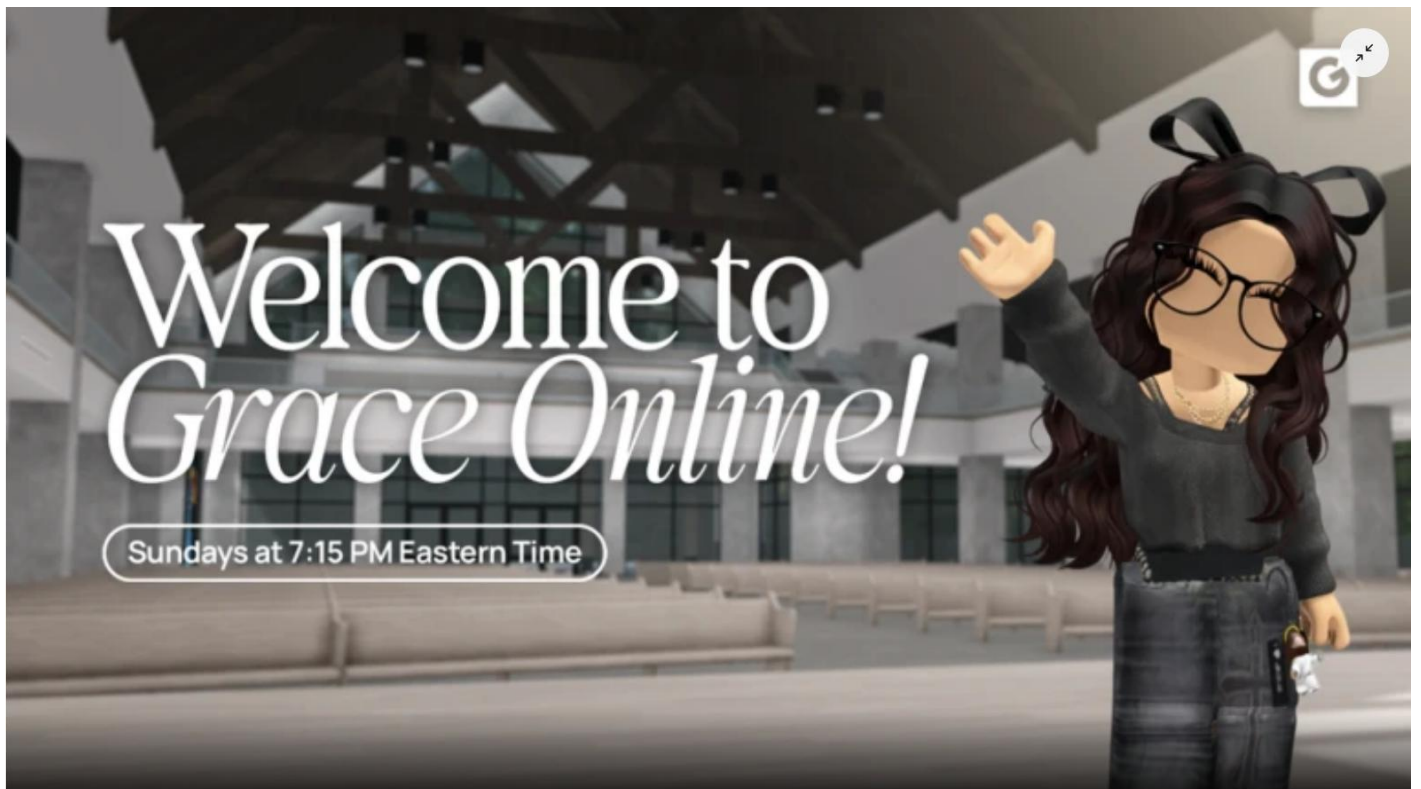


ROLE-PLAYING CHURCH

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DISCOVERING A SACRED SPACE ON ROBLOX

Master thesis

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Protestantse Theologische Universiteit, Utrecht

August 15, 2026

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*Picture on the front is taken from the picture of *Grace Chapel* on Roblox

ABSTRACT

Our lives are increasingly situated online, even our religious lives. Many people are using digital tools, such as podcasts or apps to aid their prayer lives¹ and many worship services and sermons are available online. Digital religion changes as the internet develops. While in the early years it was simply blogs and e-mail lists, now there are virtual reality churches where you can get baptized. With it, the academic field evolves. Studying the way in which the digital world is used as a tool for religion, how it influences religion and how religions negotiate with it. Within theology these negotiations are in full progress,² with discussions on the reality of the digital in terms of community and embodiment.

This study aims to gain more insight in this negotiation, by studying the phenomenon from the ground. The participant experience of a worship service on the gaming platform Roblox will be studied, with special attention to the role of embodiment through digital bodies. The study discovered that the players experience and value the service as authentic worship and discusses these findings through theoretical frameworks borrowed from liturgical studies.

KEY WORDS: DIGITAL RELIGION – CHURCH ONLINE – HYBRID EMBODIMENT – ROBLOX – DIGITAL THEOLOGY – WORSHIP – SACRED SPACES – RELIGION IN GAMING.

¹ Ilonka Terlouw, 'Devotion on Demand: Digital Prayer and the Search for Life with God', *International Academy of Practical Theology. Conference Series 5* (Forthcoming); Wendi Bellar, 'Rituals: Prayer App Rituals : How Islamic Participants Engage with Technological and Religious Affordances in Muslim Pro', in *Digital Religion: Understanding Religious Practice in Digital Media*, ed. Heidi A. Campbell and Ruth Tsuria (Routledge, 2012; 2nd edn, Routledge, 2022), <https://doi.org/10.4324/9780429295683>.

² Stefan Gelfgren, 'Christianity and Digital Media: Different Traditions and Different Aims', in *The Oxford Handbook of Digital Religion*, ed. Heidi A. Campbell and Pauline Hope Cheong (Oxford University Press, 2024), 26–27, <https://doi.org/10.1093/oxfordhb/9780197549803.013.29>.

PREFACE

People say that success comes from 99% luck and 1% sweat and I can say the same is true for this thesis. I cannot help but be thankful to the people who helped me along this journey, they have been a great support.

First of all, my niece, who came up to me and who introduced me to the way she interacted with Christianity through the digital. She is the one who introduced me to Roblox and the Christian content on the platform and is the one who inspired the topic of this research. As someone who also grew up with and on the internet the influence of digital spaces on who we are and what we think has always interested me. My own experiences with online communities, especially as a teenager, made me realise how important and how influential these communities are. For this topic, to cross my path truly felt like a Godsend.

I also wish to thank my supervisors, the encounter with whom can also be described as a stroke of luck. Each with their own strengths, they helped me focus and finetune the subject of research and helped me discover the academic field of digital religion and digital theology. Not only this, but their enthusiasm for the subject helped me stay motivated and disciplined during the process of writing the thesis. Especially their flexibility and patience when I had to put the writing of the thesis on hold for a bit.

While it is only expected to write a thesis at the end of one's master study, I cannot help but be thankful for the PThU to give me this opportunity. I thoroughly enjoyed the research and was amazed at the discoveries made during the process. Getting an opportunity to get to know other people and to study their habits and experiences can only be described as a wonderful privilege. I especially wish to thank the ethical committee of the PThU. They also were unfamiliar with Roblox and its workings but helped think of ways to conduct the research safely and with the privacy of potential participants in mind.

I also wish to thank all the people who helped me along the journey of writing the thesis, especially the proofreaders, my mother and my husband. Their enthusiasm about the subject, as well as their support truly helped me through the process. My husband

especially so who helped lighten my load outside of the thesis, despite the stress (and excitement) of becoming a father, having a sick wife, buying a house and moving.

Last, but most certainly not least of all, I wish thank God, Who put me on the path of studying theology and Who helped me see the importance and the joy of the research subject. Indeed, while I put in the effort for the thesis, it is only through Him that that effort could bear fruit, and I can only pray that it serves His purpose.

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1 – INTRODUCTION

1.1 – THE PROBLEM

The digital world is increasingly becoming a part of our lives, even our religious lives. More than 1 billion out of the 2.3 billion Christians worldwide have the YouVersion Bible app installed on their phone³ and people are using more digital tools to aid their prayer lives.⁴ This process of digitalisation of religion is viewed differently among different traditions, even within the Protestant branch of Christianity.⁵ The digital world is generally regarded and used as a tool to connect with the congregation or for missionary purposes: to reach people beyond ‘the limitations of time and physical space’.⁶ This became even more relevant during the global pandemic, when churches were forced to either go online or to not have a service at all due to social distancing.⁷

The digitalization of our lives is especially true for the younger generations, who on average spend about a quarter of the day on their phones.⁸ Roblox is one of the many platforms that these generations access through their phones,⁹ with the average player spending almost three hours a day on the platform.¹⁰ On this platform it is possible for players to make their own space and community, or ‘experience’ as it is called by Roblox, some of which are religious. One of these religious ‘experiences’ on Roblox is ‘Grace

³ Conrad Hackett et al., ‘How the Global Religious Landscape Changed From 2010 to 2020’, *Pew Research Center*, 9 June 2025, <https://www.pewresearch.org/religion/2025/06/09/how-the-global-religious-landscape-changed-from-2010-to-2020/>; Life Church, ‘YouVersion-Home Page’, YouVersion, Life Church, accessed 2 March 2026, <https://www.youversion.com/>.

⁴ Terlouw, ‘Devotion on Demand’.

⁵ Gelfgren, ‘Christianity and Digital Media’, 25–27.

⁶ Gelfgren, ‘Christianity and Digital Media’, 26.

⁷ A recurring theme in the book Heidi A. Campbell, ed., *The Distanced Church: Reflections on Doing Church Online* (Digital Religion Publications, 2020), <https://www.durham.ac.uk/media/durham-university/research-/research-centres/centre-for-digital-theology/documents/The-Distanced-Church-Reflections-on-Doing-Church-Online.pdf>.

⁸ Harmony Hit, *Phone Screen Time Addiction & Usage - New Survey Data & Statistics*, 8 January 2025, <https://www.harmonyhit.com/phone-screen-time-statistics/>.

⁹ ‘Global Roblox Game User Distribution by Age 2024’, Statista, accessed 22 February 2026, https://www.statista.com/statistics/1190869/roblox-games-users-global-distribution-age/?srsltid=AfmBOoqjiE2JiLstbcmp1XYligQsvNkJiJ_YRGciA6RYX1p5wDKKr7x.

¹⁰ ‘Roblox was dit jaar populairder dan ooit’, accessed 22 February 2026, <https://pu.nl/nieuws/overig/pc/roblox-was-dit-jaar-populairder-dan-ooit/>.

Chapel' made and hosted by Grace Online Ministries (GOM).¹¹ It is a digital space designed like a church building in which players can enter with their avatar and join the various worship services on Sunday or Wednesday, including music, prayer, and a sermon.

While the Church has made much progress in being online, initiatives like GOM are still much undiscovered and under researched. Often the fruitfulness of these types of initiatives and services are brought into question, since the congregation is seen as a passive consumer of the worship.¹² This especially in regard to the embodiment of the service, or the lack thereof,¹³ which is regarded as important during elements of the service such as singing or praying.¹⁴

1.2 – THE QUESTIONS

In this thesis we will look at this initiative, to answer the following question: What is the value of worship for the players during the service of Grace Online Ministries? To answer this question, we will turn to the following questions: What is the role of worship in digital spaces? What is the role of the digital body, or avatar, in participating in worship. What is does the worship during the service on Grace Chapel mean for the players?

As stated before, Grace Chapel can be described as a grassroot church in a digital environment. It is an experience on Roblox, made by players on Roblox themselves, who call themselves Grace Online Ministries. In this experience they host two worship services per week, one on Wednesday and one on the Sunday. For this thesis we will look at the value of the worship service they host on Sunday, as experienced by the players. This experience is accessible on the platform Roblox, which main function is for gaming, but also hosts other experiences, examples of this will be in chapter four. When a person has a Roblox account they automatically also get a digital body, called an avatar, to represent them. Using this avatar, they can join the many different experiences on the

¹¹ Grace Online Ministries, 'Grace Chapel', Roblox, Roblox Corporation, 18 May 2020, <https://www.roblox.com/games/5051109180/Grace-Chapel>.

¹² Michael Huerter, *The Hybrid Congregation: A Practical Theology of Worship for an Online Era* (InterVarsity Press, 2025), 45–49, <http://ebookcentral.proquest.com/lib/rug/detail.action?docID=31708430>.

¹³ Huerter, *The Hybrid Congregation*, 60–62.

¹⁴ F. Gert Immink, *Het Heilige Gebeurt: Praktijk, theologie en traditie van de Protestantse Kerkdienst* (Boekencentrum, 2011). 120 en 208-9.

platform, and it is how players represent themselves in this digital space, using the same avatar for all different types of experiences. In chapter 4 there will be a more detailed description of Roblox and the context of this server, since it was part of the desktop research.

1.2.1 – JUSTIFICATION

By answering these questions this thesis aims to add different insights to the ongoing academic conversation about practicing religion online. The relevance of this thesis within this conversation is plural. First, there is the relevance to the Church. As mentioned before, the Church and its members increasingly exist online. The topic of this research is one of the many examples of initiatives from individual Christians that seek ways to create a digital space to give shape to their religious expression and their identity. Theology exists to serve the Church, even if that Church is online, and by researching the value of prayer in this specific context, the academic community can discover meaningful tools and information about religious practices online. As Hoekendijk argues, if the people exist online, the Church should also be online and learn to speak the language.¹⁵ As academics and as church we must ‘*march along as these groups establish their own place in society.*’¹⁶

The focus on digital bodies within digital worship is another relevant topic within this thesis. The service of GOM has a unique position among other digitally hosted or experienced worship services, since the player takes part in the service through an avatar. By studying the role of the body and the avatar in worship we gain further insight in the experience of *hybrid embodiment* and what aspects influence this experience.¹⁷ This research is unique in this, since it does not focus on an embodied experience in a game, where the player plays as someone else, but in a context where the avatar is meant to fully represent the self without an assigned or predetermined role. This insight can also

¹⁵ J. C. Hoekendijk, *The Church inside out*, ed. L. A. Hoedemaker and P. Tijmes, trans. Isaac C. Rottenberg (Ten Have, 1964; repr., Westminster Press, 1966) Especially chapter IV.

¹⁶ Hoekendijk, *The Church inside out*, 76.

