

A FREE GUIDE FROM ENDUO MEDIA

CHURCH PHOTOGRAPHY GUIDE

Tips, printable shot lists and a simple workflow for church photography teams, from your first camera to your best Sunday.



*"One generation shall commend
your works to another, and
shall declare your mighty acts."*

PSALM 145:4 (ESV)

Every photo your team takes is part of that story. It shows the next generation what God has done in your church, one Sunday at a time.

Church Photography Guide · Version 1.0 · 2026

© 2026 Enduo Media. All rights reserved. You're welcome to print this guide and share it with your team and other churches, free. Please don't sell it, remove or cover our logo, add your own branding, or republish it as your own. Not legal advice. Have your leadership and an attorney review any policy or form before you use it.

Scripture quotations are from the ESV® Bible (The Holy Bible, English Standard Version®), © 2001 by Crossway, a publishing ministry of Good News Publishers. ESV Text Edition: 2025. The ESV text may not be quoted in any publication made available to the public by a Creative Commons license. The ESV text may not be translated in whole or in part into any other language. Used by permission. All rights reserved.



ABOUT THIS GUIDE

Great church photos start with a plan.

We see the same question in church communications groups all the time: does anyone have a guide for our photography team? This is ours, and it's free to share. Church photography is ministry. Every photo helps tell the story of what God is doing in His church.

Enduo Media is a creative team that designs for churches and ministries across the country. We see church photos every day in sermon graphics, invite cards, websites and booklets. We know what makes a photo work, and what makes it hard to use.

This guide is for the pastor starting a photography team from scratch, the volunteer who was just handed the church camera, and the communications leader who wants a better system. It walks through the whole journey: why photos matter, building a team, permission and privacy, shot lists, camera and phone basics, culling, editing, organizing and sharing.

Built from real Sundays

Our team has led volunteer church photography teams, trained brand new photographers and edited their photos every week. We've also designed with thousands of church photos. This guide is what we wish every team had on day one.

"Our purpose should never be about performance or perfection. It should be about presence, and capturing the church as it is."

Brittany Moody

Enduo Media Founder & Creative Director

HOW TO USE IT

- 1 Read it once with your whole photography team.
- 2 New to cameras? Start with Photography 101 on page 33.
- 3 Print a shot list from pages 28 to 32 for every event.
- 4 Fill in your standards on page 48 and keep the card on page 49 in your camera bag.

INSIDE

01	Your photos are your brand	5
02	Build and care for your team	7
03	Permission, privacy and ownership	19
04	Plan the shoot	26
05	Photography 101: cameras, lenses, phones	33
06	On the day	40
07	Cull: keep the keepers	41
08	Edit with a consistent look	42
09	Organize, protect and share	43
10	Put your photos to work	46
11	Keep growing	47

PRINTABLE TOOLS

Team setup worksheet	14	Team expectations worksheet	15
Photo laws at a glance	22	Sample photographer agreement	24
Parent consent and sign wording	25	Photo library checklist	27
Shot list: Sunday	28	Shot list: holidays and special services	29
Shot list: indoor event	30	Shot list: outdoor event	31
Shot list: baptism Sunday	32	Sync your cameras	39
Photography standards worksheet	48	Camera bag cheat sheet	49



01

Your photos are your brand.

Before a guest ever walks through your doors, they have already met your people. They saw them on your website, your invite cards and your Instagram. Your photos say who you are before you say a word.

Stock photos are a hard sell. Everybody knows the stock photos. Put the standard stock photo of a woman holding a Bible on your groups flyer and people can tell. She doesn't go here.

Your own people win, even on a phone. Real photos from your church beat generic stock almost every time. Sometimes just switching out the photos makes all the difference.

Photos can be your color. If your brand palette is simple, your photography can carry the color for you.

"Your branding isn't your logo. Your branding is who people say you are."

Brittany Moody

Enduo Media Founder & Creative Director

DESIGNER'S NOTE

When a graphic feels flat, the first thing we ask for is photos from last year's event. Even cell phone shots. That one swap is often the fix.

Show **people**, not just the production.

Worship shots with lights and haze are the fun ones to shoot. But someone who has never been to church might see that mailer and wonder why a concert flyer showed up at their door. People are looking for connection. Show faces. Show people with each other.



GOOD Great for a worship night promo. Use it sparingly.



BETTER This is what a guest wants to see: belonging.

SIX MARKS OF A GREAT CHURCH PHOTO

People over production

Faces and connection carry more than lights and haze.

Life happening

Real moments beat stiff, posed lineups.

The room is alive

A decorated empty room looks dead in photos. The people make the room.

Less is more

Simple backdrops let people shine. Skip the hay bales and scarecrows.

It looks like here

Your building, your town, your weather. Not mountain lakes when you live in Florida.

Sharp and awake

In focus, well lit, eyes open. Everything else is a reject.

"And day by day, attending the temple together and breaking bread in their homes, they received their food with glad and generous hearts, praising God and having favor with all the people."

ACTS 2:46-47 (ESV)

Build your photography team.

Volunteers are a gift. Treat them that way. You can only ask so much of people serving for free. Give each photographer one specific job for the day instead of "get everything." And tell them plainly: we value you, but not at the cost of your peace, your health or your boundaries.

Write it down. Make a simple team guide with your purpose, your do's and don'ts, where files go and what you expect. When your main shooter is out and a student fills in, they know exactly what to do.

Schedule like any other team. Use a scheduling tool like Planning Center (more on page 13). Ask photographers to accept their request, read the order of service before Sunday, and tell a leader early if they're sick.

Coach with "here's what we're looking for." Telling a team "you're not doing what we want, be better" never works. Show examples of shots you love. Frame changes as streamlining, so nobody hears "you're bad at this."

Start with one. One faithful photographer every Sunday beats five who show up once a year. Every extra camera means more photos to sort and more color to match. Add people when the workload asks for it.

GROW AT YOUR OWN PACE

Team of one

Wide stage, a few faces in worship, the lobby before and after. That's a full Sunday.

Team of two

One covers the stage and worship. One covers people and connection.

Three or more

Add families, serving teams and kids, following your kids policy.

"As each has received a gift, use it to serve one another, as good stewards of God's varied grace."

1 PETER 4:10 (ESV)

Look for teachable, not just experienced.

Most people have never photographed a church service. That's normal. Don't turn someone away because they don't have years behind a camera. A humble beginner with a willing trainer will often serve better than an experienced photographer who won't take direction.

01

Say yes to interest

If someone asks about the photography team, make room. Pair them with someone who can train them. Interest starts the conversation. Then follow your church's normal screening for volunteers.

02

Respect the pros

Some photographers you ask will want to be paid. That's okay. It's their living, and their skill has real value. Thank them and move on with no guilt on either side.

03

Look around the room

Students, retirees, the parent who always has a camera at games, the person taking great phone photos at every event. Your next photographer may already be there.

TEENS ON THE TEAM

Students can be some of your best photographers. Never discourage them from serving. But plan for it as a leadership team:

- Many background check services can't screen minors. It depends on your provider and location.
- Decide whether minors may photograph or film people, especially kids.
- Name the adult who oversees each student photographer.
- Get a parent or guardian to sign the volunteer agreement.
- Check your state or country's rules and your insurance.

"Let no one despise you for your youth, but set the believers an example in speech, in conduct, in love, in faith, in purity."

1 TIMOTHY 4:12 (ESV)

"The harvest is plentiful, but the laborers are few; therefore pray earnestly to the Lord of the harvest to send out laborers into his harvest."

MATTHEW 9:37-38 (ESV)

Make it easy to learn.

The best church photography teams grow their own photographers. Build a simple path from "I'm curious" to "I've got this Sunday."

01

Host an interest meeting

Once or twice a year, give a short talk on what the team does. Answer questions. Let people hold the camera. No commitment required.

02

Hold training days

Practice away from Sunday pressure. Settings, where to stand, how to move quietly. There's never enough time to teach during a service.

03

Shadow before solo

New photographers shoot alongside an experienced one for a few weeks as a second shooter. Then they're ready for their own Sunday.

04

Let them practice at home

Some people learn best with a camera in their hands for a week. If your policy allows it, let them take it home and play.

05

Point them to videos

Free online tutorials cover almost every camera model. Send new photographers the ones for the camera they'll actually use.

06

Review together

After a Sunday, sit down for ten minutes. Pick favorites. Name one thing to try next time. Small, kind feedback grows people fast.

