



Creating Church Online: Ritual, Community, and New Media (Routledge Research in Religion, Media and Culture)

Tim Hutchings

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'Online churches' are Internet-based Christian communities, pursuing worship, discussion, friendship, support, proselytization, and other key religious goals through computer-mediated communication. The first examples appeared in the mid-1980s, but this genre of online activity has been revolutionized over the last decade by considerable institutional investment and the rise of new low-cost social media platforms. Hundreds of thousands of people are now involved with online congregations, generating new kinds of ritual, leadership, and community – as well as new networks of global influence.

Creating Church Online is the first large-scale sociological investigation of this area, offering a significant and timely advance in the study of religion, media, and culture. Five ethnographic case studies are presented, based primarily in the UK, USA, and Australasia, providing levels of detail, scope, and variety previously unexplored by researchers in this field. Comparative analysis of these case studies demonstrates the emergence of intriguing new hybrids of digital, local, and institutional religion, reflecting major shifts in contemporary patterns of religious commitment. Author Tim Hutchings constructs a rich account of the culture and practice of five online churches, emphasizing worship, leadership, and community and the relationship between online and everyday life. Through such in-depth analysis, this book explores the significance and impact of online churchgoing in the religious and social lives of participants, as well as the relationship between online and everyday life, in search of a new theoretical framework to map religious users' engagement with new media.

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