¹⁷ John W. Borchert, ‘Navigating Religious Identity and Embodiment in Digital Games’, in *The Oxford Handbook of Digital Religion*, ed. Heidi A. Campbell and Pauline Hope Cheong (Oxford University Press, 2024), 224–26, <https://doi.org/10.1093/oxfordhb/9780197549803.013.11>.

aid the ongoing conversations in other related subjects, such as representation in the avatar, the real-life body and gender identity.¹⁸

The third aspect that makes this thesis relevant is the focus on the experience of the digital service by a group whose life is almost fully intertwined with the digital. A generation that grew up with the digital world easily available and accessible and experiencing this world from a different perspective than most members of the older generations. A consideration that will come back at the end of the thesis.

1.3 - OUTLINE OF THE THESIS

The thesis is built up in different parts. We will start with a theoretical chapter, looking at the study of worship, the study of digital religion and the theory surrounding bodies and avatars with regards to worship and the digital embodiment. After this there will be a considerable amount of attention paid to the methodology. In this chapter we will look at the different considerations that went into designing the practical research, as well as some practical challenges that came up during the process. In this chapter we will also thoroughly consider the positionality of the author, since this plays a central role in the design and implementation of the research method. This chapter will also include the evaluation of the design and implementation of the research method. An overview of the results of the practical research will be discussed in chapter four. Chapter 5 is the conclusion of the research, in which the previous findings will be used to answer the research questions as stated earlier. In chapter 6, using these answers, we will give some preliminary insights when it comes to the wider discussion of digital worship and try to explain the differences between this study and other studies into digital worship services. We will also evaluate the study overall, discussing the strengths and limitations of the research, as well as making suggestions for further research.

¹⁸ Ruth Tsuria, 'Hidden Religious Identities Online: Digital Religion and LGBTQIA+ Individuals', in *The Oxford Handbook of Digital Religion*, ed. Heidi A. Campbell and Pauline Hope Cheong (Oxford University Press, 2024), <https://doi.org/10.1093/oxfordhb/9780197549803.013.13>.

2 – WORSHIP, THE INTERNET AND AVATARS

In this chapter we will discuss the many different concepts and fields that are relevant for the study of a digital worship service. Much can be said about the order in which the different topics are discussed. The study of liturgy and worship has older roots and is the basic of any worship service, whether it's digital or physical. For this thesis the study of liturgy also plays an important role, as we aim to approach the digital worship service as a worship service. Yet we will start this chapter with a brief overview of the study of digital religion and the different approaches within this field. After this, we will go back to the study of liturgy to discuss the topics within this field that are relevant to the study. The concept to discuss in this chapter will be the role of embodiment in worship and the theories surrounding avatars and hybrid embodiment. The chapter will finish off with discussing some recent case studies into digital worship from different researchers, to place this study within the wider context of the debate.

2.1 – DIGITAL RELIGION

The research of digital religion, religion online or online religion is about as old as the internet itself and has changed and evolved alongside the internet. In the early days of the internet, religion mainly used it as a communication tool, for example: e-mail lists or Christian blogs. Most of it was text based and existed purely as an add-on to the physical world. Slowly the internet has evolved and with it the way it interacts with religion and the way scholars have thought about it. This change is going at a rapid pace, an inherent quality of the internet. While the field of study spans only three decades, already four different waves have been identified by scholars, some calling for a fifth.¹⁹

The vast landscape of the study doesn't end there. Within the field there are different approaches to the digital, with different theories and ideologies behind them. Scholars are divided on the best way to approach the field both methodologically and theoretically. Even the name for the field of study is contested, since it carries different

¹⁹ Heidi A. Campbell and Giulia Evolvi, 'Contextualizing Current Digital Religion Research on Emerging Technologies', *Human Behavior and Emerging Technologies* 2, no. 1 (2019): 6–7, <https://doi.org/10.1002/hbe2.149>; Gelfgren, 'Christianity and Digital Media', 28–30.

implications. The different views on the naming are represented in the different approaches we will discuss.

2.1.1 - THE WAVES

As mentioned, within the field of study there have been different waves of looking at the interaction between the digital and religion. Based on the review article by Campbell and Evolvi we will give a concise overview of these waves.²⁰ The first wave refers to the early stages of the internet, where people were mostly fascinated by '*the new and extravagant aspects of cyberspace*.' The internet was new and its many uses as a tool still spoke to the imagination of scholars. The second wave brought with it more realism. Academics started looking more critically at digital practices and spaces and started questioning them. During the third wave, scholars started to focus more on how the digital interacted with religion and the interplay between the two. The digital was not only a tool for religion to use but also changed religion and its practices. The fourth and somewhat current wave came with the internet 2.0. The digital became part of our daily lives, always accessible through our mobile phones. Scholars thus started to study the digital as part of daily life, instead of a separate space. These waves are mainly influenced by the development and integration of the digital and internet, as Gelfgren points out.²¹ He therefore argues that one can now speak of a fifth wave, with the even further increased incorporation of the digital into our daily lives. Our lives are now truly intertwined with the digital, especially when looking at the amount of time people spend on their phones or other devices.

This last wave seems to be especially relevant for this thesis. As mentioned before, teenagers are the generation that spends by far the most time of the day on their phones or another digital device. The average Roblox player, the platform on which the worship service is hosted, spends about three hours a day on the platform. Roblox is fully part of the daily life of the average player.

²⁰ Campbell and Evolvi, 'Contextualizing Current Digital Religion Research on Emerging Technologies', 6–7.

²¹ Gelfgren, 'Christianity and Digital Media', 28.

2.1.2 – APPROACHES

As the field develops, so do the views on how to study the field develop. While some approaches were more dominant in specific waves, they are not bound by these waves and have been used over a longer period of time. The first of these approaches is defined by *mediation*. The digital is seen as a tool to bridge the distance between the individual and culture or the distance between the immanent and the transcendent. For example, one studies how the Catholic Church livestreams different sacred sites. The article by Cooper et al. is another example. They argue that the digital world is a useful tool for the Church to ‘*provide its community with a 24/7 connection.*’²² If used properly it would not only completely fulfil the calling of the church, but improve on it drastically, stating: “*Reality created by digital place provides new opportunities for spiritual experiences.*”²³ Agyekum et al. also use the same approach, although they come to the conclusion that the tool comes up short. The elders question the validity of online Church: ‘*we cannot grow with this type of worship.*’²⁴

Another approach is *mediatisation*. In this, academics view digital media as something that changes society and social interactions long term. This approach would, for example, look at how the widespread use of podcasts have changed societal and religious values among frequent listeners. Concepts such as ‘tradwife’ or ‘alpha males’ can best be studied with this approach.

The last approach is named the *religious-social shaping of technology*. It approaches the digital from the point of view that both interact and negotiate: religion shapes technology and technology shapes religion.²⁵ While religion uses technology for different means, it is also bound by this technology. The way religious communities can give shape and a voice to their religion digitally is bound and influenced by the digital world. The article by Jun seems to approach digital reality in this way. He states that the digital world can be used as a place for the Church to exist in, stating that the Holy Spirit

²² Anthony-Paul Cooper et al., ‘The Reconfiguration of Social, Digital and Physical Presence: From Online Church to Church Online’, *HTS Teologiese Studies / Theological Studies* 77, no. 3 (2021): 3, <https://doi.org/10.4102/hts.v77i3.6286>.

²³ Cooper et al., ‘The Reconfiguration of Social, Digital and Physical Presence’, 5.

²⁴ Boadi Agyekum et al., ‘Streaming Religious Services during a Public Health Crisis: How Digital Religion Shapes Population Well-Being and Intergenerational Learning.’, *Mental Health, Religion & Culture* 26, no. 9 (2023): 858, 175302398, <https://doi.org/10.1080/13674676.2023.2268553>.

²⁵ Campbell and Evolvi, ‘Contextualizing Current Digital Religion Research on Emerging Technologies’, 7.

can be present online. At the same time, he points out that the digital world can also influence people, making it even more relevant for the Church to be there since it is often spearheaded by the porn and gaming industries.²⁶ Cloete calls for the same theological care in online spaces, bringing up questions about authority and identity.²⁷ The views on which are greatly influenced by the digital,²⁸ both concepts we will spend more time on later in the thesis.

2.1.3 – THE DIGITAL AND THE CHURCH

Let us now pay special attention to how different Christian denominations have approached and used the internet and the digital. In the beginning the use of the interaction with the digital was mainly decided by the development of the internet and it's uses. At first the internet mainly consisted of text-based communication, like e-mail lists and bulletin boards. The Church used these as tools to help people grow in faith and connect.²⁹ The internet was a tool to inform and teach. It gave people access to a wider range of beliefs and experiences from other people. The first digital Churches, or 'cyber-churches,' were established in the early 21st century. These websites were designed to resemble a sanctuary, using iconography usually found in Churches. On these websites the visitors could listen to a sermon and interact with other visitors in a chatroom.³⁰

However, how the internet was used by the Church wasn't solely decided by what is possible, but also by the teachings of the denomination. The Catholic Church, for example, has used the internet as a tool for teaching and connecting: the pope has a twitter account, Papal letters are available on websites and media is seen as a way to spread the gospel. At the same time, they are hesitant in the use of the digital for other means, stating that there are no sacraments on the internet and religious experiences in the digital are 'insufficient.'³¹

²⁶ Guichun Jun, 'Virtual Reality Church as a New Mission Frontier in the Metaverse: Exploring Theological Controversies and Missional Potential of Virtual Reality Church', *Transformation* 37, no. 4 (2020): 300–301, <https://doi.org/10.1177/0265378820963155>.

²⁷ Anita L. Cloete, 'Living in a Digital Culture: The Need for Theological Reflection', *HTS Teologiese Studies / Theological Studies* 71, no. 2 (2015): 3, <https://doi.org/10.4102/hts.v71i2.2073>; Campbell and Evolvi, 'Contextualizing Current Digital Religion Research on Emerging Technologies', 5.

²⁸ Gelfgren, 'Christianity and Digital Media', 19–20; Borchert, 'Navigating Religious Identity and Embodiment in Digital Games'.

²⁹ Gelfgren, 'Christianity and Digital Media', 18–19.

³⁰ Gelfgren, 'Christianity and Digital Media', 19.

³¹ Gelfgren, 'Christianity and Digital Media', 20–21.

The Protestant denominations seem to be more divided on the issue, with many traditional Churches agreeing that there are no digital sacraments. Different stances are taken on partaking in the services digitally and its value, as we will discuss more in depth when discussing some case studies, with some more traditional Churches being hesitant to share religious services online, while evangelical Churches see it as part of their calling. It is an excellent way to evangelize.³²

The last decade there have been a lot of changes in the use and views on digital worship services. With the global pandemic, the issue of streaming worship services became the biggest concern for many local Churches overnight. While in many cases this discussion seems to be about the practical aspects of the streaming, as the book *'The Distanced Church: Reflections on Doing Church Online'* shows,³³ the discussion about the value also flared up, especially in regard to communion.

Recent studies also show that individual Christians often use digital tools to aid their spiritual life. An example is the study by Terlouw, in which she discovered the role a specific podcasts plays in the prayer lives of participants of the study.³⁴ A trend that does not seem bound by religion, as Bellar shows how Muslims use an app that aids in their prayer lives, by giving them reminders and even guiding their prayers.³⁵

2.1.4 – AVATARS

In the case this thesis studies, the congregation partakes in the worship service through avatars, which are most often controlled either by mouse and keyboard or through a phone screen. Using avatars to represent one's identity online is not a new concept and there are many different viewpoints on how they should be approached: how real are they and how seriously do we take them? According to Borchert, three approaches to this subject are dominant: the *player-centric approach*, which relies on the player and their categories of identity as the starting point; the *narrative approach*, that studies the depiction and the description of the avatar; and the *embodied approach*, which focuses on the physical body of the player. The most relevant approach depends on the context in which the avatar functions according to Borchert. He borrows from Rachel Wagner and

³² Gelfgren, 'Christianity and Digital Media', 25–28.

³³ Campbell, *The Distanced Church: Reflections on Doing Church Online*.

³⁴ Terlouw, 'Devotion on Demand'.

³⁵ Bellar, 'Rituals: Prayer App Rituals'.

ties it to the approaches to studying religion and gaming: religion *in* gaming, religion *as* gaming, gaming *as* religion and gaming *in* religion.

The last one refers to the use of games in explicit religious practices, which seems most related to our case. It calls for a player-centric approach,³⁶ where the religious identity outside or prior to the game forms the identity in-game.³⁷ However, a difficulty with this comes from the context in which the case is situated: the avatars in question are also used outside of the worship service in other games on the same platform. The identity formation of the avatar and the way in which it represents the player is not only shaped by the identity of the player in their physical life, but also by the other activities the players make take part in on Roblox. Our case can therefore not only be approached as gaming *in* religion, but also as religion *in* gaming, since it is the presence of religious language in the wider gaming platform. Yet the narrative approach, which studies how the game narrative forms the in-game identity³⁸ cannot be studied, since there is no way of knowing what other games the players participate in on the platform. Above this, the amount of agency the player has in most games and even in creating games, makes this approach insufficient in this particular context.

2.2 - WORSHIP

To understand the different attitudes to digital worship we must look at the theory on what worship is, the study of liturgy. This field of study is vast and has undergone many changes. Much like the study of digital religion, the field also includes many different views on how it should be approached and studied. As this thesis centres around a specific case study of a worship service, it will limit the discussion of worship and liturgy to the topics relevant to the case. Therefore, we will also not discuss digital sacraments, as GOM does not offer these.³⁹

First, let us consider what worship is. The book *Worship in the Network Culture* from 2014 describes worship as '*adoration, reverence, devotion, veneration and*

³⁶ Borchert, 'Navigating Religious Identity and Embodiment in Digital Games', 221–22.

³⁷ Borchert, 'Navigating Religious Identity and Embodiment in Digital Games', 224–26.

³⁸ Borchert, 'Navigating Religious Identity and Embodiment in Digital Games', 224–26.

³⁹ See Appendix 2 – Frequently Asked Questions

thanksgiving.⁴⁰ In the specific liturgical context of a Christian service, Barnard et al. show that the ritual within the liturgy is the way the worship within a life of faith gains shape. This includes many rituals, like a funeral, a wedding ceremony or the Sunday morning service. While there are key differences between these rituals, usually they share the same aspects that makes the ritual give shape to the worship and faith in the life of a Christian.