Write a take-home policy

Can church cameras leave the building? Who approves it? How is gear signed out and back in? Who pays if it's lost or broken? Decide before someone asks, and put it in writing.

"Give instruction to a wise man, and he will be still wiser; teach a righteous man, and he will increase in learning."

PROVERBS 9:9 (ESV)

Decide who does what before Sunday.

When expectations aren't clear, frustration festers. Most team tension isn't about the photos. It's about nobody knowing who was supposed to do what next. Walk every photo from the camera to the post.

SHOOT 01	EDIT 02	DELIVER 03	POST 04
Who is scheduled to shoot this week? Who covers events? One photographer or a team?	Is everyone trained to edit, or only a few? Schedule editors the same way you schedule shooters.	Where do finished photos go? Who gets told they're ready, and how? A text, an email or your scheduling app.	Who posts them, and when? A social media volunteer, a communications staffer or a pastor?

Not everyone has to edit. Editing takes skill, software and hours at a computer. Letting some people shoot and others edit opens the door for more people to serve. A great shooter who never edits is still a great volunteer.

THE CHURCH EQUIPS THE TEAM

Don't expect volunteers to bring everything. If the church asks for edited photos, the church should provide what it takes to make them:

- An editing computer
- Editing software
- Storage and backups
- Cards and batteries

When the church owns the tools, the photos and the workflow stay with the church when someone steps down. More on page 11.

DECIDE WHAT TO WEAR

Some churches want photographers in normal Sunday clothes, like a dress or a button-up shirt. Others ask for all black so photographers blend in. In some rooms, all black stands out more than anything. Pick what disappears in your room and say it plainly.

Either way, choose quiet shoes and clothes you can crouch in.

Fill it in as you go. The team setup worksheet on page 14 walks through every one of these decisions, along with the expectations and care on the next few pages.

"But all things should be done decently and in order."

1 CORINTHIANS 14:40 (ESV)

Invest in gear the church owns.

A team that depends on one volunteer's camera is one broken lens away from going dark. When it's able, the church should own its own equipment and keep investing in it over time.

01

Start with one church camera

Even a used body and one good lens. Volunteers who don't own gear can still serve, and Sunday doesn't depend on one person's camera bag.

02

Insure it

Add cameras, lenses and computers to the church's insurance. When many hands use the gear, accidents happen. Someday a camera will meet the baptism tank.

03

Keep backups

Spare batteries and cards, and a backup body or a good phone with a mount. One failure shouldn't stop a Sunday.

04

Plan for when it breaks

Who decides whether to repair or replace? How is it paid for? What does the team shoot with in the meantime? Answer it before it happens.

05

Be clear about personal gear

Decide up front who is responsible if a volunteer's own equipment is damaged while serving. Put it in the volunteer agreement on page 24.

06

Be gracious when theirs breaks

A broken camera is like a broken-down car. A volunteer who can't afford to replace it isn't letting you down. Offer the church camera or another way to serve.

Budget for it. Cameras, lenses, editing software, storage and badges belong in the communications budget like microphones and projectors do.

"For which of you, desiring to build a tower, does not first sit down and count the cost, whether he has enough to complete it?"

LUKE 14:28 (ESV)

Clear expectations protect your volunteers.

Church photography takes real skill: cameras, editing software, a good eye and hours at a computer. Many churches struggle to fill the nursery. Finding someone who can do this well is a gift. When expectations aren't clear, frustration festers. Talk these through together.

01

Agree on turnaround

Same day, Monday or Tuesday? Decide together. Same day only works when it's planned for and staffed.

02

Agree on how many

Ask what will actually get used. If your church posts 30, deliver your best 30. Cull, then cull again.

03

Name a point person

Someone photographers can go to on Sunday. Not anyone on stage or in the production booth.

04

Tell them what you need

Share upcoming series, events and must-have shots ahead of time. A shot list beats "get everything."

05

Use their work

Do something with every set of photos. Social, slides, the website, a flyer. Don't let them sit untouched in a folder.

06

Close the loop

Tell the team when their photos go live. If some won't be used, say so and say why. Silence feels like rejection.

07

Respect their time

Editing shouldn't eat a whole weekend. Agree on when the work is done, and skip the midnight requests.

08

Check in regularly

Pastoral staff should sit down with the team every two months or every quarter. Ask how they're doing, not just what they shot.

09

Say thank you

Specifically and often, in person and in front of others. Name the photo you loved. People who feel seen keep serving.

Write it down. The team expectations worksheet on page 15 puts all of this on one page you can revisit at every check-in.

"Without counsel plans fail, but with many advisers they succeed."

PROVERBS 15:22 (ESV)

Care for the people behind the camera.

Serving on a photography team costs something. An afternoon with family. A Sunday nap. An evening after a full workday spent editing. When that work goes unused or unmentioned, morale drops.

That isn't vanity. A pastor who prepares all week would feel it too if nobody came on Sunday. Wanting your work to matter doesn't mean you're serving for the wrong reasons.

"Shepherd the flock of God that is among you, exercising oversight, not under compulsion, but willingly."

1 PETER 5:2 (ESV)

LEADERS SHEPHERD THE PEOPLE WHO SERVE. HERE'S HOW.

01

Schedule them

Use a scheduling tool so everyone sees the plan and can accept or decline. We recommend Planning Center. It's built for church teams, handles blackout dates and shows photographers the order of service.

02

Ask how often

Every week, twice a month or once a month? Ask each person what fits their life right now. Then honor it, even when you're short.

03

Be flexible

Some people don't want to miss worship, and that's a good conviction. Let them shoot before and after the service and sit with their family during worship.

04

Share the big days

Spread Christmas, Easter and big events across the team. Don't hand every major moment to your most experienced photographer.

05

Grow your newer people

Newer photographers know when they're the backup. Invite them to big events as a second or third shooter if they're willing. Next year, they may be ready to lead.

06

Offer seasons off

Working every event can make church feel like a job instead of a family. Build in breaks, and make it okay to step away in a hard season.

"For God is not unjust so as to overlook your work and the love that you have shown for his name in serving the saints, as you still do."

HEBREWS 6:10 (ESV)

TEAM SETUP

Build your team on paper first. Fill this out with a pastor and your team leader.



LEADERSHIP

STAFF MEMBER OVER THE TEAM

PHOTOGRAPHY TEAM LEADER

WHO DECIDES WHAT GETS POSTED

WHO ANSWERS QUESTIONS ON SUNDAY

Pick someone who isn't on stage or in the production booth.

ROLES

☐ Everyone shoots and edits

☐ Some shoot, some edit

☐ One editor edits everything

PHOTOGRAPHERS

EDITORS

HANDOFF

FINISHED PHOTOS GO HERE

TELL THIS PERSON WHEN THEY'RE READY

☐ By text

☐ By email

☐ In our scheduling app

☐ In a team chat

WHO POSTS TO SOCIAL MEDIA

WHO UPDATES THE WEBSITE AND PRINT

EQUIPMENT THE CHURCH PROVIDES

☐ Cameras

☐ Lenses

☐ Cards and batteries

☐ Editing computer

☐ Editing software

☐ Cloud storage and backup

☐ Team badges

☐ Camera bags

☐ Phone mounts

WHERE THE GEAR IS KEPT

WHO TAKES CARE OF IT

WHAT WE WEAR AND HOW WE SCHEDULE

☐ Normal Sunday clothes

☐ All black

☐ Team shirt or lanyard

SCHEDULING TOOL

SCHEDULE GOES OUT BY

BIG EVENTS ARE ASSIGNED BY

TEAM EXPECTATIONS

Fill this out with your photographers and a pastor. Revisit it at every check-in.



WHO TO GO TO

PHOTOGRAPHY TEAM LEADER ON SUNDAY

PHONE

BACKUP CONTACT

PASTOR OR STAFF MEMBER OVER THE TEAM

DELIVERY

☐ Same day by _____

☐ Next day by _____

☐ Within ____ days

EDITED PHOTOS FOR A SUNDAY

EDITED PHOTOS FOR A BIG EVENT

UPLOAD THEM HERE

WHO POSTS THEM

WHEN THEY USUALLY POST

SERVING RHYTHM

☐ Every week

☐ Twice a month

☐ Once a month

☐ Sundays only

☐ Sundays and events

☐ Events only

SUNDAYS THIS PHOTOGRAPHER ALSO GETS TO SIT AND WORSHIP

CHECK-INS AND CARE

☐ Every two months

☐ Quarterly

☐ Twice a year

NEXT CHECK-IN DATE

HOW WE'LL SAY THANK YOU

ANYTHING ELSE WE AGREED ON

REVIEWED TOGETHER BY

AND

DATE

Presence, not performance.

