

# Music Guidelines from WorshipWeb

For all UU worship leaders and religious professionals

December 2021

Dear Weary and Wonderful Worship Leaders,

In March 2020, we were forced to learn new practices and skills in order to create online/streaming worship for our congregations. While streaming worship has become a norm, we've noticed how easy it is to fall short of honoring right relationship with the musicians—both professional and volunteer—who create music for our worship. Since our faith is grounded in values of respect and equity, we're encouraging UU congregations to practice *new* skills to incarnate those values.

Throughout the pandemic, many musicians were generous enough to share their work, [in video form](#), with congregations. Music is such an integral and life-giving part of worship that these gifts of music elevated our online worship services. Unfortunately, this generosity has created an expectation—perhaps unconscious—that music comes to us for free. This expectation has had the unjust effect of devaluing the work and skills of many musicians.

As soon as you're able to discuss these guidelines with your worship team and other congregational leaders, we recommend that all UUs congregations, regardless of size, adopt the following relational practices:

- When you discover a music video that you'd like to include in worship, **communicate with the artist(s)**. Offer appreciation in addition to asking to “use” the work that they've created. As an act of connection, reaching out allows you to share the worship context in which you'd like to share their music. This will involve time and labor on your part. Relationship is time- and labor-consuming, and yet it's at the heart of our values.
- Get in the habit of **compensating artists** for *every video* that you use. Ask the musician what their desired honorarium is, or



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offer a pay-what-you-can financial gesture. If yours is a small congregation with “no budget for music,” interrogate your assumptions about what financial range is possible for you, and what it would mean to create worship services without any music.

- Understand that almost always, a financial contribution for a video doesn't secure ownership of that music, but rather a **one-time usage**.
- Show the entirety of the video, as originally produced, so that **credits are included** in your worship service.
- **Cultivate appreciation for musicians.** If the video you use was created by a music professional on congregational staff, use your Google skills to send a quick note of thanks to the Board, making sure the congregation's leaders know that “their” staff member's gifts have been enjoyed beyond their own walls.



We know that the pandemic has worn down your resources and energy; we know that it might feel overwhelming to add more tasks to the process of planning worship. We also trust you to prioritize the ethic of relationship expressed in these recommendations, just as we hope that musicians will feel more comfortable asking that their work be honored.

Thank you for understanding that all of us are strengthened when we attend to our relationships with one another, including those who create, accompany, and perform the music that enriches our worship services.

[Rev. Erika Hewitt.](#)

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in collaboration with the Association for Unitarian Universalist Music Ministries (AUUMM)