We must thus ask the question what aspects enables a ritual to do this and how can we be sure it is an authentic worship experience. Weil, an American Episcopal priest and liturgical scholar, describes an authentic worship experience as a '*non-rational experience*', with an '*overwhelming sense of the Divine Presence*', as well as a '*profound sense of his membership in the community of faith*.'⁴¹ Barnard et al. give the 'Divine presence' a central role in genuine worship. Worship presupposes an addressee and thus Gods presence is expected and anticipated. It is an act of faith, in which the worshipper trusts that God hears them and is listening.⁴² In this, worship includes prayer:

*"the act of worship, here understood as the point of concentration at which the whole of the Christian life comes to ritual focus, necessarily includes the act of praying, here understood as petitioning God to come down in our acts of worship."*⁴³

Worship is a petition for God to come down to us. It is an act that requires a relation connection and acknowledges our dependence on God.⁴⁴ Nichols agrees with Barnard et al. that all worship requires an addressee, though she takes this to mean that worship does not require prayer, but in essence is an act of prayer:

⁴⁰ Marcel Barnard et al., 'WORSHIP / PRAYER', in *Worship in the Network Culture: Liturgical Ritual Studies; Fields and Methods, Concepts and Metaphors*, Liturgia Condenda 28 (Peeters, 2014), 355–56.

⁴¹ Louis Weil, 'Worship', in *The Study of Liturgy and Worship: An Alcuin Guide*, ed. Benjamin Gordon-Taylor and Juliette Day (Liturgical Press, 2013), 27–29, <https://archive.org/details/studyofliturgywo0000unse/page/n5/mode/2up> Quote from page 28.

⁴² Barnard et al., 'WORSHIP / PRAYER', 356–57.

⁴³ Barnard et al., 'WORSHIP / PRAYER', 359.

⁴⁴ Barnard et al., 'WORSHIP / PRAYER', 360–63.

*“Prayer is the name of the configurations of speech, song, silence and gesture in which human beings communicate with God. In that sense, it comprehends the whole Godward activity of worship, an activity which itself originates in God”*⁴⁵

Interestingly, Immink, does not mention faith in God’s presence as a requirement of genuine worship.⁴⁶ He states that both singing and prayer are cornerstones of the liturgy, but these actions only require the Christian to focus on God. This focus does presuppose God’s focus on the world and is thus an act of faith in His attention, Immink does not strictly mention His presence as important.⁴⁷

2.3 – EMBODIMENT AND AVATARS

The body also gets a central role in worship and the liturgy. While it is part of the study of liturgy, we will discuss it separately as it is also an important theme in digital theology. Indeed, it is often the physical aspect that seems to be the biggest concern when discussing digital worship. As Cilliers states: *fides quaerens corporalitatem*.⁴⁸ The Spirit was poured out over fleshly bodies, thus faith requires flesh and faith is the one returning requirement for genuine worship.

2.3.1 – BODIES IN WORSHIP

In one of the ways in which people participate in worship and prayer is through gesture.⁴⁹ Nichols describes the whole of worship as prayer and states that prayer ‘*involves the whole embodied person*.’⁵⁰ Following the French liturgist Patrick Prétot, she states that the body can show us that we are before God and who we are before God. Postures and gestures mark the transition ‘*to a setting which requires concentration on the presence of God*.’⁵¹

The three self-described white, male and protestant academics, supported in this chapter by Mbaya, agree with the Nichols that the body plays a central role in the liturgy

⁴⁵ Bridget Nichols, ‘Prayer’, in *The Study of Liturgy and Worship: An Alcuin Guide*, ed. Benjamin Gordon-Taylor and Juliette Day (Liturgical Press, 2013), 92, <https://archive.org/details/studyofliturgywo0000unse/page/n5/mode/2up>.

⁴⁶ Immink, *Het Heilige Gebeurt*, 208.

⁴⁷ Immink, *Het Heilige Gebeurt*, 183. “*Wie bidt, richt zich op God*.” Translation by author

⁴⁸ J. H. Cilliers, ‘Fides Quaerens Corporalitem: Perspectives on Liturgical Embodiment’, *Verbum et Ecclesia* 30, no. 1 (2009): 50–64, <https://doi.org/10.4102/ve.v30i1.63>.

⁴⁹ Nichols, ‘Prayer’, 92.

⁵⁰ Nichols, ‘Prayer’, 95.

⁵¹ Nichols, ‘Prayer’, 96.

and worship.⁵² Inspired by African academics and practices, they expand that worship through dance is like liturgical incarnation: in dancing we participate in Christ.⁵³ The body is also becoming more relevant in worship outside of the Sunday service, with clothes that have statements of faith and bracelets that remind the wearer to think about what Jesus would do.⁵⁴ Yet, protestants are divided on the issue, with many, following Calvin, distrusting the body and downplaying its role and importance in worship and receiving ‘the Word of God.’⁵⁵

Barnard et al. argue that this is a wrong assumption. The body, fragile and broken, is the place where the resurrection happens, it is the place where we receive Christ. It is not only in gesture, posture or dance that we participate in Christ through our bodies, but it is already in the brokenness of our bodies that we participate in Christ. “*The broken human body refers to the crucified and glorified body of Christ.*”⁵⁶ Our broken bodies, partaking in the liturgy and in worship, make the liturgy ‘stretch out to all of broken humanity’.⁵⁷

2.3.2 – AVATARS IN WORSHIP

When it comes to the conversation about embodiment in gaming through an avatar, Borchert begins the conversation with liturgical studies. He mentions the increase in the relevance of the body in the performance and how digital studies wrestled with the idea the idea that the digital is disembodied.⁵⁸ This the digital body, although it seems freely shaped by the player, is still bound by the social norms and the practical limitations within the digital environment. The body, although digital, is still the way in which players shape and show their identity and in turn this body, and thus the identity, is also shaped by the context. Not only in looks, but also in posture or gestures: a place where identity is enacted.

⁵² Marcel Barnard et al., ‘EMBODIMENT / PERFORMANCE’, in *Worship in the Network Culture: Liturgical Ritual Studies; Fields and Methods, Concepts and Metaphors*, by Marcel Barnard et al., Liturgia Condenda 28 (Peeters, 2014), 215–17.

⁵³ Barnard et al., ‘EMBODIMENT / PERFORMANCE’, 221–22.

⁵⁴ Barnard et al., ‘EMBODIMENT / PERFORMANCE’, 208–15.

⁵⁵ Barnard et al., ‘EMBODIMENT / PERFORMANCE’, 229–30.

⁵⁶ Barnard et al., ‘EMBODIMENT / PERFORMANCE’, 233–35.

⁵⁷ Barnard et al., ‘EMBODIMENT / PERFORMANCE’, 235.

⁵⁸ Borchert, ‘Navigating Religious Identity and Embodiment in Digital Games’, 227–28.

The discussion has developed to centre around three main questions. A question about embodiment and cognition, a question about material bodily extension and a question about the relationship between bodies and larger religious or metaphysical frameworks. The question about cognition and embodiment argues that the mind gives the body a place, which is inherently tied to meaning-making and materiality, which seems to apply beyond the physical, into the digital.⁵⁹ Of course, games are inherently embodied since the controller is controlled by the physical body of the player. It is the player that decides where the digital body, the avatar, goes and which postures and gestures the avatar makes.

Yet through the lens of Christian liturgy and salvation there is still much to be said about the subject. Especially looking at it from an Old Testament perspective, where there is an unbreakable body and mind connection: there is no salvation outside of the body.⁶⁰ Indeed, if we look at the statement by Barnard et al. that it is in the brokenness and fragility of the body, that we partake in Christ's death and resurrection, it would mean that the digital body, which is neither fragile nor broken, simply cannot participate in Christ. Add the earlier argument from Cilliers, stating that the Spirit is poured out over the flesh, and the existence of a purely digital Church becomes impossible.

A final question, which always comes up with this subject, is whether it is in earnest. Can one earnestly create a religious identity on a gaming platform, can one earnestly 'role-play' as a person partaking and performing in liturgical worship through an avatar?⁶¹ Borchert answers this question by relying on James Paul Gee. Identity formation is always playful⁶² and indeed, based on the book by Lang and Van der Molen about psychological conversations in a professional care setting, life always includes a certain amount of role-playing.⁶³ The question becomes, are players playing in earnest: *"buying into the system willingly and fully."*⁶⁴

⁵⁹ Borchert, 'Navigating Religious Identity and Embodiment in Digital Games', 228–29.

⁶⁰ Borchert, 'Navigating Religious Identity and Embodiment in Digital Games', 230.

⁶¹ Borchert, 'Navigating Religious Identity and Embodiment in Digital Games', 231.

⁶² Borchert, 'Navigating Religious Identity and Embodiment in Digital Games', 232.

⁶³ G. Lang and H. T. van der Molen, *Psychologische Gespreksvoering: Een Basis Voor Hulpverlening*, 13th edn (Nelissen, 2007), 81–116.

⁶⁴ Borchert, 'Navigating Religious Identity and Embodiment in Digital Games', 231.

3 - METHODOLOGY

While this paper interacts with the wider discipline of digital theology and digital religion, the specific area of investigation is new: namely Christian worship on Roblox. On top of this, the researcher was also relatively unfamiliar with the platform. This necessitated different steps in the research and the research design. The first step was to discover how Roblox works and get an initial introduction into the environment through desktop research, the results of which were discussed in the previous chapter. Based on the results multiple methodologies for research seemed relevant. In the following chapter we will discuss these different methodologies, their strengths regarding the objectives of the research and how the researchers dealt with potential weaknesses and risks in the methods.

Halfway through the process of research, it became clear to the researcher that some of the chosen methods for research weren't possible to utilize in the current research, this will also be thoroughly discussed. The design is primarily based on different chapters from *The Routledge Handbook of Research Methods in the Study of Religion*,⁶⁵ with insights from the book *Digital Theology: A Computer Science Perspective*.⁶⁶

3.1 - INITIAL RESEARCH DESIGN

The research design was set up based the goal of answering the research question and the sub questions in the unique context of the project. The main research question focuses on a specific case within digital theology: the worship service of Grace Online Ministries on Roblox. The research therefore has a narrow focus and a small sample size and thus has limited generalizability.⁶⁷ Yet the nature of the study also allows for more detailed analysis of the findings and thus contributes valuable knowledge to the wider debate on digital theology.

⁶⁵ Steven Engler and Michael Stausberg, eds, *The Routledge Handbook of Research Methods in the Study of Religion* (Taylor & Francis Group, 2021), <http://ebookcentral.proquest.com/lib/pthu/detail.action?docID=6803335>.

⁶⁶ Erkki Sutinen and Anthony-Paul Cooper, *Digital Theology: A Computer Science Perspective* (Emerald Publishing Limited, 2021), <http://ebookcentral.proquest.com/lib/pthu/detail.action?docID=6675258>.

⁶⁷ Sutinen and Cooper, *Digital Theology*, 74–75.

The focus of this specific case is the personal experience of the players and the use of avatars during the service. Access to the knowledge that can answer the questions that regard to personal experience, especially within religion, can best be obtained by interviewing participants. As T. M. Luhrman states: *much about belief and experience cannot be observed*.⁶⁸ The use of avatars during the service and the unique interplay between the physical and the digital can, however, partially be observed. The way the participants use their avatar during the service and ‘perform religion’ can best be answered using observation and participant observation.⁶⁹ The performance of the physical body is less easily observed in the context, since participants of the service, as well as potential participants of the research, are in different parts of the world, making it a logistic impossibility to observe their actions. The only way to gain access to this knowledge is also through interviews. However, especially with the small sample size used for this study, it is important to keep in mind that interviews are often subjective, fully reliant on self-report and influenced by the interviewer.⁷⁰

In what follows we will discuss the set-up of the participant observations and the interviews. Special attention will be given to the step of ‘gaining trust,’ an important part of research involving other people, and the challenges this specific case posed on that front.

3.1.1 - PARTICIPANT OBSERVATIONS

As mentioned, one of the methods used during the research was participant observation. Two worship services were attended by the researcher. The worship services of GOM are held every Sunday at 7.15 pm EST, which is 1.15 am local time for the researcher. Typically, these services last between an hour and ninety minutes, though after the service ends the music and worship team continue for a while. The services attended happened on the 6th and the 13th of April, the first of which was an Easter service.

⁶⁸ Tanya M. Luhrman, ‘Interview Methods’, in *The Routledge Handbook of Research Methods in the Study of Religion*, ed. Steven Engler and Michael Stausberg (Taylor & Francis Group, 2021), 346, <http://ebookcentral.proquest.com/lib/pthu/detail.action?docID=6803335>.

⁶⁹ Graham Harvey, ‘Field Research and Participant Observation’, in *The Routledge Handbook of Research Methods in the Study of Religion*, ed. Steven Engler and Michael Stausberg (Taylor & Francis Group, 2021), <http://ebookcentral.proquest.com/lib/pthu/detail.action?docID=6803335>.

⁷⁰ Luhrman, ‘Interview Methods’, 355.

Participation was practiced through an avatar, and the researcher generally tried to follow the actions of other avatars, including going up front, raising and waving hands, dancing and ‘praying,’ in which the avatar put their hands together and bow their head. The researcher also walked around the church space during worship a few times, which was done by many other avatars as well, as to get a more complete picture of the way the participants used their avatar.

During these observations the researcher focused on the use of the avatar, since this is the focus of the research. The researcher paid attention to the way the avatars looked, the way the movements available to the avatars were used, the different uses of the chat function, the positions of the avatars within the digital church space and her own experiences during the service.

To aid these observations the researcher also watched several services on YouTube, these will be linked in the results chapter.

There are multiple things to be aware of during participant observation. First to mention is the role of the researcher. While a researcher’s goal is to observe the data as objective as possible, they are still part of the data themselves through their participation. Actions undertaken by the researcher can affect the actions of the other people participating in the service.⁷¹ There is also the question of the level of participation practiced by the researcher.⁷² While simply observing the service the researcher can already find out how the people that participate in the worship service of GOM use their avatars. However, by participating I hoped to gain a deeper understanding of the experience, in a sense using my own experience as part of the data.

3.1.2 - INTERVIEWS

A lot of choices about the interviews were made from ethical considerations. First, the research happened in an international context, which means that the design should follow the strictest considerations, especially since the subject was about religion. Practically this meant that the people involved in the interviews had to be over eighteen years old, so that they were able to make an informed decision about consenting to the

⁷¹ Harvey, ‘Field Research and Participant Observation’, 276–77.

⁷² Harvey, ‘Field Research and Participant Observation’, 274–76.

interview. Since most of the players on Roblox are under eighteen and most participants of the GOM worship services belong to that age group as well, this is a loss, since the research would have been more representative of the experience of the players if the sample could have been more representative. However, getting parental permission, which would be needed when interviewing minors, is challenging in a digital space, mainly because it is difficult to ascertain whether the parent truly is the one giving consent.

Due to this restriction, the number of potential interviewees was already significantly decreased. While the sample size of the research would only consist of about 5 to 7 people, due to time constraints, the restriction would already be very restricting. Therefore, the only other restriction in place was that the interviewees would have had to attend at least one service in the last three months.