We document the life of the church in a way that points people to Christ. We observe, we serve and we worship alongside our church family while we capture their moments of joy, reflection and celebration.

DO

- ✓ Be present in worship, ready to catch key moments quietly.
- ✓ Wear your photography team badge every time you serve.
- ✓ Follow your team's dress guidelines. Dress modestly for crouching and reaching.
- ✓ Move quietly and respectfully around the room.
- ✓ Watch the order of service for baptisms, dedications and guest speakers.
- ✓ Arrive with batteries charged and cards formatted.
- ✓ Ask your team lead when you're unsure.

DON'T

- ✗ Photograph first time guests or unfamiliar faces up close, especially children.
- ✗ Use burst mode during prayer, invitation or communion.
- ✗ Wear flashy colors or noisy accessories.
- ✗ Use flash. Ever.
- ✗ Stand on chairs or disrupt anyone to get a shot.
- ✗ Post or keep church photos on personal accounts or devices.
- ✗ Bring friends or family along while you're serving. Stay focused and flexible.

IT HAPPENS

Accidentally photographed a new guest or a child you don't know? That's okay. Flag it for your team lead. It gets reviewed before anything is posted.

"Whatever you do, work heartily, as for the Lord and not for men."

COLOSSIANS 3:23 (ESV)

Be safe. Be seen.

People relax around a photographer they trust. Trust comes from three things: a safe person, a visible badge and a team that's introduced with care.

Background check every photographer

Photographers see every room in your building and every face in it. Hold them to the same background check you expect of your security team or children's volunteers. If they'll ever shoot in kids' areas, it's not optional.

Phones need badges most

Someone filming a child on a phone with no badge makes people uneasy fast. Phone shooters need a visible badge even more than the person with the big camera.

Explain the why

Tell people from the stage or in your newsletter: we want to tell the story of what God is doing here. Then share the first photos so people see themselves. Add more coverage as trust grows.

Wear a photography team badge

A badge says you're trained, checked and serving. When a kids volunteer sees someone new photographing children, the badge is the difference between alarm and peace of mind.

Introduce the team slowly

Some churches, especially more traditional ones, have never had a photography team. People can feel it's unnecessary or a distraction. Start small and quiet. A few wide shots. No flash. No walking the aisles.

Ask before you add more

Check with leaders before shooting a new ministry or room for the first time. A quick conversation now saves a hard one later.

BEFORE SOMEONE SERVES

- | | |
|--|---|
| ☐ Background check cleared | ☐ Volunteer agreement signed |
| ☐ Read the team guide | ☐ Shadowed a Sunday |
| ☐ Photography team badge issued | ☐ Knows the do-not-photograph plan |

LOOK THE PART

"When I shot social video on my phone and photos at the same time, I mounted my phone on top of my DSLR. You get the full grip, so both are steadier. And it just looks more official."

Brittany Moody

Enduo Media Founder & Creative Director

"For we aim at what is honorable not only in the Lord's sight but also in the sight of man."

2 CORINTHIANS 8:21 (ESV)

Some moments are holy.

A church photographer sees people at their most joyful and their most raw. Before you press the shutter, ask one question: would this person thank me for this photo?

Altar calls and prayer

Someone kneeling at the front is meeting God, not posing. Shoot wide, from behind, or not at all. Ask before you post anything where they can be recognized.

Baptisms

Talk to candidates before the service so nobody is surprised. Post only flattering shots. Then send them their photos. It's a gift they'll keep for life.

Weddings

If the couple hired a photographer, stay out of their shots and out of their way. Ask before you shoot at all.

Mission trips

Learn local customs and photo laws before you go. Ask before photographing anyone, especially kids. Show partnership and local leaders, not visitors as heroes.

Think like your security team

Don't post shots that show security positions, door codes, kids' room layouts or check-in screens. Post event photos after people leave, not live.

Mind the livestream

Ask your production team where you can stand. Stay out of the broadcast camera's view.

Tears

Emotional moments are powerful. They're also personal. Ask the person before their hardest moment ends up on a mailer.

Funerals and memorials

Only photograph them if the family asks. Then follow their wishes exactly.

Outreach and benevolence

People receiving help deserve dignity. Photograph the volunteers and the work. Never make someone the face of need unless they freely agree.

Some rooms are off limits

Recovery groups, counseling, prayer rooms and care ministries. Leave the camera outside.

Communion

Stage communion shots before the service: the elements, the table, hands holding the cup. During communion itself, shoot only wide and quiet, or not at all.

Never use flash

Not in worship, not at events, not ever. It pulls every eye in the room and breaks the moment. Raise your ISO instead.

Pause at the door. Before you walk into a room, stop and read it. A small group sharing prayer requests. A hard conversation. A quiet moment at the altar. If you step in and realize this isn't the moment, have the courage to quietly step back out. People respect that far more than a photographer who stays because they're already in the room.

Show your whole church. Every age, every background, every ability. Newcomers and longtime members. Not just the stage and the same five faces. Once a quarter, scroll through your Finals and ask: who's missing?

"A time to keep silence, and a time to speak."

ECCLESIASTES 3:7 (ESV)

Protect your people and your photos.

WHO OWNS THE PHOTO?

Whoever presses the shutter usually owns the copyright. That's true for a volunteer, in your building, even on the church's own camera. Paid staff doing their job are the exception. For everyone else, the church only gets rights through a signed written agreement.

Here's why it matters. A gifted volunteer serves for three years, then leaves on hard terms. Now they can say you can't use their photos on your website or the banner by the road. We've even seen a photographer object when a designer added a color overlay to her photo.

The fix is simple. Have every photographer sign an agreement when they start serving. It either transfers the copyright to the church or gives the church a permanent license to use, edit and share the photos. See the sample on page 24.



Shooting from behind tells a family story without showing a child's face.

TAKING PHOTOS VS. USING THEM

- ☐ **Taking photos at church is generally allowed.** It's your building and your gathering, so you set the rules. Check your local laws.
- ☐ **Signs are optional.** A notice at the door usually isn't required, but it sets expectations and lowers risk. Sample wording on page 25. Outside the US? See pages 22 and 23.
- ☐ **Scan the background.** Crop out anyone who didn't sign up to be there. Some people can't be seen at church at all, like someone in a recovery ministry or a new believer whose family doesn't know yet.
- ☐ **Using photos is different.** Putting a recognizable face in an ad or naming someone may need their consent. Many states have publicity laws.
- ☐ **Asked to remove a photo? Do it.** Don't argue. Take it down everywhere it's posted, stop using it and note the request. See your takedown plan on page 44.
- ☐ **Cover photos:** pick someone who wouldn't mind their face on invite cards all over the city.

This isn't legal advice. Laws vary by country, state and city. Have your leadership and an attorney review your policies. Outside the US? Privacy laws like the UK and EU's GDPR set stricter rules for photos of people.

Ask first. Assume nothing.

Leadership sets the rules

Your children's ministry leaders decide what's allowed and tell the photography team before every event. Photographers should never have to guess.

Get it in writing

For anyone under 18, get a parent or guardian's written consent before you use a recognizable photo. Add it to your kids registration form. Sample on page 25.

Mark opt-outs quietly

Give kids who can't be photographed a marker only your team recognizes, like a small symbol on the name tag. Avoid anything that singles a child out to other families. Keep it the same every week.

Tell the story without faces

Hands at the craft table. Kids from behind. Wide shots where no one is recognizable. Remember that clothing and context can still identify a child. They still show a ministry full of life.

Some churches say no

Some churches don't photograph kids at all. That's a valid choice. Write it down so everyone knows.

Foster care and custody

Kids in foster care often can't appear online, and foster parents usually can't sign for them. The caseworker or agency decides. Custody issues can mean the same thing.

Watch the check-in sticker

Name tags often show a child's name and a parent's phone number. Frame around them or edit them out. Never post a sticker someone could read.

Students on your team

A photographer under 18 needs a parent or guardian to sign their volunteer agreement too.

BEFORE ANY PHOTO OF A CHILD IS POSTED

- | | | |
|---|--|---|
| ☐ Checked the do-not-photograph list | ☐ No readable name tags | ☐ No names in the caption |
| ☐ Location data removed | ☐ Children's ministry lead approved | ☐ Gallery limited to approved people |

"See that you do not despise one of these little ones."

