The Time
- Christmas All Year Long
- Christmas Angels
- Christmas Canon Rock
- Christmas Carol
- Christmas Cheer
- Christmas Cookie
- Christmas Day
- Christmas Don't be Late
- Christmas Eve Sarajevo 12/24
- Christmas Fantasia
- Christmas Feelin'
- Christmas Festival

- Christmas for Cowboys
- Christmas Glory Medley
- Christmas Hallelujah
- Christmas Hymn
- Christmas in the USA
- Christmas Is My Favorite Time of the Year
- Christmas Is The Best Time of the Year
- Christmas Lullaby
- Christmas Waltz
- Celebrate Christmas Day
- Come and Worship Medley
- Come Emmanuel
- Come On Christmas
- Do You Hear What I Hear
- Don't Leave Jesus Off Your Christmas List
- Don't Save It All For Christmas Day
- Emmanuel
- Fantasia of Christmas Bells
- First Day of the Son
- Frosty The Snowman
- Give a Gift This Christmas
- Happy Birthday, Baby Jesus
- Have a Jolly Holly Christmas
- Have a Merry Merry Christmas
- Have You Heard About The Baby
- Have Yourself a Merry Little Christmas
- Holy You Are
- I Want a Hoppopotamus For Christmas
- It's Christmas Time
- Jesus Born on This Day
- Last Christmas
- Let's Make a Baby King
- Let's Have a Christmas Celebration
- Little Baby Boy
- Mad Russian Christmas
- Mary Did You Know
- Mary Had a Baby
- Not An Ordinary Baby
- On the First Day of Christmas
- Christmastime
- One Christmas Eve
- One Small Child
- Peace On Earth (I Heard The Bells On Christmas Day)
- Ring Those Bells
- Rockin' Around The Christmas Tree
- Rudolph The Red Nose Reindeer
- Santa Claus Is Coming To Town
- Santa's Classical Christmas
- Sending You A Little Christmas
- Silver Bells
- Sing Christmas
- Sing We Now of Christmas
- Sleigh Ride
- Super Duper Christmas
- The Birthday of a King
- The Christmas Waltz
- The Night Before Christmas
- The Song of Christmas
- The Sounds of Christmas
- This Baby Boy
- This Is Christmas
- Three Days Left 'Til Christmas
- Two Steps Around the Christmas Tree
- Up On The Rooftops Reindeer Pause
- What's This
- White Christmas
- Who Comes This Night
- Winter Wonderland
- Would It Still Be Christmas

Learn more about our licenses!

CCS provides blanket licenses that meet most church performance copyright needs. For more details or information about products and services that we offer contact:

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