

Book review: Love to Share

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Love to Share: Intellectual Property Rights, Copyright, and Christian Churches,

Co-published by WACC and WCC

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At first glance, one might wonder why Churches would be concerned about legal matters such as intellectual property rights and copyright issues. As it turns out, Churches regularly have to deal with these matters, particularly concerning music and liturgy for worship. How can Christians be fair to the creator of these works, while at the same time promote a generous spirit of sharing? *Love to Share* is a response from the World Association for Christian Communication and the World Council of Churches.

The book seeks to broaden the discussion on intellectual property (IP) and copyright from a strictly legal perspective to a more theological and ethical stance. They do recognize the importance of complying with IP laws. However, they also believe that Churches can offer alternatives to the present system to reflect a more just distribution of the blessings of our creative powers.

The book frames the IP debate in the context of globalization, especially the divide between peoples of the North and peoples of the South. The argument for promoting a culture of sharing is similar to that in ecumenical documents such as the WCC's *AGAPE*. It's no surprise that one of the book's contributors is Dr. Rogate Mshana, head of the economic justice program at the World Council of Churches. Others on the writing team are from Brazil, Switzerland, Canada, Guatemala and the U.S.A.

Besides insightful Biblical reflections on property, ownership and community, *Love to Share* is clearest when it simply tells the stories of copyright problems that Churches have faced. For example, the WCC itself has struggled to get copyright permission for songs to be used at its ecumenical meetings. Another case is the Kuo family from Taiwan, who fought a long legal battle to be compensated as composers of a song that featured at the 1996 Olympics in Atlanta. In addition, many publishing houses in the North hold the copyright (and profit) for Christian music that often originated in communities in the South. Such incidents illustrate how

complex the situation has become and why solutions are urgently needed.

The book offers concrete suggestions for Churches to tackle IP and copyright issues. What I found most refreshing was their promotion of free distribution for non-commercial use of worship resources whenever possible. It goes completely against the 'logic' of the market. This free sharing could be accomplished through innovative concepts such as 'copyleft', Creative Commons and the Internet database www.feautor.org

Surely, there are even more ways to facilitate the sharing of God's grace through our creative expressions. Asia communicators could make a significant contribution by sharing their own problems and solutions with the global community.