MATTHEW 18:10 (ESV)

Your church doesn't automatically own the photos.

Copyright belongs to the person who takes the photo, the moment they press the shutter. In the US, when an employee takes photos as part of their job, the church owns them. A volunteer isn't an employee.

Unless a volunteer has signed something giving the church rights, they still own their photos. That's true even on a church camera, during a church service. The same goes for graphics, videos and designs made by volunteers or freelancers.

Without a written agreement, the church may only have a vague, unwritten permission to use the photos. That's hard to rely on when someone moves away or leaves on hard terms.

Option A

Transfer the copyright

The photographer signs the copyright over to the church. The church owns the photos. The photographer needs permission to use them in a portfolio.

Option B

Grant a license

The photographer keeps the copyright and gives the church a permanent, free, worldwide right to use, edit and share the photos.

Either works. What matters is that it's **in writing, signed before they serve, and continues after they stop serving**. See the sample agreement on page 24.

Respect goes both ways

Being a church doesn't change copyright law. A photographer can love their church and still own their work. If you want to use a photo beyond what you agreed on, ask. Credit them when you can, even when you don't have to. And hold the church to the same standard with other people's work: no photos or graphics pulled from search results or another church's website.

Outside the US? Most countries also give copyright to the creator first, but rules for employees and commissioned work vary. **Not legal advice.** Have an attorney review your agreement.

"Pay to all what is owed to them... respect to whom respect is owed, honor to whom honor is owed."

ROMANS 13:7 (ESV)

The global church has local rules.

Much of this guide reflects common practice in the United States. Many other countries treat photos of people as protected personal information, with stricter rules on consent, notice signs and children. Here's the short version. Details are on the next page.

WHERE	MAIN LAW	ADULTS IN A SERVICE	CHILDREN
United States	No single national law	Notice is common practice. Consent is needed to use a face in advertising.	Written parent permission is the standard practice.
United Kingdom	UK GDPR	Notice, door signs and an easy opt-out. Consent for close-ups and promotion.	Written parent consent.
European Union	GDPR	Clear notice and an easy way to say no. Some countries add image rights.	Written parent consent.
South Africa	POPIA	Consent must be voluntary, specific and informed.	A parent or guardian must consent. An opt-out notice usually isn't enough.
Canada	PIPEDA and provincial laws	Depends on the province. BC, Alberta and Quebec matter most.	Written parent consent.
Australia	Privacy Act	Covers larger organizations. A newer privacy tort applies to everyone.	Follow your state's child safe standards.
New Zealand	Privacy Act 2020	Covers churches of every size. Explain why you take photos and how you'll use them.	Take extra care and get parent consent.

Tell people

Signs, a slide and a line in your bulletin.

Make opting out easy

A camera-free section and a simple way to ask.

Get it in writing for kids

Signed parent consent, kept on file.

Delete when asked

Quickly, kindly and everywhere it lives.

The children column shows common church practice. It isn't always a legal requirement. **These four habits work in every country.** They go a long way toward meeting the law and keeping trust.

Country by country.

United States

There's no single national law on church photos. People at a public gathering have limited privacy expectations, and a church can set photo rules on its own property. Using someone's face to advertise or promote can require consent under state law. A few states, including Illinois, Texas and Washington, regulate face recognition data, so check before turning on face tagging in a photo library.

European Union

The same GDPR rules apply across the EU, and some countries add their own image rights. Expect clear notices for everyone, written consent for children, and an easy way for anyone to say no.

Canada

The federal law, PIPEDA, mostly covers commercial activity, so many churches fall outside it. Provincial laws can still apply. BC's privacy law covers non-profits, Alberta's covers some, and Quebec's Law 25 can apply too.

New Zealand

The Privacy Act 2020 applies to almost every organization, churches included, whatever their size. Tell people why you're taking photos and how you'll use them, and take extra care with children.

United Kingdom

Under UK GDPR, a photo of someone you can recognize is personal data. Many churches publish a photography privacy notice, post signs at the door and offer a camera-free seating area. Get written consent for children and for close-up or promotional use.

South Africa

POPIA treats identifiable photos as personal information. Consent has to be voluntary, specific and informed. For anyone under 18 it must come from a parent or guardian, and a "tell us if you object" notice usually isn't enough.

Australia

The Privacy Act covers organizations above a revenue threshold, so many smaller churches fall outside it. People can now sue over serious invasions of privacy, whatever the size of the church. State child safe standards often shape photo rules for kids.

Everywhere else

Treat the practices in this guide as a starting point, not the finish line. Ask your denomination, network or a local attorney what applies where you serve. Many denominations already have a policy you can adopt.

General information only, not legal advice. Laws vary by country, state, county and city, and they change. Check with a local attorney or your country's privacy regulator before you set policy.

"Let every person be subject to the governing authorities."

ROMANS 13:1 (ESV)

Volunteer photographer agreement.

Sample wording only. This is not legal advice. Laws vary by country, state, county and city. Have your church leadership and a qualified attorney review and adapt this form before you use it.

VOLUNTEER PHOTOGRAPHER AGREEMENT

Church name and logo here

- 1 Serving.** I volunteer to take photos and video for _____ ("the Church"). I am not an employee and I receive no pay.
- 2 Rights to the photos.** *Choose one with your attorney.* **Option A, transfer:** I assign to the Church all copyright in photos and video I take while serving. **Option B, license:** I keep my copyright and give the Church a permanent, free, worldwide license to use, edit, crop, add text to and share the photos in any format, without credit or payment. Either way, this continues after I stop serving.
- 3 Personal equipment.** If I use my own camera, lenses, phone or other gear, I do so at my own risk. The Church is not responsible for loss, theft or damage. If I use Church equipment, I will follow the Church's policy for its care and whether it may leave the building. *Ask your insurer what your policy covers.*
- 4 Files and privacy.** I will upload all photos to the Church's shared folder within _____ hours. Once my team lead confirms they arrived safely, I will delete them from my cards, devices and personal cloud accounts. I will not post, sell or share church photos on my own accounts or portfolio without written permission.
- 5 Children and safety.** I will follow the Church's photography and children's ministry policies, including the do-not-photograph list.
- 6 Removal requests.** If someone asks not to be photographed or asks for a photo to be removed, I will honor it and tell my team lead.
- 7 Conduct.** I will serve respectfully and follow direction from my team leaders. Either of us may end this arrangement at any time.

VOLUNTEER NAME

SIGNATURE

DATE

PARENT OR GUARDIAN, IF UNDER
18

SIGNATURE

DATE

CHURCH REPRESENTATIVE

SIGNATURE

DATE

Parent consent and sign wording.

Sample wording only. This is not legal advice. Laws vary by country, state, county and city. Have your church leadership and a qualified attorney review and adapt this form before you use it.

PARENT OR GUARDIAN PHOTO CONSENT

_____ takes photos and video at services and events to share the life of our church in print, on our website and on social media. We never post children's names or check-in information with photos.

CHILD'S NAME

AGE OR GRADE

CHOOSE ONE

- ☐ **Yes.** My child may appear in church photos and video.
- ☐ **Yes, but no face.** Hands, from behind and wide group shots only.
- ☐ **No.** Please don't photograph my child. We'll give them a _____ so the team knows.
- ☐ **Please talk with me first.** There's a custody, foster care or safety situation.

You can change your choice anytime by telling _____. If you ever want a photo of your child removed, ask and we'll take it down.

PARENT OR GUARDIAN NAME

SIGNATURE

DATE

PHOTOGRAPHY HAPPENS HERE

We take photos and video today to celebrate our church family, and we may share them in print and online. Prefer not to be photographed? Tell a photography team member or a greeter and we'll honor that. Want a photo removed? Just ask.

About notice signs

In the US, signs usually aren't required by law. They're a simple way to set expectations and reduce risk. Other countries can be stricter, so see pages 22 and 23. Post one at main entrances and kids check-in, and add the same note to event registration pages.

04

Plan the shoot before Sunday.

Start with what you'll need

Which mailers, invites, series graphics and web pages are coming? Shoot for those, not just this week's post.

Know your light

Walk your building. Note where the light is great and when. Some windows glow right at sunset. Put it in your team guide.

Keep photo ops simple

A clean backdrop or handheld signs is plenty. Corrugated plastic signs photograph the same as pricier ones. Order about two weeks out.

