



Seeker Churches: Promoting Traditional Religion in a Nontraditional Way

Kimon Howland Sargeant

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America's religious landscape is in flux. New churches are springing up and many older churches are redefining themselves to survive. At the forefront of this denominational free-for-all are evangelical "seeker" churches.

These churches target "seekers"—individuals of any faith or denominational background who seek spiritual fulfillment but are not currently affiliated with any specific church. By focusing on this largely untapped group, seeker churches have become one of the fastest-growing religious movements in the country. In his study, Kimon Sargeant provides a sociological context for the rise of these churches by exploring the rituals, messages, strategies, and denominational functions of this emerging form of American evangelical Protestantism.

Featuring live bands, professional lighting and sound systems, and multi-media presentations, seeker churches are attracting many people who have "dropped out" of organized religion. To broaden their appeal, they offer attendees advice on everyday issues ranging from relationships to finance.

Sargeant focuses on the success of the Willow Creek Association, the seeker church association started by the Willow Creek Community Church near Chicago. With over 5,000 member churches, the seven-year old association has already outdistanced 90 percent of American denominations and is the leader of the seeker church movement. Through eyewitness accounts and careful research, Sargeant reveals the "seeker" movement to be a "reformation" of American Protestantism.

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