Another ethical, and practical, consideration was the tool used for the interviews. Normally interviews are held face to face, however, this is not feasible when interviewing people from different countries. Different tools had to be used to make sure the interviews could happen safely and privately. The first step in ensuring the safety of the participants was the age verification, since, according to the BBC, a significant number of minors lie about their age online.⁷³ To check their age we will rely on the age verification system of Roblox, which allows the players to only talk to people close to their own age group. To use the chat function the players must let Roblox take a picture of their face based on which the age of the player will be estimated. Teenagers and children are unlikely to find ways to circumvent this verification process, since it will lock them out of their own age group. The researcher is over 21 years old, the oldest age group within Roblox and thus only allowed to chat with people over sixteen.⁷⁴ This is already a huge step to ensure that none of the potential interviewees would be under sixteen and is thus a very useful first step in the age verification. Thus, the researcher will ask on Roblox in

⁷³ Liv McMahon et al., *Do 'much, Much More' on Age Verification, Social Media Apps Told*, 28 November 2024, <https://www.bbc.com/news/articles/cn4v52ezx17o>.

⁷⁴ Rob Hearn, 'Roblox Age Verification Changes Explained: How to Get Around Them (and Why You Shouldn't)', *Gamezebo*, 3 February 2026, <https://www.gamezebo.com/features/roblox-age-verification-changes-explained-how-to-get-around-them-and-why-you-shouldnt/>. And my own desktop research.

Grace Chapel, before and after the service, whether people are interested in participating in this research after giving a short description.

Once the potential interviewees express an interest in the research and declared they were over eighteen years old, the next problem arises: Roblox is not reliable when it comes to privacy. The chat is public and even the private chats between players are accessible for people employed by Roblox, which means I cannot guarantee their privacy for the interview if it takes place on this platform. On top of this, it is impossible to share links or documents on Roblox⁷⁵ making the move to a different platform challenging. However, players can connect their Discord account to their Roblox account and GOM has their own server on Discord. Discord is an app, primarily used by gamers and fandoms, to chat or audio and video call.⁷⁶ While the social platform is not private enough to conduct the interviews, it will allow the researcher to explain more about the project, share the information on the privacy and the informed consent form, gives the potential interviewee an opportunity to ask any question they might have and allows the researcher to share a link to the Teams call where the interview will take place. They were also informed that they could pull back from the research at any time for any reason. The Teams environment would be provided by the PThU, ensuring the safety of any interviewees and their data.

The interviews themselves would be designed by following a semi-structured method⁷⁷ with the initial design being based on the findings from the participant observations and the sub research questions. The main reason for using semi-structured interviews is to find out what language and questions would be helpful for the interviews, as Lührman points out. This also would help with the challenge that comes with working globally, since there are many different contexts and cultures the interviewees are from.⁷⁸ For the same reason, most questions in the interview are open-ended.

⁷⁵ At least, the researcher could not figure how to share a link without it being censored.

⁷⁶ 'About Discord | Our Mission and Story', accessed 14 July 2026, <https://discord.com/company>.

⁷⁷ Lührman, 'Interview Methods', 348–50.

⁷⁸ Lührman, 'Interview Methods', 360.

3.2 - IMPLEMENTATION

To get to know the culture and understand the ‘local behaviour’ surrounding Roblox and more specifically GOM the researcher already made an effort to get to know the community a few months before the data gathering.⁷⁹ Early February the researcher made a Roblox account and joined the Discord server of Grace Online Ministries.⁸⁰ Since Grace Chapel,⁸¹ the experience page of Grace Online Ministries and the place they have their services, is only accessible once your Roblox account is a month old, joining the community on Roblox itself took a bit longer.

For any practical researcher, it is also important to build rapport and win trust in the community. In a digital environment this becomes more challenging, as trust is best build face to face.⁸² Neumaier states that the best way to gain trust is to introduce yourself and the research and maintain an accessible web presence, however even this is a challenge in online spaces, as the spaces and the contacts are very liquid. For example, most days multiple people join the GOM discord for the first time, yet most of them barely seem participate in any of the channels. To help build trust and familiarity it is important to actively participate in such communities, making your username and profile picture a recognizable recurrence. This of course has the downside that you as a researcher are forced to play a bigger role in the data than what would usually be the case in practical research.

On Discord I also tried to get in contact with the leadership. One has to contact the leadership by creating a so called ‘ticket’ which creates a separate channel accessible for the creator of the ticket, in this case the researcher, and the leadership. While the research wasn’t fully designed at this time, I decided it was wise to already share some information with them on the topic of research to ask if they were interested and if they could help gather people for the interviews. Contact with leadership turned out to be a challenge, not only due to the time difference, but they often took multiple

⁷⁹ Lührman, ‘Interview Methods’, 360.

⁸⁰ Link to the server is available through their YouTube videos or their experience on Roblox.

⁸¹ <https://www.roblox.com/games/5051109180/Grace-Chapel>

⁸² Anna Neumaier, ‘Digital Ethnography’, in *The Routledge Handbook of Research Methods in the Study of Religion*, ed. Steven Engler and Michael Stausberg (Taylor & Francis Group, 2021), 222, <http://ebookcentral.proquest.com/lib/pthu/detail.action?docID=6803335>.

days, sometimes even weeks, to reply to the messages. However, at first, they seemed interested and enthusiastic about the research.

Thus, after discussing the safest way to do the interviews with the ethical commission of the PThU as well as my supervisors, I decided to start asking players if they would be interested in participating in the interviews. I spent multiple hours on Grace Chapel on Roblox, asking any visitor if they had been to a service before, if they would be interested in participating and if they were over eighteen. I also spend some time before and after the service trying to chat with other players in the digital space to see if they were interested in participating, however most players ignored me and, in the end, only one player was willing and able to participate in the research.

One of the problems seemed to be that people did not want to participate in an interview, thus, based on the interview question, I decided to open a questionnaire instead. This questionnaire roughly would go through the same process as the interview to ensure the safety and the age of the participants. It would be hosted on Microsoft forms provided by the university, ensuring their privacy.

There was also more contact with the leadership of Roblox through the ticket, who at first had mentioned they would help after receiving all the information about the project. However, at the last minute, they decided to pull back, since they weren't sure it was safe enough.

As an inexperienced researcher, especially in a relatively new context, one is bound to make some mistakes. Clearly the researcher wasn't able to build enough trust and convince the leadership that the privacy and the data of any participant would be very well protected. A big part of this might have been the limited time available to build trust and make contact. Another mistake made by the researcher is the lack of data of these interactions. There were no screenshots or other forms of collecting data used for the interaction with the leadership and the channel has since been deleted by the leadership. Of course, the question can be raised whether it would have been ethical to gather this data, since it was a more private chat with the researcher and permission would be needed to gather data from this chat.

3.3 - REVISED RESEARCH DESIGN

After a long period of trying to find participants, the researcher and her supervisors agreed to change the method for collecting data at least partially. The participant observations could still be used, since the server is publicly accessible and the services are also hosted publicly on YouTube and TikTok. However, as mentioned before, one cannot access personal experiences through participant observations and for this another method was needed.

This method presented itself while the researcher was in the process of getting to know the local context and culture on Discord. On the server hosted by GOM there are multiple channels on which the players have shared personal experiences: a ‘testimony-channel’ and a ‘prayer-request’ channel. These channels and the discord server could be studied using the method of content analysis, a common tool for social media research.⁸³ The researcher looked for messages on the Discord channel about the service of Grace Online Ministries, excluding results that only contained practical information, like where and when the service would be held.

One of the upsides of this method is that it is unobtrusive, as Badzinski et al. point out.⁸⁴ The data itself thus is not influenced by the researcher, except in the selection process and the analysis, since the interpretation depends on the reader.⁸⁵ There are some ethical considerations specifically for this method in this context. Neumaier warns that even if the platforms used might be publicly accessible, the users might still perceive it as private.⁸⁶ For this reason, even though the data will be pulled from a server that is publicly accessible, all the private information and data will still be anonymized. More ethical considerations will be discussed below.

3.4 - DATA ANALYSIS

Once the data of the participant observations, the YouTube videos and the content analysis was collected, it was time to analyse the data. Coding will be used to aid in the

⁸³ Sutinen and Cooper, *Digital Theology*, 77–81.

⁸⁴ Diane M. Badzinski et al., ‘Content Analysis’, in *The Routledge Handbook of Research Methods in the Study of Religion*, ed. Steven Engler and Michael Stausberg (Taylor & Francis Group, 2021), 182, <http://ebookcentral.proquest.com/lib/pthu/detail.action?docID=6803335>.

⁸⁵ Badzinski et al., ‘Content Analysis’, 183.

⁸⁶ Neumaier, ‘Digital Ethnography’, 226.

analysis, which is a central method used for analysing the content created by the data, whether they are images or texts.⁸⁷ Initially the data was ordered by using ‘Initial Coding’⁸⁸ based on different categories. The first of these was participation in worship, which selected all the data where the avatars and the players’ performance and chats were directly tied to the service, or the reflection there on in the Discord. The second category used was interactions among players, be it positive or negative, failed or successful. The third category used in the initial phase was the testimony category, either during the service on Roblox, or testimonies concerning the service on Roblox.

The first category, participation in worship, was used to answer the question how people use their avatar during worship. Within this category the researcher reflected on the design of the avatars and the way the chat and the actions available to the avatar were used during worship.

The second category, namely the interaction between players, was used to answer the question how involved the players were with the service. By looking at the topics of conversation as well as the level of interaction, one can gain an impression of the general attitude towards the services. A lack of interaction could imply that the player was ‘afk’⁸⁹ and not actively involved in the service, despite their avatar’s participation. Other interactions can show what players in this context find important and relevant to talk about, possibly giving an impression of the value they find in the service.

The last category is the most direct source to answer the question about the value of the worship service of Grace Online Ministries, since a testimony is a profession of a personal religious experience. Any testimonies during the worship service or on Discord about GOM are therefore relevant for answering our question about what worship in Grace Chapel means for the players.

⁸⁷ Steven Engler et al., ‘Coding’, in *The Routledge Handbook of Research Methods in the Study of Religion*, ed. Steven Engler and Michael Stausberg (Taylor & Francis Group, 2021), 513–14, <http://ebookcentral.proquest.com/lib/pthu/detail.action?docID=6803335>.

⁸⁸ Engler et al., ‘Coding’, 514–18.

⁸⁹ Away From Keyboard, a general term used in digital communities to imply the absence of the person behind the screen. The reason for absence is, of course, impossible to ascertain.

3.5 - ETHICAL CONSIDERATIONS

Most ethical considerations were already discussed in the different methods used during the process. However, there are a few other precautions that were taken to ensure the anonymity of the players. For example, while usernames are often viewed as anonymous, since they are often unrelated to the people's real names, the researcher decided to be cautious and follow Neumaier advice to view them as '*very real*.'⁹⁰ For this reason the usernames will be anonymized in all the data.

We also aimed to collect the least personal data as possible, leaving out things like gender, country, age and anything else identifiable. While the data could be relevant for other research or further analysis, it did not fall in the scope of the goal of this research and was thus left out.

3.6 - POSITIONALITY

Lastly, as was pointed out before, it is important to discuss the position and the role of the researcher in collecting the data. Not only because the researcher is the one who selected the data and interpreted it, but also because the researchers experience will be part of the data. One of the strengths of this research it is the unique positionality of the researcher herself. As an active participant in online communities from around the age of thirteen, the researcher is very familiar with digital communities and digital culture. While the degree of digital nativity can be questioned, since she only had access to the internet via a desktop and only as an older teenager via her phone, she grew up with web 2.0. The researcher is therefore closer related culturally to the subject of research than most researchers, making her better equipped to understand the phenomenon studied. However, it is important not to overestimate this knowledge and experience, since every community and thus every digital community is different.

There are also limitations to the research presented. Firstly, the time zones of the service differed to the local time of the researcher, making it that the service was in the middle of the night. The environment of a dark house and everyone sleeping, as well as

⁹⁰ Neumaier, 'Digital Ethnography', 225.

the tiredness of the researcher is bound to influence her experience of the service and might have affected the data collected.

Religiously speaking, the researcher is a Christian studying Christian worship. On one hand this means that she automatically takes the worship and what is happening there very seriously, as well as the added benefit of having a roughly corresponding worldview, however this also means that she might be less objective in observing, analysing and judging the data. The researcher tried to keep this in mind and postpone her own judgement until the discussion. However, one can not truly objectively measure social or religious issues.⁹¹

⁹¹ Irene Zempi and Imran Awan, 'Autoethnography', in *The Routledge Handbook of Research Methods in the Study of Religion*, ed. Steven Engler and Michael Stausberg (Taylor & Francis Group, 2021), 155, <http://ebookcentral.proquest.com/lib/pthu/detail.action?docID=6803335>.

4 – RESULTS

In this chapter we showcase the extensive data that was gathered through participant observations and the analysis of YouTube videos. We will start with an impression of Roblox. After which we will discuss GOM and the worship service, giving a general overview of the order of service as well as the lay-out, the possible emotes, the general habits during the service and a few challenges that are part of the design of the game but that influence the findings. After this we will move on to discuss how the players participated in the worship, through the chat as well as through their avatar. During the service there were also other types of interactions to consider. Lastly, we will look at a few instances of players reflecting on the relevance of the service in their lives, either on Discord or Roblox.

While all the interactions and other types of texts that were studied are all in English, the players often make use of internet-based language. The translations of these sayings and other habits that convey meaning are made by the author herself, based on her own experience in online communities. When the author is not sure of the meaning, this will also be made clear and the original text will be depicted in the notes.

4.1 – ROBLOX

To be able to discuss the results, I will first give a quick introduction into Roblox and my own experience with the platform, with some aid from Wikipedia, since there are little academic sources for this platform.

Roblox is a free to use “*immersive gaming and creation platform that offers people millions of ways to be together, inviting its community to explore, create, and share endless unique experiences,*” according to their own website.⁹² This seems an apt description. When installing the platform on my desktop with it came a program which would enable me to create my own ‘experience.’ Through the main program one gains access to their own homepage, with varying types of experiences available to join. This varies in different kind of games, such as clicker games and role-play games, as well as more community focussed spaces or other types of activities.

⁹² ‘What Is Roblox’, Roblox, accessed 3 April 2026, <https://about.roblox.com/what-is-roblox>.