Shoot for the season you need

Christmas photos are full of sweaters and red. They can't go on an Easter mailer. Grab everyday clothes shots on purpose.

Tell people

Family photos or a photo booth only work if people know. Promote them ahead of time.

Shoot before you submit

Booklets and big projects stall waiting on photos. Get the shots first, then send the design request.

ALWAYS COVERED, EVERY TIME

Baptisms

Plan your angle ahead. Be mindful of privacy near changing areas.

Dedications

Baby and child dedications, every one.

Major holidays

Christmas, Easter and your big seasonal Sundays.

Special Sundays

Graduation, awards, anniversaries.

Guest speakers

Get wide and tight shots for future promos.

Ordinary Sundays

Perfect for refreshing worship, fellowship and team shots.

"Commit your work to the LORD, and your plans will be established."

PROVERBS 16:3 (ESV)

Build a library, not just a feed.

"We will not hide them from their children, but tell to the coming generation the glorious deeds of the LORD, and his might, and the wonders that he has done."

PSALM 78:4 (ESV)

Shoot the first-time guest journey

Parking, signs, front doors, greeters, kids check-in, coffee, a seat. Your Plan a Visit page needs these more than any worship shot. A guest who has seen your doors feels less nervous walking through them.

Hold a staff photo day

Once a year. Same backdrop, same light, same crop. Add new staff as they join so the website never has a missing face.

Cover every ministry

Each ministry needs a few current photos for its web page and promos. Check them off every quarter.

Shoot evergreen photos

Your building in every season. The empty room in great light. Signs, coffee cups, open Bibles, hands. No faces means fewer permission questions, and they never go out of date.

Offer a picture day

Free family portraits for your church directory. Families get a gift. You get smiling, willing people and a signed release on the spot.

Name it so you can find it

Add keywords to your Finals, like baptism, lobby or worship. Your designer can search instead of scroll.

PHOTO LIBRARY CHECKLIST

- | | | |
|--|---|--|
| ☐ Building outside, each season | ☐ Parking and entrance | ☐ Front doors and signs |
| ☐ Greeters and welcome | ☐ Kids check-in area | ☐ Coffee and lobby |
| ☐ Worship, wide | ☐ Pastor and staff headshots | ☐ Baptism |
| ☐ Communion details | ☐ Small groups | ☐ Students |
| ☐ Kids ministry, per policy | ☐ Serving and outreach | ☐ Prayer, from behind |

SUNDAY

EVENT

DATE

ARRIVAL TIME

PHOTOGRAPHERS AND CAMERAS

BEFORE THE SERVICE

45 TO 60 MIN

- ☐ Sync cameras with the team before you shoot
- ☐ Close-ups of the band and vocalists at rehearsal
- ☐ Building and signage as people arrive
- ☐ Greeters and ushers welcoming people
- ☐ Coffee and lobby conversations
- ☐ Kids check-in and volunteers, per your policy
- ☐ Guest and next steps area in use
- ☐ Volunteers serving with badges or lanyards

AFTER THE SERVICE

10 TO 15 MIN

- ☐ People staying to talk and catch up
- ☐ Pastors talking with people up front
- ☐ Families together on the way out
- ☐ Upload, check every file arrived, then format your card

DURING THE SERVICE

60 TO 90 MIN

- ☐ Welcome, announcements and scripture reading
- ☐ Wide shots of the full room during worship
- ☐ Wide and tight shots of each vocalist and musician
- ☐ Hands raised, people singing, faces not backs
- ☐ Down the rows: open Bibles and people taking notes
- ☐ Pastor preaching: wide, tight and a range of expressions
- ☐ Prayer and communion, quietly, no burst mode
- ☐ Baptisms, dedications or guests on the order of service
- ☐ The production team at work

FOR YOUR DESIGNERS

- ☐ Horizontal and vertical versions of key shots
- ☐ Open space beside the subject for text
- ☐ Everyday, non seasonal shots for future use

NOTES FOR THIS SUNDAY (WHERE THE LIGHT IS BEST, SPECIAL MOMENTS, WHO TO WATCH FOR)

HOLIDAYS AND SPECIAL SERVICES

Christmas, Easter, Good Friday, graduations, anniversaries and big Sundays

ENDUO
MEDIA

SERVICE	DATE	ARRIVAL TIME	PHOTOGRAPHERS AND CAMERAS
---------	------	--------------	---------------------------

BEFORE THE SERVICE

60 MIN

- ☐ Sync cameras with the team before you shoot
- ☐ Stage design and decor before the doors open
- ☐ Special music and kids choir at rehearsal
- ☐ Communion elements and candles up close
- ☐ The building with a full parking lot
- ☐ Greeters welcoming guests in holiday outfits
- ☐ New signage, welcome desks and guest gifts

AFTER THE SERVICE

15 TO 20 MIN

- ☐ Families in their holiday outfits. It's okay to ask them to pose.
- ☐ People greeting new members and guests
- ☐ The photo backdrop with people in it
- ☐ Pastors talking with people up front
- ☐ Upload, check every file arrived, then format your card

DURING THE SERVICE

75 TO 105 MIN

- ☐ The same decor again once the room fills up
- ☐ Wide shots from the back and from the side of the stage
- ☐ Soloists, duets and the kids choir, wide and tight
- ☐ Candlelight on faces. Raise your ISO and hold steady.
- ☐ Communion, prayer and the invitation, quietly
- ☐ Baptisms: the moment, the cheer and the hug
- ☐ Pastor preaching, wide and tight

OUTDOOR EXTRAS

IF PLANNED

- ☐ People waiting for the activity to start
- ☐ Kids running, shot wide or from behind
- ☐ Low angle shots from down in the grass
- ☐ Parents watching their kids
- ☐ Winners with their prizes, with a parent's okay

NOTES: WHO'S DOING WHAT, WHERE TO STAND, WHERE THE SUN WILL BE

INDOOR EVENT

Conferences, men's and women's events, banquets, VBS, fellowship dinners



EVENT	DATE	ARRIVAL TIME	PHOTOGRAPHERS AND CAMERAS
-------	------	--------------	---------------------------

BEFORE THE EVENT

- ☐ Sync cameras with the team before you shoot
- ☐ The building exterior and event signage
- ☐ Volunteers setting up and preparing
- ☐ Decor details: tables, centerpieces, stage
- ☐ Caterers or kitchen team cooking

ARRIVAL AND REGISTRATION

- ☐ Guests arriving and parking team helping
- ☐ Check-in, name badges and welcome gifts
- ☐ Merch or resource table in action

THE MEAL

- ☐ Candid shots of people eating and laughing
- ☐ Food details and the serving line
- ☐ Wide shots that show a full room
- ☐ Volunteers serving and cleaning up

THE MAIN SESSIONS

- ☐ Hosts and speakers, wide and tight
- ☐ People listening, laughing and taking notes
- ☐ Worship during the sessions
- ☐ Open Bibles and people praying
- ☐ Games, challenges and audience moments
- ☐ Volunteers being recognized and thanked
- ☐ The tech team in the booth
- ☐ Childcare rooms, per your kids policy
- ☐ Creative shots of the atmosphere

WRAPPING UP

- ☐ Group photos of attendees and the team
- ☐ People leaving and the space at the end
- ☐ Volunteers breaking down
- ☐ Upload, check every file arrived, then format your card

NOTES: SCHEDULE, SPEAKERS' NAMES, SPECIAL MOMENTS

OUTDOOR EVENT

Picnics, outreach days, outdoor baptisms, egg hunts, block parties, camps



EVENT	DATE	ARRIVAL TIME	PHOTOGRAPHERS AND CAMERAS
-------	------	--------------	---------------------------

BEFORE THE EVENT

- ☐ Sync cameras with the team before you shoot
- ☐ Set white balance to Daylight or Cloudy
- ☐ Walk the site. Note where the sun is and where the shade is.
- ☐ Tents, signage, games and food stations
- ☐ Volunteers setting up and prepping food

DURING THE EVENT

- ☐ One wide shot that shows the whole space and crowd
- ☐ People arriving and being welcomed
- ☐ Games and activities in action
- ☐ Kids playing, shot wide or from behind
- ☐ Low angle shots from down in the grass
- ☐ The grill, the food line and people eating
- ☐ Families on blankets and neighbors talking

OUTDOOR BAPTISMS

IF PLANNED

- ☐ The crowd gathered at the water's edge
- ☐ Each person going in, wide and tight
- ☐ Coming up out of the water
- ☐ The celebration, hugs and towels

GOLDEN HOUR

- ☐ Groups with the sun behind them
- ☐ Warm candids as the light gets low
- ☐ Creative shots: sun flare, details, silhouettes

WRAPPING UP

- ☐ A big group photo before people leave
- ☐ Volunteers cleaning up
- ☐ Upload, check every file arrived, then format your card

Outdoor light tip: overcast days are your friend. In harsh midday sun, move people into open shade or put the sun behind them so they aren't squinting.

