

Risk Alert



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You need permission to use 'The Dash'

Over the last few years, nine Church Mutual customers have been threatened with copyright infringement litigation regarding unauthorized use of a poem entitled "The Dash."

Those claims have resulted in demands for financial compensation.

Churches have used this piece, written by Linda M. Ellis, in their bulletins, on their websites and as memorials at funerals.

"The Dash," copyrighted on June 15, 1998, is an inspirational poem that uses the dash between the birth and death dates on a person's tombstone as a metaphor for life. It is available for sale at www.lindaellis.net.

We wanted you to be aware that Linda Ellis's company, Linda's Lyrics, is actively monitoring and enforcing its rights to "The Dash."

According to the United States Copyright Office, copyright is a form of protection grounded in the United States Constitution and granted by law for original literary, musical, dramatic and artistic works, such as poetry, novels, movies, songs, computer software and architecture.

Infringement occurs when a copyrighted work is reproduced, distributed, performed, publicly displayed or made into a derivative work without the permission of the copyright owner.

Religious organizations are able to purchase licenses that allow them to use some copyrighted works for an annual fee, normally in the \$250 range.

For more on this subject, go to www.churchmutual.com, click on Safety Resources, Risk Reporters, *Risk Reporter for Religious Institutions*, Access by edition and consult the Fall 2010 edition.