The platform can be accessed through different devices, like the smartphone, a gaming console or computers. In all cases one participates through an ‘avatar.’ A digital body that you can design yourself, though most options require the player to spend ‘Robux,’ the currency of the platform, which can be bought, but one can also gain them by selling designs of shirts or even creating a paid experience. This is extra interesting since one can also change Robux back into more widely accepted currencies like the euro or dollar.⁹³

The home screen works roughly the same as the home screen of YouTube and such social medias and is decided by an algorithm that combines your past interactions with the platform and experiences with what is currently popular among other players. One can also search for specific experiences, which I did to find Grace Chapel. I did a basic exploration of the different ways the Christian religion was practiced on the platform by searching with the terms ‘worship’ and ‘prayer.’ Screenshots can be found among the appendices to give an impression of the findings.⁹⁴ The term prayer yielded many different results, many games with a Christian theme, some Islamic prayer spaces and one Christian prayer place. The terms worship, Christian and Church give a lot more Christian themed results, with a lot of games but also an array of different religious resources like Bible quizzes and worship experiences.

4.2 - INTRODUCTION INTO GRACE ONLINE MINISTRIES

GOM describes itself as a *non-denominational, Bible-believing community*.⁹⁵ On the Discord server it expands on its self-introduction in the *Frequently Asked Questions* section,⁹⁶ although it is still quite compact. According to this the community does not practice either communion or baptism since it “*does not feel appropriate to roleplay these things in a ROBLOX game.*” Their only statement of faith, besides the ‘Bible-believing community’ is: “*We believe in the Trinity (...) We believe the Holy Spirit indwells each and every believer who confesses Jesus as their Lord and Saviour.*”

⁹³ ‘Roblox’, *Wikipedia*, 29 March 2026, <https://en.wikipedia.org/w/index.php?title=Roblox&oldid=1345952089>.

⁹⁴ See Appendix 1 – Roblox Search Results

⁹⁵ Grace Online Ministries, ‘Grace Chapel’.

⁹⁶ See Appendix 2 – Frequently Asked Questions

4.2.1 - GENERAL IMPRESSION OF THE SERVICE

The service of GOM takes place in a digital environment designed like a modern church. When entering the environment, one spawns in the entrance area, which is separated from the worship area by a single grey wall. There are windows and doors along all the outside walls except for where the stage is, but they cannot be used. The general environment is predominantly decorated with different shades of grey with a plant here and there.⁹⁷ The worship area is filled with four rows of light grey pews, with plenty of room in front of the stage. There is also an upstairs area, with a few pews. There is one lectern on stage.

The service follows the general order of service as used commonly by charismatic churches: they start with a few worship songs; during which they sometimes do some announcements and/ or prayer. This is followed up with a short sermon, and the worship continues through music. The services are concluded with a prayer, though the music continues after the service. During the musical part of the service a big group of avatars are on stage, dancing to the music and using the chat to sing the lyrics. During the prayer and the sermon, they leave and only one avatar remains on stage, behind the lectern. During the music, the camera angle for the livestreams slowly pans around the room, allowing the watcher to see all the different avatars attending and even their interactions. During the prayer and service, the camera is solely focussed on the avatar on stage. For all the sounds during the game, like the music, the prayer, and the sermon, they use prerecorded messages. This is probably the case because otherwise not everyone would be able to hear the audio due to age restrictions.

In the service players can use several types of emotes. There are multiple emotes tied to the avatar, which the avatar can carry out in any environment in Roblox, a few of these are free, but many must be bought with the in-game currency Robux. There are also emotes provided through the Grace Chapel experience, which are available to everyone. These emotes can be combined. The avatar bound emotes consist of short emotes, like a short wave or a shrug, and continues emotes, like 'High Wave,' in which the right hand is raised while the whole body sways from left to right, 'Applaud,' which looks like the avatar is giving an applause, and 'Happy,' which is a dance where the avatar raises both

⁹⁷ Since the observations, the environment has been changes and updated.

hands and jogs in place, occasionally turning slightly to the left and to the right. GOM emotes consists of movements more commonly used during worship services, like raising one or two hands, 'prayer,' which makes your avatar lower their head and put their hands together, a forward extended arm, kneeling and 'hands by side,' which raises your avatars hands to about where the belly button would be, as if carrying something.

The last general observation of note is about the chat. How the chat appears in Roblox differs per server. From my observations, what is typed in the chat always appears above your avatar's head, comparable to the depiction of talking in a comic book. However, from a certain distance the message in the speech bubble is replaced by three dots (...), indicating that something is said, but making it impossible to know what was said. Many experiences on Roblox also show the chat messages in a square box at the top left of the screen, making it possible to read all the messages from the age groups that you are allowed to interact with. However, they do not have this feature in Grace Chapel, meaning that some messages are not readable. While I was active in Roblox through the avatar I could simply move closer to see what was said. In the YouTube videos, however, the position and distance of the camera is not decided or controlled by the viewer, making speech bubbles disappear from view or unreadable due to distance. This is an extra challenge for the research, since age restrictions did not allow me to see most of the chat, while there are a lot more chats visible on YouTube. This means that the context of certain chats will sometimes be missing. When this is the case, they will either be filled in by the researcher with clear argumentation, or it will simply be stated that part of the conversation is missing.

4.3 - PARTICIPATION IN WORSHIP

One of the unique characteristics of the service on Roblox compared to most religious services available online is that people can join the server through an avatar, allowing them to participate in the service. Yet the environment is different from the usual church environment as well as the fact that it is taking place on a gaming platform, with even the leadership of the ministry stating that it is a Roblox *game*.⁹⁸ Let us therefore look at the behaviour of the congregation during the worship service. First the (mostly) shared forms

⁹⁸ See Appendix 2 – Frequently Asked Questions

of participating in the service by the congregation will be described, as well as the more common exceptions to this. This will be divided into how the avatars move in, and around the environment, as well as the use of the different emotes and the use of the chat. We will also discuss the physical appearance of the avatars and comments other players made on the physical look of other avatars. Lastly, we will look at some comments regarding the presence of God during and in the service. When the author is speaking about movement etc. the remark will always be about the avatar in game, unless stated otherwise.

4.3.1 - COMMON FORMS OF PARTICIPATION

As stated before, the player appears in the entrance area of the church building. Most people, once spawned immediately rush to the front of the worship room, standing in front of the stage. Some people stay behind, which could be for multiple reasons, like a bad internet connection or already joining while their physical body still needs to do other things in preparation for the service. Some people rush to the worship room but sit down in one of the many pews instead of at the front. As the service progresses more people join the server. Avatars can walk through each other and stand in the exact same spot, close to the stage, many avatars are ‘clipping’⁹⁹ due to this. Many players also want to avoid this and are standing a bit more spread out slightly further away from the stage. An example of the crowd and the clipping can be seen in picture A.¹⁰⁰

⁹⁹ Overlapping, partially or totally standing in the same place, making them partially invisible to show the other avatar.

¹⁰⁰ A screenshot of the service on April 5th by author, any visible player names are erased.



Picture A

During the parts of the service where music is played and songs are sung, most players stay near the stage. Often raising one or both of their hands in worship, sometimes using a dance emote or the high wave emote as a dance and either chatting along to the lyrics of the song or agreeing with the song by using the chat to say ‘amen,’ ‘hallelujah’ or other, longer praises. For example, someone exclaims in all caps (signifying enthusiasm): “Yes, *amennnn Lorddddd. I love Jesus, let Him work.*”¹⁰¹ The use of multiple letters at the end of the word signifying their enthusiasm and importance. This enthusiasm can also be seen in a message where someone simply, again in all caps, states ‘*amen*’ with, roughly estimated, forty n’s at the end of it.¹⁰² There are also some less common exclamation during worship like: “Jesus Raveeeee” fully capitalized¹⁰³ or “*god is my og, he knows my hearttt lol.*”¹⁰⁴ ‘Og,’ in this context means original, often used as a compliment stating that no one can do it as good as the one being described. On top of that, there is a shared anticipation of the sermon, with people often asking whether there is a sermon or when the sermon starts. For example, on April 5th someone asked:

¹⁰¹ Grace Online Ministries, *Grace Online | Easter Sunday | 4/5/2026*, 2026, at 9:50, 1:17:34, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=RzmmwEuz6y8s>.

¹⁰² Grace Online Ministries, *Grace Online | Easter Sunday | 4/5/2026*, at 12:01.

¹⁰³ Grace Online Ministries, *Grace Online | Main Worship Experience | 4/12/2026*, 2026, at 25:28, 46:17, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=A_Mr8sR90SU.

¹⁰⁴ Grace Online Ministries, *Grace Online | Easter Sunday | 4/5/2026*, at 15:59. Improved spelling of kno by author to improve readability.

*“when does praise and worship end?”*¹⁰⁵ Or on the twelfth, when the sermon was especially short: *“Will there be more speakers???”*¹⁰⁶

There are also many people who seem less involved in the service, standing to the side, not using emotes or the chat and seemingly unaffected. Some avatars are running around a lot, through other avatars in front of the stage, but also across the whole building. Some avatars are also regularly jumping in front of the stage.

Once the sermon starts, everyone is asked to sit down *“for the Word of God”*¹⁰⁷ and the avatars grouped up at the front spread out over the seats, taking the front pews first. Here it is not possible for avatars to overlap, due to gameplay restrictions, so the players are spread out quite evenly. While the pastor occasionally asks for interaction in his prerecorded sermon, not a lot of people seem to reply. Unfortunately, this could not be double checked on YouTube, where more chats are visible for the researcher, since the congregation is not in view. During the sermon reflections are sometimes made on the unique context of Roblox, with the preacher telling the people to close their eyes *“I want you guys all to bow your heads and close your eyes wherever you’re at, tell your cat to close your eyes, tell your mom and your dad to close their eyes, everybody close your eyes”*¹⁰⁸ asking for participation with the physical body and even the physical environment outside of Roblox as well. During this prayer, as well as during the one at the end of the service, almost all players use the ‘prayer’ emote from Grace Chapel, bowing their heads and folding their hands together. At the end of the sermon, when the music starts again, many people reply to the sermon by saying ‘amen.’ Just like at the start of the service, they rush to the front to join in on the singing and dancing in worship.

It is worth noting that not all interactions with the service are positive, but in the critique the relevance of the service becomes even more apparent. During my second participation in game a scenario arose in which someone was criticized for not wearing proper clothing in church. The criticized avatar in question is wearing underwear. While this seems like an odd thing to wear to church, at the same time, many people do not

¹⁰⁵ Grace Online Ministries, *Grace Online | Easter Sunday | 4/5/2026*, at 23:58.

¹⁰⁶ Grace Online Ministries, *Grace Online | Main Worship Experience | 4/12/2026*, at 34:06.

¹⁰⁷ Grace Online Ministries, *Grace Online | Main Worship Experience | 4/18/2026*, 2026, at 33:25, 59:15, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=jr_axtgawlc.

¹⁰⁸ Grace Online Ministries, *Grace Online | Easter Sunday | 4/5/2026*, at 58:28-58:36.

seem particularly worried about looking their ‘Sunday best.’ As with many online spaces, avatar appearances can range from a monkey to a rat with fairy wings or even a weird worm or alienlike creature, see pictures B, C and D for example. Although most avatars are human like, as can be seen in the picture A. In another service there is also a remark on the outfit of the speaker, asking why he is ‘zesty’¹⁰⁹ (see also picture F below.)



Picture B

Picture C

Picture D

Picture F

4.3.2 - GOD’S DIGITAL PRESENCE

During the service, many different types of remarks were made that references God’s presence, either as a request or as a statement. During the sermon on April 5th, the preacher states: “*I believe that my God is standing here, right here, in this game*”¹¹⁰ and this idea of God’s presence is also echoed by the congregation. Someone asks, in all caps: “*Holy Spirit, move in this place*” and someone agrees with them saying: “*Yes, Lordddd, move in this place.*”¹¹¹ During the service on April 18th players also seem convinced God is with them, saying in all caps: “*I feel Him moving!!*” and “*I feel you, Father*”.¹¹²

The service and the experienced presence of God seems to also impact people physically: “*Am going to pass out*”¹¹³ as well as someone stating they are crying by placing the word between two asterisks, signifying an action.¹¹⁴ During the first observation, which was the service on April 5th, I also noted multiple people stated that they were crying ‘in a good way’, however the YouTube video doesn’t show this as the recording crashed.

¹⁰⁹ Grace Online Ministries, *Grace Online | Main Worship Experience | 4/18/2026*, at 11:41.

¹¹⁰ Grace Online Ministries, *Grace Online | Easter Sunday | 4/5/2026*, at 56:40.

¹¹¹ Grace Online Ministries, *Grace Online | Easter Sunday | 4/5/2026*, at 27:36 and 31:36.

¹¹² Grace Online Ministries, *Grace Online | Main Worship Experience | 4/18/2026*, at 30:06 and 31:09.

¹¹³ Grace Online Ministries, *Grace Online | Main Worship Experience | 4/12/2026*, at 31:41.

¹¹⁴ Grace Online Ministries, *Grace Online | Main Worship Experience | 4/18/2026*, at 27:14.

One last interaction stands out and, while it is unique, it is worth discussing. Someone states during the service that they are speaking in tongues.¹¹⁵ At first simply using the chat to say: *speaks in tongues* in all caps, but afterwards seemingly typing it out: “N aRgdaDdsgrdffgfgfgttratgfszs.” Due to the camera angle and the way the chat works, the researcher cannot be entirely certain the same person said these things, however it seems likely.

4.4 - INTERACTION DURING THE SERVICE

As mentioned in the methodology chapter, the author had a tough time interacting with people during and after the service. Multiple attempts were made to engage people in a conversation and ask them if they were interested in taking part in the research and many times there was no answer at all. A few times there was a short conversation and only twice did the author manage to hold a longer conversation with another player. During the participatory research there were also signs that players often seemed to ignore each other, with questions never being answered and people not engaging in a two-way conversation. An example of this is during the second service when a player shared with the developer of the ministry that Grace Chapel helped him grow closer to Jesus, despite it being a heartfelt compliment, the developer never answers.

However, studying the YouTube videos of the same services and the one after show, it seems that it was not entirely the case. A question that was not answered from the authors point of view, was answered from the point of view of the YouTube video. The player had asked how to do the dances and in the first thirty seconds of the video we can see someone giving an answer.¹¹⁶ In the same service someone asks for prayer after going through a heartbreak and about half a minute later we see someone putting a short prayer in the chat for the first person.¹¹⁷ Different players also seem to be familiar with each other, stating they were looking for them¹¹⁸ or, somewhat less enthusiastically: “*its u again.*”¹¹⁹ People also seem to share joy in the amount of people the service on the

¹¹⁵ Grace Online Ministries, *Grace Online | Easter Sunday | 4/5/2026*, at 17:18 and 18:35.