NOTES: WEATHER PLAN, WHERE THE SUN SETS, SPECIAL MOMENTS

BAPTISM SUNDAY

Baptisms in a service, at a pool, a lake or a river. Talk to every candidate ahead of time.



SERVICE

DATE

ARRIVAL TIME

PHOTOGRAPHERS AND CAMERAS

BEFORE THE SERVICE

45 TO 60 MIN

- ☐ Sync cameras with the team before you shoot
- ☐ The baptistery or pool set up, lights on
- ☐ Details: robes, towels, certificates, shirts
- ☐ Candidates with family and friends, with their okay
- ☐ Pastors praying with candidates, if they're comfortable
- ☐ Walk your angle. Know where the changing areas are and never shoot toward them.

AFTER THE SERVICE

15 TO 20 MIN

- ☐ Each candidate with family, dry and changed
- ☐ A group photo of everyone baptized
- ☐ Hugs and celebration in the lobby
- ☐ Upload, check every file arrived, then format your card
- ☐ Send each person their photos privately within the week

DURING THE BAPTISMS

20 TO 40 MIN

- ☐ A wide shot of the room as baptisms begin
- ☐ Each candidate stepping into the water
- ☐ **The moment they come up. This is the shot. Stand where you can see their face.**
- ☐ Family and friends cheering, crying and clapping
- ☐ The pastor's face during the moment
- ☐ Testimonies shared on stage, wide and tight
- ☐ The first hug out of the water

FOR YOUR DESIGNERS

EVERY TIME

- ☐ Horizontal and vertical versions of the best moments
- ☐ A wide shot of the church celebrating
- ☐ Water and towel details with no faces

NOTES: CANDIDATE NAMES IN ORDER, WHO'S DOING WHAT, WHERE TO STAND

Three settings that control every photo.

Every photo is made of light. Aperture and shutter speed control how much light gets in. ISO brightens what the camera captures. Photographers call it the exposure triangle. Change one and the others have to adjust.

ISO

HOW BRIGHT THE CAMERA MAKES IT

Low ISO (100 to 400) gives clean photos in bright light. High ISO brightens a dark room but adds grain, called noise.

Sunday tip: most newer cameras handle ISO 3200 to 6400 well in a dim room. Test yours. A little grain beats a blurry photo.

APERTURE

HOW WIDE THE LENS OPENS

Shown as an f-stop. A small number like f/1.8 lets in lots of light and blurs the background. A big number like f/8 keeps more in focus.

Sunday tip: f/2.8 for one person. f/4 to f/5.6 for groups so every face is sharp.

SHUTTER SPEED

HOW LONG THE CAMERA LOOKS

A fast shutter like 1/500 freezes motion. A slow one like 1/30 lets in more light but blurs anything that moves.

Sunday tip: 1/125 or faster for people. 1/250 or faster for kids and energetic worship. Stabilization steadies your hands, not your subject.

GOOD STARTING SETTINGS

WHERE	ISO	F-STOP	SHUTTER
Worship in the auditorium	3200 to 6400	f/2.8	1/250
Lobby and hallways	1600 to 3200	f/2.8	1/160
Group photo indoors	1600 to 3200	f/5.6	1/125
Outdoors, bright day	100 to 200	f/4	1/500

BRAND NEW? DO THIS

Use Aperture Priority mode (A or Av on the dial). You pick the f-stop. Turn on Auto ISO and set its minimum shutter speed to 1/125, or faster for energetic worship. Menus vary by camera. The camera handles the rest.

Terms you'll hear on day one.

SOOC

"Straight out of camera." The photo exactly as the camera made it, with no editing.

RAW vs JPEG

RAW keeps everything the sensor saw, so you can fix color and brightness later. JPEG is smaller and ready to share, but much harder to fix.

White balance and Kelvin

Makes white look white under any light. Warm indoor bulbs sit around 3200K. Daylight sits around 5600K. Wrong white balance turns skin orange or blue.

Depth of field

How much of the photo is in focus from front to back. Shallow means a sharp subject and a soft background. Deep means everything is sharp.

Bokeh

The soft, creamy blur behind a subject. You get more of it with a low f-stop and a longer lens.

Focal length

Measured in millimeters. A low number like 24mm is wide. A high number like 200mm zooms in tight.

Prime vs zoom

A prime has one focal length and is usually brighter and sharper. A zoom covers a range and is more flexible.

Full frame vs APS-C

Sensor sizes. Full frame handles low light better and blurs backgrounds more. APS-C, also called crop sensor, is smaller, lighter and more affordable.

Crop factor

On APS-C, a lens acts about 1.5 times longer (1.6 on Canon). A 50mm frames like roughly 75 to 80mm.

Eye and subject autofocus

The camera finds faces and eyes and tracks them as people move. Turn it on. It's the biggest help for beginners.

Burst mode

Holds the shutter down for many frames per second. Great for baptisms and kids. Never during prayer.

Silent shutter and banding

The electronic shutter makes no sound. Under LED stage lights it can cause dark stripes. If you see them, switch to the mechanical shutter or turn on anti-flicker.

Frame rate (fps)

For video. 24fps looks cinematic, 30fps is standard for web and livestream, and 60fps can be slowed down smoothly.

The 180 degree rule

For natural looking video, set shutter speed to about double the frame rate: 1/50 at 24fps, 1/60 at 30fps, 1/125 at 60fps.

Culling

Sorting through a shoot to keep the best photos and reject the rest, before any editing.

Preset

A saved set of edits in Lightroom or Camera Raw. Apply it to every photo for a consistent look.

Choosing a camera for your church.

There's no wrong brand. Pick one and keep your whole team on it, so lenses, batteries and color all match.

CANON

Warm, flattering skin tones, dependable autofocus and easy menus.

SONY

Excellent eye tracking, strong video and the most lens choices.

NIKON

Comfortable grips, tough build and natural color.

FUJIFILM

Beautiful color straight out of camera. Compact APS-C bodies.

OUR PICKS BY BUDGET LEVEL

GETTING STARTED

Your first church camera. Easy to learn. APS-C.

Canon EOS R50: guided menus and reliable eye autofocus in a small body.

Nikon Z50 II: deep grip, simple controls and pro-level subject detection.

Fujifilm X-T30 III: great looking photos with little or no editing.

STEP UP

Better low light and autofocus for dim rooms.

Sony a6700: top tracking and in-body stabilization. APS-C.

Canon EOS R8 Mark II: an affordable first full frame camera, now with stabilization.

Nikon Z5 II: value full frame with stabilization and two card slots.

PHOTO AND VIDEO

One camera for Sunday photos, sermon clips and promo videos.

Canon EOS R6 Mark III: clean 4K, full-size HDMI for your livestream switcher.

Nikon Z6III: fast autofocus and 6K video for teams that shoot both.

THE WORKHORSE

Full frame, two card slots, built for every Sunday for years.

Sony a7 V: excellent stabilization and AI subject recognition.

Canon EOS R5 Mark II: high resolution and pro autofocus for big events.

Nikon Z8: flagship autofocus and a truly silent shutter.

Spend on lenses. A great lens on an entry camera beats a kit lens on an expensive one. See the next page.

Buy refurbished. Manufacturer refurbished bodies come with a warranty and stretch a ministry budget.

Models current as of fall 2026. Cameras get replaced often, so check for a newer version before you buy.

The lens matters more than the camera.

The number in millimeters tells you how wide or tight the lens sees. The f-number tells you how much light it lets in. For dim church rooms, look for f/2.8 or lower.

24mm whole room	35mm a group	50mm what your eye sees	85mm one face	200mm stage from the back
---------------------------	------------------------	-----------------------------------	-------------------------	-------------------------------------

WIDER

TIGHTER

50mm f/1.8

START HERE

Nicknamed the nifty fifty. Inexpensive, sharp and bright, so it lets in far more light than a kit zoom. Great for people, details and anything up close.

35mm

LIFE OF THE CHURCH

A natural wide view for the lobby, small groups and candid moments. Close to how people remember a room.