¹¹⁶ Grace Online Ministries, *Grace Online | Main Worship Experience | 4/12/2026*, at 0:30 ‘the(n) click mo(re) emotes’.

¹¹⁷ Grace Online Ministries, *Grace Online | Main Worship Experience | 4/12/2026*, at 10:42 and 11:18.

¹¹⁸ Grace Online Ministries, *Grace Online | Easter Sunday | 4/5/2026*, at 11:22.

¹¹⁹ Grace Online Ministries, *Grace Online | Main Worship Experience | 4/18/2026*, at 20:20.

server during Easter, stating: “Guys, my PC is lagging!” and “mine is kind of lagging too” “haha.”¹²⁰ While it might not seem positive that a computer is lagging, it is in this context, it is used to point out that there are so many people worshipping and so many avatars to load that their computer cannot take it.

However, during the service and after the service there are only a few longer interactions among the players in the congregation. One being a discussion about not being able to physically go to church.¹²¹ The other being a discussion with people visiting the church who are not big fans of the service or of Christianity. During most of the service on April 12th, starting 4 minutes and 33 seconds into the service, one can see a small group of people in the middle being involved in this conversation until just after the sermon. Some of the visitors seem to actively want to antagonize the congregation, by saying stuff like: “Satan save us please” and “Go praise sky papa,”¹²² which in turn seems to work, with someone even calling security.¹²³ At the same time, some of the conversation seems a lot friendlier, with someone stating multiple times that Jesus loves them despite what flaws they have. The visitors seem surprised at the existence of the worship service on Roblox¹²⁴ and even seem convinced it is a cult.¹²⁵

While the conversation itself is not that much of interest to us, it does clearly show a few things: people take the worship seriously and feel the need to stand up for the worship when people question it. It also shows that other outsiders and visitors are also convinced the participants take it seriously, even if they did not expect it. However, this interaction also shows how difficult it is to adequately measure how much people are truly engaged in worship. One of the visitors’ avatars was nodding to the music, seemingly dancing, while the same person seemed opposed to the service in the chat.¹²⁶

¹²⁰ Grace Online Ministries, *Grace Online | Easter Sunday | 4/5/2026*, at 20:23 and 21:05.

¹²¹ Grace Online Ministries, *Grace Online | Main Worship Experience | 4/12/2026*, at 15:06-16:31 The messages imply that the conversation started before and might have continued after.

¹²² Grace Online Ministries, *Grace Online | Main Worship Experience | 4/12/2026*, at 5:15 and 11:41.

¹²³ Grace Online Ministries, *Grace Online | Main Worship Experience | 4/12/2026*, at 12:52.

¹²⁴ Grace Online Ministries, *Grace Online | Main Worship Experience | 4/12/2026*, at 4:33 and 11:57.

¹²⁵ Grace Online Ministries, *Grace Online | Main Worship Experience | 4/12/2026*, at 10:29 and 12:34.

¹²⁶ Grace Online Ministries, *Grace Online | Main Worship Experience | 4/12/2026*, at 15:01 avatar with the light purple hair, bottom right of the screen.

4.5 - IMPORTANCE OF THE SERVICE

During and outside of the service the players often reflect on the importance of the service. This has been showcased earlier, where someone shared with the developer of the game how important Grace Chapel has been for him and helped him to grow closer to Jesus. There also seems to be a group of players attending Grace Chapel because they cannot attend a physical church, yet people also question this.¹²⁷

This becomes even more clear on their Discord server, where people share testimonies, prayer requests, and memes among other things. While most testimonies do not explicitly mention Grace Church, others show that the service has had an impact on their lives. For example, someone shared on the 16th of March:

“I appreciate [preacher]’s teaching yesterday on forgiveness and surrender. (...) I’ve struggled with letting go and fully surrendering to God in the past. (...) I like how [preacher] indicated that forgiveness is more than a feeling. (...) I’ve chosen to forgive everyone in my heart for their trespasses. Thank you [preacher] for teaching on this and thank You Holy Spirit for speaking through them!”¹²⁸

On the 26th of April someone shared:

“I’m CHRISTIAN BOOSTED (...) This church game has forevermore changed my life, and now I see Christ more and more everyday!”¹²⁹

As well as Grace Church helping with difficulties at home, either because of conflict or an illness:

“Also, I joined this server to get more understanding to God, and to extend my values to everyone no matter what religion, race, nationality, and ethnicity they are, and to strengthen my Faith personally during hard times especially my family conflict between my grandparents from my dad side.”¹³⁰

And:

¹²⁷ Grace Online Ministries, *Grace Online | Main Worship Experience* | 4/12/2026, at 15:06-16:31.

¹²⁸ See Appendix 3 – 16th of March

¹²⁹ See Appendix 4 – Christian Boosted

¹³⁰ See Appendix 5 – Green

“(...) then my mother got sick and we couldn’t go in person anymore, but we still watch our church through livestream so we don’t feel disconnected. When I found Grace Church (at the time) that first service won my heart. The New Age music I’ve never heard blessed my soul so much, God is & has been so good to me blessing me & handling my prayers & concerns with so much care you can’t not praise his name”¹³¹

These testimonies clearly show that the worship service on Grace Chapel on Roblox influences and sometimes even changes peoples’ lives.

4.6 - OTHER IMPRESSIONS

However, not everyone attending seems to experience the service as valuable. While most people enthusiastically join in on the worship and even seem to experience the presence of God, some people take it less seriously. During the service a player mentions that they “*love to fart*”¹³² and even the volunteers seem worried about people not taking it seriously or disrupting the service, sharing a notification telling us to not ‘be distracted by the exploiters.’¹³³ The game environment in which the service takes place also plays a role in some people’s experience of the service. An example from the chat is that someone asked to be adopted,¹³⁴ which can either refer to another game on Roblox or simply to the relatively common phenomenon in digital spaces where people ‘adopt’ each other as children and parent.¹³⁵

I had mixed experiences of the services. On the one hand I enjoyed the worship experience and tried to participate through my avatar as good as I could while taking notes. Copying the other players, by standing near the stage and typing in the chat ‘hallelujah’ or ‘amen’ when it felt fitting. It truly felt as if I was praising God in that moment. At times I even felt overwhelmed by the amount of movement in Grace Chapel as if I was truly in that crowded space, not just seeing it on a screen. On the other hand,

¹³¹ See Appendix 6 – Volunteer

¹³² Grace Online Ministries, *Grace Online | Easter Sunday | 4/5/2026*, at 45:19.

¹³³ Grace Online Ministries, *Grace Online | Easter Sunday | 4/5/2026*, at 30:42.

¹³⁴ Grace Online Ministries, *Grace Online | Main Worship Experience | 4/18/2026*, at 48:47 ‘*adopt me httpets nty sry atm.*’ The researcher is not sure what the third word and the last three words mean.

¹³⁵ While I could not find a reliable source to support this statement, one can find another example in the episode from ‘*Jack Whitehall: Fatherhood with my Father*’ episode 2 ‘*technology*’ in which they explore the metaverse.

there were times that I became very aware of the fact that I was not actually in a church, but simply sitting in my office in the middle of the night, at least physically speaking. This happened most often, but not exclusively, while I was taking notes in my physical notebook, taking my hands away from the keyboard and mouse through which I controlled het avatar.

5 - CONCLUSION

The case study was designed to help us answer the question what the value of worship on Roblox is. To get to the answer three sub questions were asked: What is the role of worship in digital space, especially when we look at Roblox? How do the players participate in worship through their avatar? What does the worship service of GOM mean for these players? In this section of the thesis, we will discuss the answers to these questions, as well as the main research question, harking back to the past chapters of the research.

5.1 - ROLE OF WORSHIP IN DIGITAL SPACES

To answer the question what the role of worship is in digital spaces we will mainly have to rely on the first chapter of the thesis. One can be sure that the interaction between religion and the internet is as old as the internet itself, starting out as a tool of communication. Even now, many Christian communities see the internet primarily as a tool for communication and evangelization. At the same time, as internet becomes more intertwined with our daily lives, it becomes a more common tool used for personal worship, mainly through prayer apps. Some churches, however, encourage a hybrid service: though happening in the physical world, one can also participate through digital means. Especially evangelical Churches prioritize an online presence of their worship services, using it as a tool for outreach.

When we look at specifically Roblox, there seems to be a worship space for different religions, like a Muslim prayer room and Mosques, as well as multiple Christian Church environments. Though it is sometimes difficult to distinguish between roleplay and genuine participation simply from the outside.

5.2 - PARTICIPATION DURING THE SERVICE

Based on the observations and the analysis of the YouTube videos of the service of GOM, one can say that the players seem to actively search for ways to participate. When the worship music is being played, they rush to the stage, standing as close to it as possible, and try to emulate singing along to the lyrics in the chat. They use emotes to dance to the music or simply raise their hands to show that they are worshipping. Even when they are not singing along to the lyrics, they often participate by giving shouts of praise, like

hallelujah, or saying amen. To give extra stress on what they're saying and to give it more weight, they add letters often to the end of important words and speak in all caps, using common digital practices to give, in a matter of speaking, voice to their experience and their genuine participation. The avatars are an integral part of this, with people moving about to disengage from worship and join in on a conversation or by moving their avatar away from a conversation to get into the worship.

The use of the avatars by the worship team, the person leading in prayer and the preacher is even more interesting. While all the sounds are pre-recorded and the presence of the avatars and the people controlling the avatars is not strictly necessary, since the sounds are not dependent on them at all, the avatars still have to be on stage to represent the sounds. Indeed, even the worship team and the background singers sing along through chat. They even equip microphones to the avatars to show who is speaking and who is the main singer. How the avatars are used and where they are placed seems to matter for the experience of the service. Not just the player's own avatar matters in the experience, but all the other avatars matter also, as we can see from the celebration of there being a lot of avatars, despite the impact it has on the smoothness of the service. Even the sermon, often viewed as a more passive part of the service, had avatars sitting preferably on the front row, as close to the action as possible.

This last observation does show a difference between digital bodies and physical bodies. At least speaking from my own observations. In most physical Churches the front rows often fill up last, instead of first. This difference is further seen in some of the actions of the avatars, like jumping up and down or running around during the service. While some Churches encourage such self-expressions, it is rare to observe this level of physical intensity.

5.3 – THE MEANING FOR THE PLAYERS

It is clear from the observations of the worship service and the analysis of the Discord messages that the service of GOM is relevant to the players, though differences between players apply. Some seem to use it as an opportunity to get to know more Christians and explore a faith passed down to them by their parents. Others, who cannot go to a physical Church, seem to use it as a genuine Church service, while at the same time

acknowledging they think a physical Church and Church community is important to have. For a lot of players, the service is a way of exploring a different version of worship, bringing upbeat and contemporary music to the table. Some find relevance in the sermons, stating that they have learned to forgive through a sermon, or simply shown by their impatience for the sermon to begin.

Another important finding in this respect is the reported presence of the Holy Spirit, or indeed another persona of God, in the digital space. Not only does the preacher assert that Jesus is indeed in Grace Chapel, but there are also multiple people in the congregation who either ask for the presence of the Holy Spirit or simply state that they feel His presence, with someone even speaking in tongues. While we will discuss later how seriously we can take these assertions when we look at the claim that *'faith requires flesh, for the Spirit was poured out over fleshly bodies'* from Cilliers,¹³⁶ the players themselves seem genuine in these assertions.

The meaning is also reflected in what is happening to the players physical bodies. While we do not have a lot of insight into this aspect of the service, there are some players who state that they are crying, which has to be a report of their physical body, since the avatars on Roblox cannot cry, at least not in Grace Chapel.

Lastly, the meaning to the players is shown when the validity of the experience is questioned by visitors. Not only what the players said shows that they take it seriously, standing up for the service and for Christianity in general, but especially the length of the discussion. The participants of the service are willing to put time and effort into defending the service, which is less likely if they hadn't experienced it as genuine worship.

5.4 – THE VALUE OF PARTICIPATING

With the answers to the sub-questions, we can look again at the main research question: What is the value of worship for players during the service of Grace Online Ministries on Roblox? While the absence of interviews to rely on in answering these questions makes it more challenging to answer this question, there is a lot of data available through the

¹³⁶ As discussed in 1.2.3 see Cilliers, 'Fides Quaerens Corporalitem'.

observation, participation and the analyzation of the worship services themselves, especially with the help of the recordings on YouTube and the testimonies on Discord.

The players of Roblox who attend the services of Grace Online Ministries find value in the services. Not simply in the enjoyment of the music (though they appreciate it as a 'rave') or because it is an online community of Christians in which they find fellowship, but because they seem to experience and practice genuine worship on the platform. They do not only sing along with the lyrics of the songs but feel the Spirit moving. They do not only dance to the music with their avatars, but cry with their physical bodies because they are moved by the worship. They do not just listen to the sermon because it is part of it, but they learn from it, they practice it in their daily lives. In their own words, they aren't simply enjoying a service, they are Christian boosted.

Micheal Huerter wrote a book called *'The Hybrid Congregation'* in which he discusses what makes online practices worthwhile and effective. On page 121 he states that an effective communal practice, as we see in Grace Chapel, must be participatory, transformative, appropriate to the medium and centered on God.¹³⁷ Of those, only the appropriation of the medium has not been observed nor discussed, simply because the author has no insight in this. However, all three other criteria are fulfilled in the service of GOM. Players actively participate in the worship, in any way possible and it clearly has value for them. It impacts their experience. The players claim that the service changed their lives, made them grow closer to Christ or taught them about forgiveness. During the service the players pray to and praise God. The whole service is focused on God, as much as in a physical Church.

Indeed, while the leadership does not wish to call Grace Chapel a Church, while neither baptism or communion are practiced in the digital space, and while the service always includes a call to join a physical 'real life' Church, the service of GOM seems to mean as much to the players as a physical Church service.

¹³⁷ Huerter, *The Hybrid Congregation*, 121.

6 - DISCUSSION

So where does this leave us in the wider theological debate about digital Churches and Digital worship. As we have seen in the first chapter of the thesis, there is a lot at stake when it comes to digital worship. If the Spirit, as Cilliers states, had been poured out solely over the flesh, can we truly celebrate and worship God through digital means? Can we truly gather as a Church through wires and screens, by typing ‘amen’ and ‘hallelujah’ at the right times? We will discuss this thoroughly and even try to explain the differences in experiences. After this we will also touch on the subject of religious authority.

6.1 - TIME, SPACE AND EMBODIMENT

When it comes to a gathering, two things seem to be of central importance: time and space. To be gathered together means to be physically gathered in the same place at the same time. An important matter for the liturgy: Barnard et al. spend an entire chapter focussed on these aspects of the liturgy;¹³⁸ an article on Christianity Today shows that this discussion is not only experienced as relevant to scholars of liturgy, but a wider concern among Christians;¹³⁹ and a study from Kruger shows that this concern is to be taken seriously.¹⁴⁰ Indeed, a significant minority in Kruger’s study could not experience online space as a sacred space and almost a third agreed at least partially with the statement that virtual services aren’t genuine worship services.¹⁴¹ A qualitative study by Agyekum et al. shows even more that digital and online worship is not seen or experienced as genuine worship.¹⁴² The study, populated by people aged between 63 and 76 years old, interviews people about their experience of streaming the worship services during the COVID19 pandemic. The older generations report that they do not think there is a spiritual dimension during online worship, since it is not a real physical gathering.¹⁴³

¹³⁸ Marcel Barnard et al., *Worship in the Network Culture: Liturgical Ritual Studies: Fields and Methods, Concepts and Metaphors* (Peeters, 2014), Time and Space.

¹³⁹ Bonnie Kristian, ‘Don’t Forsake the Assembly’, *Christianity Today*, 7 January 2026, <https://www.christianitytoday.com/2026/01/dont-forsake-the-assembly-why-go-to-church/>.

¹⁴⁰ Ferdinand P. Kruger, ‘Descriptive Empirical Perspectives on Participants’ Attitudes on Virtual Worship Services Kindle an Ineluctable Revisiting of Ecclesial Assumptions in a Post-Pandemic World’, *HTS Theologiese Studies / Theological Studies* 77, no. 4 (2021): 11, <https://doi.org/10.4102/hts.v77i4.7125>.

¹⁴¹ Kruger, ‘Descriptive Empirical Perspectives on Participants’ Attitudes on Virtual Worship Services Kindle an Ineluctable Revisiting of Ecclesial Assumptions in a Post-Pandemic World’, 6.

¹⁴² Agyekum et al., ‘Streaming Religious Services during a Public Health Crisis’.

¹⁴³ Agyekum et al., ‘Streaming Religious Services during a Public Health Crisis’, 859–61.

Even the ease in which one can access the online space is seen as a vice, since it is a lower level of expectation.

Agyekum et al. explains this by using the concept of therapeutic landscape by Gesler. They state that the physical Church building offers such a space that ‘*contribute(s) to members’ spiritual and mental well-being.*’¹⁴⁴ Barnard et al. also stress the important role space can play in the experience of the religious. Building on social studies, they define space in four different categories: the ‘firstspace’ is just the physical aspect of the space: the geographical space. The ‘seconspace’ is the idealised version of a space: the ideas and imagined concepts of the space. The ‘thirdspace’ is the lived space: created and lived in by the people, think of a living room or parks. The ‘fourthspace’, introduced in the book, is the anticipated space: like bread and wine that becomes the body and blood, a space becomes a sacred space.¹⁴⁵ Through the believers’ anticipation that the space will take part in the transcendent reality, in the Holy, they can perceive and take part in this transcendent reality.¹⁴⁶ They illustrate this with multiple examples from the Bible.¹⁴⁷ The burning bush, a firstspace, is perceived as a sacred space and becomes a sacred space for Moses as he anticipates and then experiences the transcendent reality in it. The gathering of Christians as described multiple times in the New Testament is also such a sacred place but then formed by the people themselves. The anticipation of the Spirit makes the believer able to take part in the Spirit and take part in this Holy Space. Barnard et al. continue and describe how the ritual during the Church service allows the Church building to be revealed to the believers as a sacred space participating in the Holy.

When looking at studies that reflect on the use of online meetings for spiritual practices this lack of a sacred space and time seems to be one of the important struggles with digital spirituality. In a study where Catholics joined in on an online prayer group, held through zoom or the Telegram platform, the participants mentioned there was an

¹⁴⁴ Agyekum et al., ‘Streaming Religious Services during a Public Health Crisis’, 863.

¹⁴⁵ Barnard et al., *Worship in the Network Culture*, 294, 296.

¹⁴⁶ Barnard et al., *Worship in the Network Culture*, 296–97.

¹⁴⁷ Barnard et al., *Worship in the Network Culture*, 297–302.

absence of boundaries between the spiritual practices and other spaces of life.¹⁴⁸ Physically, the participants were often in the same space for the prayer as for other activities like work, and even have the same posture sitting in front of a screen. Together with the flexibility allowed the risk of ‘praying while multitasking.’ Another problem was the lack of embodiment for the prayer, with a person stating that they missed ‘*to be able to kneel together during prayer.*’¹⁴⁹ This lines up with earlier statements found in chapter one of the thesis, where the body is described as a tool that, through out gestures and actions, can show us that we are before God and what we are before God.¹⁵⁰

Yet, in this paper we have seen the opposite happen. The players on Roblox clearly state they feel the presence of God in the digital space and are convinced He is there. They are emotionally affected, some even moved to tears and they protect the space. In her book ‘*@ Worship*’ Berger sees this disconnect happen as well, with liturgical scholars being shocked at digital liturgical gatherings since they are ‘not grounded in the physical co-presence of worshippers,’ yet participants still experiencing it as a true celebration.¹⁵¹ Yet, Berger argues, there is no need for physical co-presence in worship.¹⁵² Indeed, communion with the Church of Christ has never been bound to physical co-presence, either spatially or in time. When we worship, we worship with the whole worldwide Church throughout history, a Church that is ‘made’ by God.¹⁵³ A gathered Church, physically or digitally, will always come up short in the participation and actual presence of the congregation: people are distracted during worship or feel alienated in the congregation. Indeed, in an earlier chapter Berger describes many instances of people celebrating and praying with the whole Church while on their own. The sick, who cannot come to the celebration, can still receive the eucharist at home and even the hermits, praying and taking the eucharist by themselves, do this with the whole Church.¹⁵⁴

¹⁴⁸ Shoshi Keisari et al., ‘Spirituality during COVID-19 in Northern Italy: The Experience of Participating in an Online Prayer Group.’, *Pastoral Psychology* 71, no. 2 (2022): 208, 156108731, <https://doi.org/10.1007/s11089-022-00998-1>.

¹⁴⁹ Keisari et al., ‘Spirituality during COVID-19 in Northern Italy’, 208.

¹⁵⁰ Nichols, ‘Prayer’, 96 See also 1.3.1.

¹⁵¹ Teresa Berger, *@ Worship: Liturgical Practices in Digital Worlds* (Taylor & Francis Group, 2017), 37–39, <http://ebookcentral.proquest.com/lib/pthu/detail.action?docID=4891118>.

¹⁵² Berger, *@ Worship*, 38–40.

¹⁵³ Berger, *@ Worship*, 40.

¹⁵⁴ Berger, *@ Worship*, 24.

Even the sacred spaces, as established by Barnard, can be anticipated and experienced through digital means, without being bound by a place. This was observed in a recent study by Ilonka Terlouw.¹⁵⁵ In the study a group of congregants were asked to reflect on their prayer lives in multiple group sessions. From this study the importance of technology in people's private prayer lives came into view, especially the prominence of podcasts and the Bible app. In reflecting on the findings Terlouw states: "*The use of devotional podcasts gives rise to a new kind of sacred space.*"¹⁵⁶ This space is not physical but purely exists for the individual. This sometimes even goes without specifically religious gestures or postures, as many people practice this during the commute, either in the bus or driving a car.

6.2 – MEANINGFUL PARTICIPATION

Then how can we explain the vast differences in experiences reported? While some people seem to be able to anticipate and take part in a sacred space through digital means, a lot of people also report this simply not being the case. We cannot simply say they didn't genuinely anticipate the sacred space and thus could never take part in it, since that would not treat those believers seriously. On top of this, digital religion and digital worship is slowly moving away from the fringes of worship and becoming part of the daily lives of many Christians. However, we cannot leave behind those who do not experience the sacred space digitally.

This question seems to be in need of further exploration, though some initial observations can be made. As the study of Kruger shows, people's attitude to digital worship changed as they became more familiar with it and they often acknowledge the benefits, even if they think physical services are still preferable.¹⁵⁷ It seems familiarity with the digital improves the view on digital worship. This seems also the case when we compare the study by Agyekum et al. with this study. Their study reported overall a negative attitude to digital worship, with an absence of a spiritual sense and it being lower quality overall among the population of the study.¹⁵⁸ In the study the participants

¹⁵⁵ Terlouw, 'Devotion on Demand'.

¹⁵⁶ Terlouw, 'Devotion on Demand', 6–7 Quote from page 6.

¹⁵⁷ Kruger, 'Descriptive Empirical Perspectives on Participants' Attitudes on Virtual Worship Services Kindle an Ineluctable Revisiting of Ecclesial Assumptions in a Post-Pandemic World', 7.

¹⁵⁸ Agyekum et al., 'Streaming Religious Services during a Public Health Crisis', 859–60.

even reported that everything felt like a ‘youth gathering’.¹⁵⁹ This is of note since the study was populated by older participants, with ages ranging from 63 to 76, who are generally less digitally literate. However, this paper reports a worship service held on Roblox, where most players are under 21 years old and so-called ‘digital-natives.’ These players, that were already on Roblox, spend a considerable amount of time online and on Roblox, seem to experience the worship service as genuine and don’t miss out on the spiritual sense during this digital service at all. Familiarity with the digital and the digital environment seems to play an important role in the experience of the participants. However, more research would be needed to explore this conclusion.

The level of participation may also impact the experience of a digital place as a sacred place. The worship experience on Roblox offers different forms of participation than the other platforms used. A livestream of a worship service only allows you to leave comments and otherwise participate in your own home, without being able to see others participating. A video call allows you to interact better with others, but it has still limited options when it comes to expressing yourself with gestures and postures, as you are computer bound. The service on Roblox, however, allows interaction with other players as well as expression through a digital body, even if it is still limited in comparison to physical services. While there is more research needed to investigate this theory, the current research also seems to suggest the importance of active participation through avatars. The players rush to the front and stay as close to the stage as possible during the worship, they sit in the front pews during the sermon and are busy using the chat to participate in the worship. Simply being there, even with their avatar, does not seem to be enough in the digital worship.

6.3 – POWER AND VULNERABILITY

From these findings we also see a powershift happening in the religious context. As Sutinen and Cooper mention: “*those who have will and skill to use technology, easily dominate others.*”¹⁶⁰ In the case of Roblox specifically this statement has two sides. On the one hand, Roblox gives all players the option to set up an ‘experience’ easily, giving everyone an opportunity to create their own worship service. The maker of the experience

¹⁵⁹ Agyekum et al., ‘Streaming Religious Services during a Public Health Crisis’, 860.

¹⁶⁰ Sutinen and Cooper, *Digital Theology*, 6–7.

also has a lot of freedom in deciding who is allowed in the digital space, by giving people a temporary or even permanent ban. This could allow safe places to be made for different minority communities, such as the LGBTQIA+.¹⁶¹

Yet digital literacy, once again, matter a lot, despite it being theoretically possible for everyone to create such experiences. Besides teenagers, most people are not familiar with new digital media and technology and often lack the time and ability to keep up with the fast pace of the internet. This is also true for Roblox, as mostly teenagers use it. While this creates opportunities for teenagers to explore their religious identity online, away from parents and other traditional authority figures, this also gives way to new authority figures, often based on non-traditional authority structures.

There are different theories on how authority is gained. Firstly, through the followers agreeing (consciously or unconsciously) with the religious leader. Secondly, by social structures and cultural rules, in which the caretakers of the system have the authority. The third way of gaining authority is by one's position in the social system, especially as caretaker of the system. Lastly, one can gain authority by having the right relationships with the right people. For religious communities' authority can also be gained through extensive knowledge of the religion, by receiving special training within the religion or by performing a specific role in the religion. Central in these ways of gaining power is always the recognition of the already established communities, their traditions and their teaching.¹⁶² However, the digital age is adding another way to gain authority according to Campbell, namely the algorithm.

Digital authority is based on visibility and findability and to gain those two, one must rely on the algorithm. These algorithms are non-human and computer-driven,¹⁶³ which in turn judges content based on an often-unknown set of requirements, though engagement and advertiser friendliness are often the most important. This can be either positive or negative engagement.¹⁶⁴ Roblox is also controlled by such an algorithm, which

¹⁶¹ Tsuria, 'Hidden Religious Identities Online', 255–56.

¹⁶² Heidi A. Campbell, 'Approaching Religious Authority Through the Rise of New Leadership Roles Online', in *The Oxford Handbook of Digital Religion*, ed. Heidi A. Campbell and Pauline Hope Cheong (Oxford University Press, 2024), 346–48, <https://doi.org/10.1093/oxfordhb/9780197549803.013.16>.

¹⁶³ Campbell, 'Approaching Religious Authority Through the Rise of New Leadership Roles Online', 349.

¹⁶⁴ Carlos Diaz Ruiz, *Market-Oriented Disinformation Research : Digital Advertising, Disinformation and Fake News on Social Media* (Taylor & Francis, 2025), 159–60, <https://doi.org/10.4324/9781003506676>.

causes Grace Chapel to be visible on the homepage of most Christian teenagers when the experience is widely visited, for example during the service. This can be problematic, since people see this as a reliable way of getting information, after all it is done by an objective computer.¹⁶⁵

The authority figures created this way are often not per se educated in religious matters or supported by a religious community, but are mainly digital entrepreneurs and, in the case of Roblox, teenagers themselves. While most people who take part in digital worship do not have it as their only worship practice,¹⁶⁶ the influence of these digital entrepreneurs can become problematic, as there is no way in which they are held accountable to institutional structures.¹⁶⁷

6.4 - EVALUATION

In this thesis I set out to look for the value the participants found in the worship service on Roblox. This came with many challenges along the way: discovering a new platform and learning how it works. Discovering what risks came with the platform and the research and developing methods how to deal with these risks with input from the ethical committee and my supervisors. Especially when the implementation of the initial research design proved to be an issue. Yet, relying on different forms of data, the research question could adequately be answered and with that it shows that we need to take digital worship seriously as a whole church.

Not only did the global pandemic show that it is an issue all local Churches and all Christians are facing, but digital worship is also simply becoming part of our lives. Nowadays it is practically impossible to separate one's life from technology, even within religious spheres. While many scholars seem to focus on the question whether it should happen and whether it is genuine worship, this thesis shows that the younger generations already seem to have adapted to the digital and even experience God's presence in the digital space.

¹⁶⁵ Campbell, 'Approaching Religious Authority Through the Rise of New Leadership Roles Online', 349–50.

¹⁶⁶ Berger, @ *Worship*, 37.

¹⁶⁷ Campbell, 'Approaching Religious Authority Through the Rise of New Leadership Roles Online', 353–54.