85mm

PORTRAITS

Flattering headshots of staff, baptism candidates and families, with a soft, blurry background.

24-70mm f/2.8

ONE LENS FOR SUNDAY

A zoom that covers almost everything, from the whole room to a single face, and stays bright as you zoom.

70-200mm f/2.8

THE STAGE

Fills the frame with the pastor or the band from the back of the room, so you never walk up front during the service.

16-50mm

APS-C EVERYDAY

A compact everyday zoom for crop sensor cameras. Remember the crop factor: on APS-C a 50mm frames like about 75 to 80mm, and a 23mm or 33mm prime acts like a 35mm or 50mm.

50mm or 70-200mm? Use the 50mm when you can walk right up to people, like in the lobby. Use the 70-200mm when you need to stay put, like in the back of the auditorium during the sermon. A simple starter kit is a 50mm f/1.8 plus one everyday zoom.

Use what you have. Set it up right.

Any camera can work. Plenty of churches shoot on a donated DSLR that's six to eight years old. That's okay. Some iPhone photos are better than some DSLR photos we get.

Shoot RAW. RAW files hold far more information, so a dark or grainy shot can be rescued later. If you shoot RAW and JPEG, keep them in separate folders.

Match your cameras. Different brands have different color profiles. If you can, keep your team on the same brand.

White balance is the big one. *"I once had a trainee set the wrong white balance outdoors and never change it back. It was a warm day and every outdoor photo came out blue. I fixed each one by hand."*

Brittany Moody

Enduo Media Founder & Creative Director

Outdoors	Daylight, or Cloudy on overcast days.
Indoors	Fluorescent, Incandescent or Custom, depending on the room.
Auditorium	Set it manually. Auto shifts between warm and cool under mixed stage light.
Moving rooms?	Check it again every single time.

Shooting promo video? Stay consistent. Jumping from crisp 4K to grainy phone clips is more jarring than shooting it all on a phone. A cheap plug-in lapel mic beats your phone's built-in mic.

05



BEFORE EVERY SHOOT

- ☐ Battery charged, spare packed
- ☐ Memory card formatted
- ☐ RAW turned on
- ☐ White balance set for this room
- ☐ Clock synced with the team
- ☐ Badge on, lens wiped clean



Shooting with a phone.

Phone-only team? You're not behind. Today's phones take great photos in good light. A few habits make the difference.

Wipe the lens. Pocket lint is the top reason phone photos look hazy.

Tap, then slide down. Tap your subject to focus. Then drag brightness down a touch so stage lights don't blow out.

Brace yourself. Tuck your elbows in and hold still. Dim rooms need steady hands.

Pick Most Compatible. On iPhone: Settings, Camera, Formats. Photos save as JPEG instead of HEIC, so every designer can open them.

Go easy on Portrait mode. Fake blur can cut off hair, hands and mic stands.

Turn off location. Phones tag photos with GPS. Turn it off for the camera, especially around kids.

Don't pinch to zoom. Tap 1x, 2x or 3x to use the real lenses. Zooming past them just crops. Walk closer instead.

Flash off. Always. It flattens faces and distracts the whole room.

Shoot RAW for big moments. Turn on ProRAW on iPhone or RAW in Pro mode on Android. Files are huge, so save it for what matters.

Shoot both ways. Horizontal for web and print. Vertical for stories and reels.

Edit with your preset. Lightroom Mobile has a free version. Syncing your team's preset may need an Adobe plan.

Upload, then delete. Church photos on your phone also sync to your personal cloud. Upload to the church folder, then delete from both.

PHONE VIDEO IN 30 SECONDS

Shoot horizontal for sermon clips. Use 4K at 30 frames per second. Long press to lock focus and exposure. Clip on a lapel mic. Keep it steady with a small grip or tripod. Social media and video deserve a guide of their own.

SYNC YOUR CAMERAS ON THE COUNT OF THREE.

Every camera stamps each photo with its own clock. When the clocks don't match, photos from different shooters land out of order. Sync them and the whole day plays back in order, from the first hug in the lobby to the last song.

1

GATHER

Before you start shooting, get every photographer together with cameras in hand.

2

MATCH THE CLOCK

Everyone opens the date and time setting and enters the exact same date, hour and minute.

3

COUNT IT OUT

One person calls it: "One, two, three." On three, everybody presses OK at the same moment.

4

CONFIRM

Check that every camera matches down to the second. Then go shoot.

Then: when you import, sort everything by capture time. Culling and filing go faster because the story is already in order.



06

Get the story, not just the stage.

Go wide, then tight

Start with the whole stage and set so people can see the room. Then move in for faces and details.

Keep shooting the sermon

Expressions change fast. Your designers need options for quote graphics, promos and birthday posts.

Check the background

Before you press the shutter, look at who's behind your subject. It's easier than cropping later.

Turn around

Some of the best shots are in the seats and the lobby. The stage is only part of Sunday.

Quiet moments, quiet camera

During prayer, invitation and communion, no burst mode. One careful frame beats twenty clicks.

Shoot your printed pieces

Once banners, backdrops and signs are up, get them with people around them. It's proof for next year.

Shoot with intent.

Every event ends up with too many photos. Fewer, better shots mean less time sorting on Monday.

"Rejoice with those who rejoice, weep with those who weep."

ROMANS 12:15 (ESV)

CULL HARD. KEEP THE KEEPERS.

One Sunday can easily mean 700 photos. A big event can hit 1,500. Nobody needs all of them. Culling is where you pick the best and let the rest go, before anyone spends a minute editing.

OUR WORKFLOW IN NARRATIVE SELECT

1

IMPORT

Bring in every card, sorted by capture time.

2

CHECK FACES

It zooms in on every face and flags closed eyes and soft focus.

3

T OR X

T to keep. X to reject. Move fast. Don't overthink.

4

COPY KEEPERS

Show only tagged photos, select all, copy them to a Culled folder.

5

EDIT THAT

Edit only what's in the Culled folder. Nothing else.

LET IT GO IF IT'S

- X** Blurry or missed focus
- X** Eyes closed or half closed
- X** A funny face or mid bite
- X** One of ten near copies. Keep the best one.
- X** Someone who can't be shown, or a background you can't crop

ABOUT AI CULLING

AI tools are getting really good at sorting photos, and they save hours. Use them. Just keep a human making the final call on what represents your church.

"Test everything; hold fast what is good."

1 THESSALONIANS 5:21 (ESV)



08

Edit with one consistent look.

Lightroom or Camera

Raw

They run on the same engine. Pick one and stay with it. If your team already lives in Photoshop, Camera Raw is right there.

Edit to your brand

Your color grading should feel like your palette. Cool blue brand, warm orange photos? Something's off.

Match every camera

Put shots from different cameras side by side and match them before you export.

Build a preset

Save a preset for your church's look and use it every week. Tweak it, save it, build on it.

Rescue dark shots

Adobe's AI Denoise can give the grainiest, darkest photo new life. It works best on RAW files.

Know when to stop

Some leaders want natural photos with no heavy filters or overlays. Let the photos be the photos.

EDIT IN THIS ORDER

- 1 White balance
- 2 Exposure
- 3 Your preset
- 4 Crop and straighten
- 5 Name tags and distractions
- 6 Export for where it's going

A note on black and white: some churches only post black and white photos. That can be a brand choice. Just make it on purpose, and keep some color in your brand so every banner isn't gray.

One home for every photo.

Keep every photo in one shared Dropbox or Google Drive folder that your staff and your designers can reach. Then use the same folder structure every single time. Here's the one we recommend.

THE FOLDER STRUCTURE WE RECOMMEND

Photography

YYYY

MM Month

MMDDYYYY Sunday date first, then the event

1 All Photos everything that came off the cards

Photographer's Name

RAW required for every shoot

JPEG only if they shot both

2 Culled the best photos, picked after sorting

3 Finals edited and ready to post or design with

Number your subfolders

Putting 1, 2 and 3 in front of All Photos, Culled and Finals keeps them in workflow order.

Give events a drop link

Send leaders a shared upload link so anyone can add phone photos while it's fresh. Nobody has to hunt for them later.

Upload the same day, check, then format

Confirm every file arrived and is backed up before you format the card. It protects privacy and keeps church photos off personal drives and phones.

Hand your designers the Finals

Organized by date, your designers can grab this season's best photos instead of ones from five years ago.

Protect your photos and your people.

Follow the 3-2-1 rule

Three copies, on two kinds of storage, with one offsite. Your shared drive counts as one. A sync is not a backup. Delete it in one place and it's gone everywhere.

Decide how long to keep it

Keep Finals long term. They're your church's history. Keep All Photos and Culled for one to two years, then archive or delete. Remove sensitive photos when asked. Write it down so nobody has to guess.

Add your name

Put your church name and copyright in the photo's metadata on export. It travels with the file.

Think before face recognition

Photo apps can name everyone automatically. Handy for staff. Risky for kids. Turn it off in shared church libraries.

Treat cards with care

Never delete in camera. Upload, check that everything arrived, then format the card in camera. Label your cards and retire old ones.

Strip the location

Photos can carry GPS data that shows exactly where they were taken. Remove it when you export. In Lightroom it's one checkbox.

Write alt text

When you post online, add a short description. People using screen readers can enjoy the photo too, and search engines can find it.

Control access

Limit who can delete from the shared folder. Remove access when a volunteer steps away.

YOUR TAKEDOWN PLAN

When someone asks you to remove a photo, say yes and do it the same day. Don't argue. Take it down from your website, social media and galleries, and pull it from the next print run. Copies people already shared may still be out there, so act fast. Name one person who handles requests and keep a simple log.

HONEST EDITING WITH AI

Removing a distracting exit sign is fine. Adding people who weren't there, changing faces or bodies, or creating a moment that never happened is not. Your photos show what God is really doing in your church. Keep them true.

"Whatever is true, whatever is honorable, whatever is just, whatever is pure, whatever is lovely, whatever is commendable... think about these things."

PHILIPPIANS 4:8 (ESV)



09 • SHARE AND ARCHIVE

Let your church see the photos.

Your congregation loves finding themselves in Sunday's photos. Give them one place to browse your Finals. Here are popular options churches use.

Flickr

Public or private albums people can browse, with a simple link to share.

SmugMug

A polished gallery website with passwords and download controls.

Google Photos

Shared albums anyone can open from a link. Members can even add their own.

Pixieset or Pic-Time

Beautiful client galleries photographers use, with easy downloads.

SharePoint or OneDrive

A good fit if your church already runs Microsoft 365 for staff.

Dropbox or Google Drive

Share a view-only link to the Finals folder. Simple and fast.

Share Finals only. Never post the full shoot or RAW files. Put the gallery link in your email, bulletin or church app.

Mind privacy settings. For galleries with kids, use a password or private link, and check your do-not-photograph list first.

SAVE YOUR HISTORY BEFORE IT'S GONE

Most churches have great printed photos through the 90s. Then the wheels fall off. From the early 2000s to about 2015, photos lived on random hard drives and old computers instead of the cloud. If an anniversary is coming, start now. Scan prints at 300 DPI or higher, then crop, name and file them. Damaged photos can often be retouched and upscaled. It's a project of several months, and a great one for an intern.

"When your children ask in time to come, 'What do those stones mean to you?'" JOSHUA 4:6 (ESV)



10

Put your photos to work.

Send last year's photos with the request

They show your designer the vibe of the event, so the graphic doesn't come back too formal, too masculine or too childish.

Describe the look you want

"Wild" can mean jungle. "Desert with shrubs" can't. Be specific and attach a few examples.

Lead a carousel with design

Make the first slide a designed graphic, then let real photos follow. Ask people to comment.

Rotate, don't repeat

One photo on every graphic in a series gets stale fast. Keep the fonts and textures. Swap the photo.

Show people what to expect

Event photos make great Facebook and Google ads. Put a few on the back of your invite cards too.

Share your history

Throwback photos before a church anniversary give newer people a window into God's faithfulness.

GOING BIG?

For banners and walls, start with the highest resolution original you have and ask your print vendor what size and resolution they need. Big prints are viewed from farther away, so they need fewer pixels per inch than a flyer. Keep text as vector. Judge it from viewing distance, not nose to the screen. Then zoom in on the final PDF before you order. A pixelated print once cost us a \$700 reprint.

"Write the vision; make it plain on tablets, so he may run who reads it."

HABAKKUK 2:2 (ESV)

11

CHAPTER 11 • KEEP GROWING

Never stop learning.

The best church photographers aren't the ones with the best gear. They're the ones who keep practicing, keep asking and keep showing up.

Follow churches you admire

Save five to ten church accounts whose photos you love. Notice what they shoot, where they stand and how they edit. Learn from them. Don't copy them.

Look outside the church

Wedding and event photographers face the same dim rooms and moving people. Their tips work on Sunday too.

Practice on purpose

Try a monthly challenge. One lens only. Hands only. Silhouettes. The guest journey. Limits build skill fast.

Shadow before solo

New photographers shadow someone experienced for a Sunday or two before they shoot alone.

Join a community

Search Facebook for church photography, church media and church communications groups. Ask questions, share your work and learn from teams a few steps ahead.

Learn for free

Your camera brand's own tutorials, YouTube, your public library, camera store classes and local photography clubs.

Review together

Once a month, everyone brings three favorites and one they'd reshoot. Ask your designer which photos got used and why.

Grow the team

Ask who has a camera sitting in a closet. Students, retirees and hobbyists make great photographers. So does the friend who always posts great phone photos.

Celebrate your team. Hang a photo wall in the lobby. Play a year-end slideshow. Credit volunteers when they're okay with it. And rotate the schedule so your photographers get to sit and worship too.

"He has filled them with skill to do every sort of work done by an engraver or by a designer..."

EXODUS 35:35 (ESV)

OUR PHOTO STANDARDS

Pull your ten favorite photos your church has ever taken. Write down what makes them work. That's your standard. Hand this page to every new photographer.

WHY WE PHOTOGRAPH

OUR LOOK IN THREE WORDS

OUR EDITING PRESET IS CALLED

OUR TOP TEN PHOTOS LIVE HERE

ALL PHOTOS UPLOAD HERE

OUR COLOR AND EDITING STYLE

- ☐ Warm ☐ Cool ☐ Bright and airy ☐ Dark and dramatic ☐ Natural, minimal edits
- ☐ Black and white

KIDS AND STUDENTS

- ☐ Faces are okay with parent approval ☐ From behind or hands only ☐ No kids in public posts

WHO APPROVES WHAT GETS POSTED

WHO KEEPS THE "DO NOT PHOTOGRAPH" LIST

SHOTS WE ALWAYS WANT

SHOTS WE NEVER POST

CAMERA BAG CHEAT SHEET

Cut along the dashed lines. Laminate them. Keep a set in every camera bag.

BEFORE YOU SHOOT

- Battery charged, spare packed
- Card formatted, RAW on
- White balance set for this room
- Clocks synced: "One, two, three, OK"
- Badge on, order of service read

WHITE BALANCE

- **Outdoors:** Daylight or Cloudy
- **Indoors:** Fluorescent, Incandescent or Custom
- **Auditorium:** set it manually, skip Auto
- **New room?** Check it again
- Blue skin on a warm day? Fix it now.

GET THESE SHOTS

- Wide stage, then tight faces
- Lobby connection and laughter
- Pastor: many expressions
- Families in everyday clothes
- Space for text, both orientations

SERVE WELL

- Move quietly. No chairs.
- No burst mode in prayer or communion
- Guests and kids you don't know: not up close
- Watch the background and name tags
- Not sure? Flag it for your lead.

AFTER THE SERVICE

- Upload to the shared folder today
- Year, month, date, your name
- RAW and JPEG in separate folders
- Check uploads, then format
- Nothing on personal accounts

REMEMBER WHY

You're not just taking pictures. You're helping tell the story of how God is moving through your church.

Team notes

Ideas from your last review, shots to try, light to remember.

GOT GREAT PHOTOS?

Great photos make great graphics.



Let's put your photos to work

Enduo Media is a subscription creative team for churches. Sermon series, invite cards, social graphics, booklets, websites and more.

Real photos of your people are what make that design look like your church. Send us your Finals and we'll do the rest.

Need photography team badges? Volunteer name tags and lanyards are something we design for churches all the time.

Want a guide like this for your church?

We can rebuild this guide for your church, with your branding, your photos, your policies and your people. It's ready to hand to every new volunteer. We'd be honored to serve you. Reach out at contact@enduo.media for a quote.

More free guides for your church

Scan the code or visit enduo.media for printables and free resources for church communicators.

Lead a church photography community or have something we should add? We'd love to hear from you at contact@enduo.media.



ENDUO

MEDIA

empowering churches to be creative

ENDUO.MEDIA