Putting the findings of the thesis next to the findings of other researchers showed that there was a lot of difference in the experience of digital worship among different groups of people. In an attempt to analyse this difference, I used the concept of sacred spaces and tried to discover some tentative answers as to why there is a difference in the experience of digital sacred spaces. However, this needs further research, especially because of the risks involved in digital grassroot Churches and the absence of accountable authority structures in the digital.

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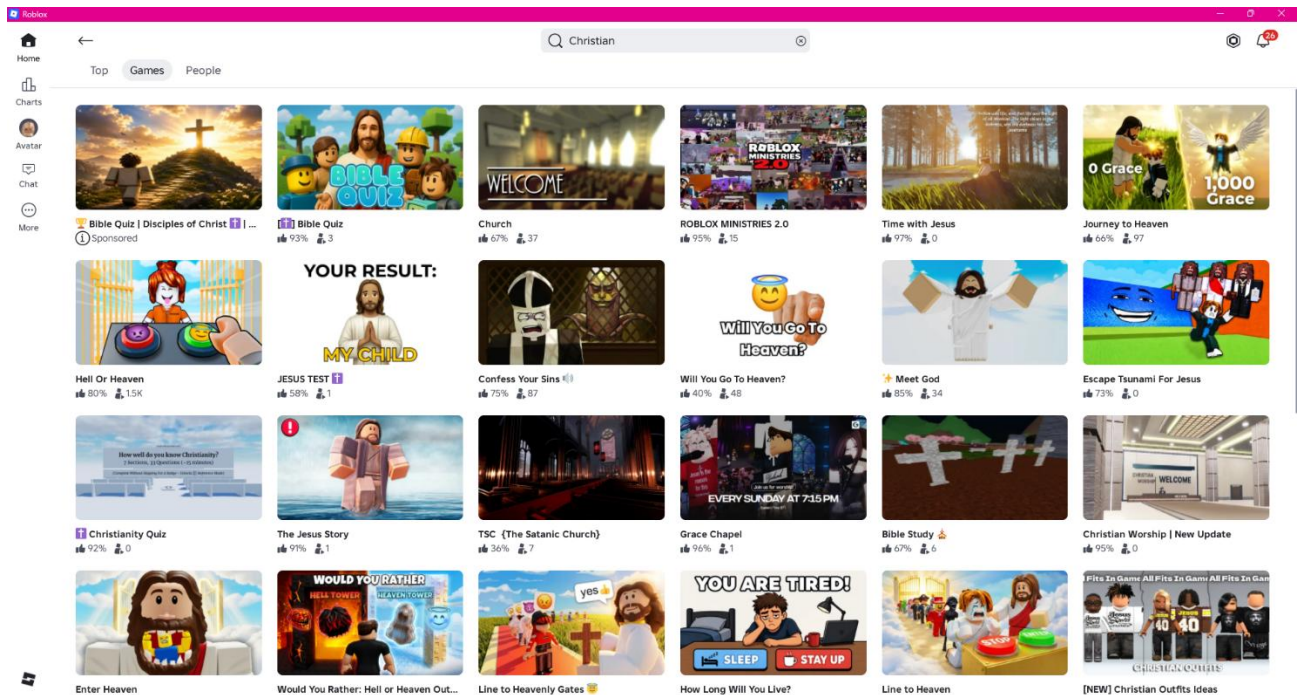
Weil, Louis. 'Worship'. In *The Study of Liturgy and Worship: An Alcuin Guide*, edited by Benjamin Gordon-Taylor and Juliette Day. Liturgical Press, 2013.
<https://archive.org/details/studyofliturgywo0000unse/page/n5/mode/2up>.

Zempi, Irene, and Imran Awan. 'Autoethnography'. In *The Routledge Handbook of Research Methods in the Study of Religion*, edited by Steven Engler and Michael Stausberg. Taylor & Francis Group, 2021.
<http://ebookcentral.proquest.com/lib/pthu/detail.action?docID=6803335>.

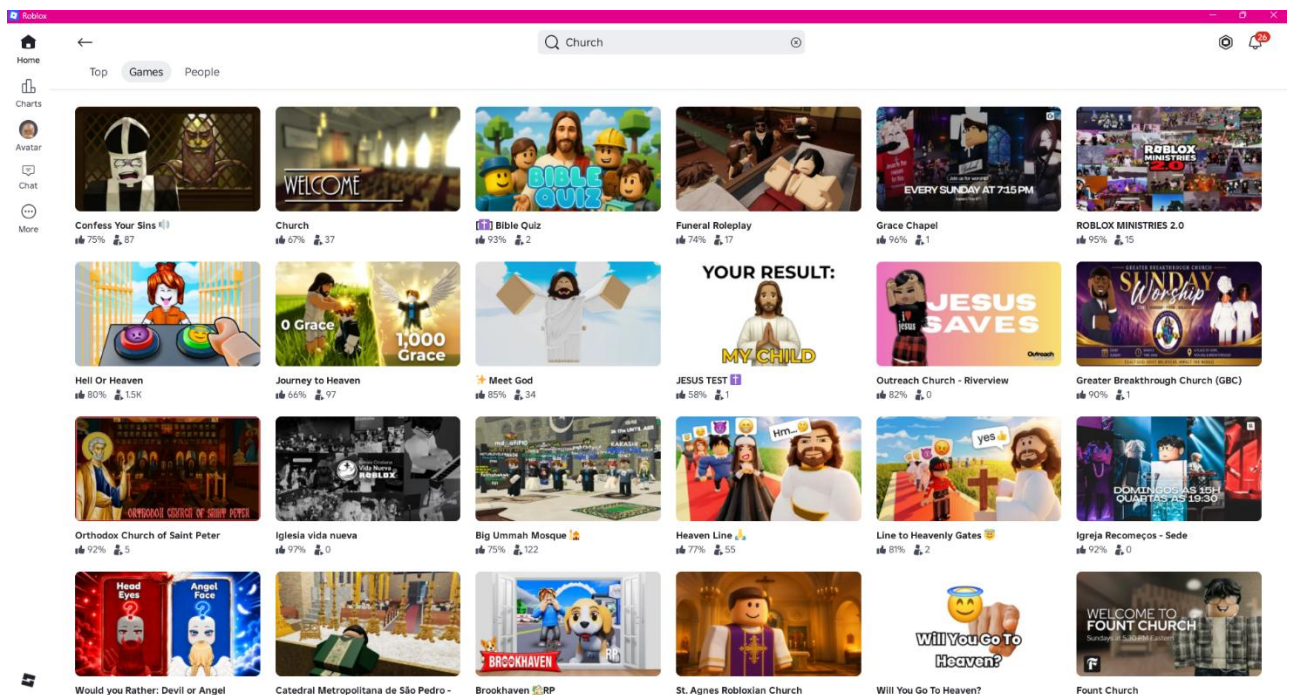
APPENDICES

APPENDIX 1 – ROBLOX SEARCH RESULTS

Results for search term: 'Christian'



Results for search term: 'Church'.



Results for search term: 'prayer'

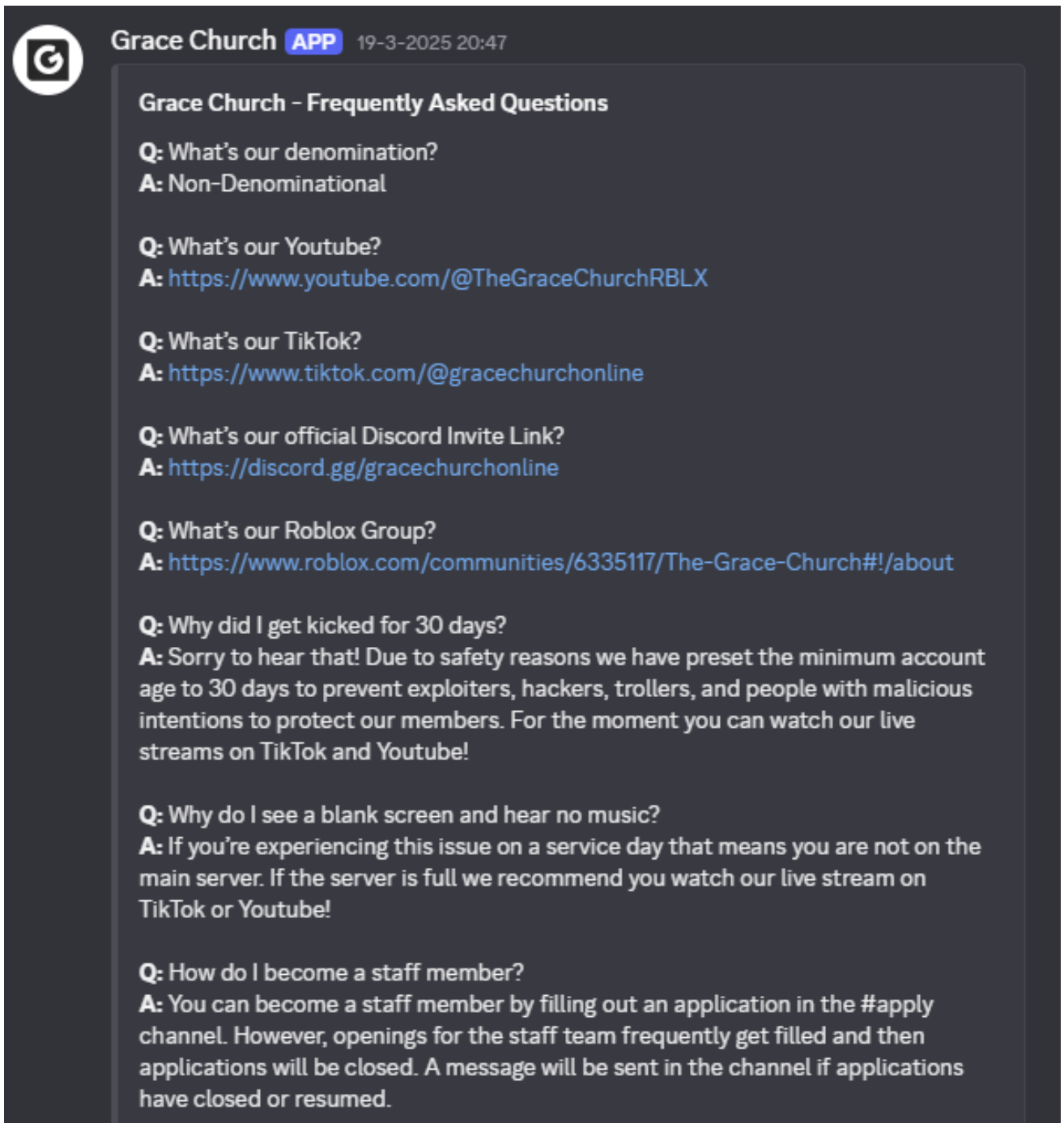
This screenshot shows the Roblox search results for the term 'prayer'. The interface includes a top navigation bar with 'Home', 'Charts', 'Avatar', 'Chat', and 'More' options. A search bar at the top displays 'Prayer' with a magnifying glass icon. Below the search bar, there are tabs for 'Top', 'Games', and 'People'. The main content area displays a grid of 24 game thumbnails, each with a title, a small Roblox icon, and a percentage rating. The games include 'Big Ummah Mosque', 'Eid 2026 | Simulator voor Salah en ...', 'Faith Incremental', 'Mosque At-Taubah 2026', 'Confess Your Sins', 'Prayernolia', 'Line to Heaven', 'Meet God', 'Hell Or Heaven', 'Journey to Heaven', 'Church', 'Line to Heavenly Gates', 'Mukbang Game [Testing]', 'AlHaram', 'Saudi-Kashtah', 'Bounce Castle Playground Roleplay', 'The Preacher', 'Prayer Islam 2026', 'ALTER EGO', 'YOUR RESULT: JESUS TEST', '[CH4] Lost in the Desert - Abu Fanous', 'Prayer Simulator Palestine', '+1 Age Every Click', and 'Clone Engine'.

Results for search term: 'Worship'

This screenshot shows the Roblox search results for the term 'worship'. The interface is similar to the previous one, with a top navigation bar and a search bar displaying 'Worship'. Below the search bar, there are tabs for 'Top', 'Games', and 'People'. The main content area displays a grid of 24 game thumbnails, each with a title, a small Roblox icon, and a percentage rating. The games include 'Grace Chapel', 'Christian Worship | New Update', 'Christ Is Risen Worship Center | Main ...', 'Bible Quiz', 'Church', 'Elevate Worship Palm Beach Gardens ...', 'Iglesia vida nueva', 'Meet God', 'TSC (The Satanic Church)', 'Big Ummah Mosque', 'Hell Or Heaven', 'Journey to Heaven', 'Evangel Worship Experience', 'Confess Your Sins', 'Tower | How Pick Me Are You?', 'Chiclayo Eterno [BETA]', 'Expedition Worship', 'Enter Heaven', 'The Place of Worship', 'Mosque At-Taubah 2026', 'Would You Rather: Angel vs Demon Ou...', 'Line to Heaven', 'The Jesus Story', and 'Covenant of Worship'.

APPENDIX 2 – FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

Screenshot from Discord, see also next page.



Grace Church **APP** 19-3-2025 20:47

Grace Church - Frequently Asked Questions

Q: What's our denomination?
A: Non-Denominational

Q: What's our Youtube?
A: <https://www.youtube.com/@TheGraceChurchRBLX>

Q: What's our TikTok?
A: <https://www.tiktok.com/@gracechurchoonline>

Q: What's our official Discord Invite Link?
A: <https://discord.gg/gracechurchoonline>

Q: What's our Roblox Group?
A: <https://www.roblox.com/communities/6335117/The-Grace-Church#!/about>

Q: Why did I get kicked for 30 days?
A: Sorry to hear that! Due to safety reasons we have preset the minimum account age to 30 days to prevent exploiters, hackers, trollers, and people with malicious intentions to protect our members. For the moment you can watch our live streams on TikTok and Youtube!

Q: Why do I see a blank screen and hear no music?
A: If you're experiencing this issue on a service day that means you are not on the main server. If the server is full we recommend you watch our live stream on TikTok or Youtube!

Q: How do I become a staff member?
A: You can become a staff member by filling out an application in the #apply channel. However, openings for the staff team frequently get filled and then applications will be closed. A message will be sent in the channel if applications have closed or resumed.

Q: When are our services?

A: Wednesday's and Sunday's at 7:15 PM EST!

Q: Do we practice communion and baptism?

A: We don't practice communion or baptism as we don't feel it is appropriate to roleplay or do these things in a ROBLOX game.

Q: How do we approach those with different views?

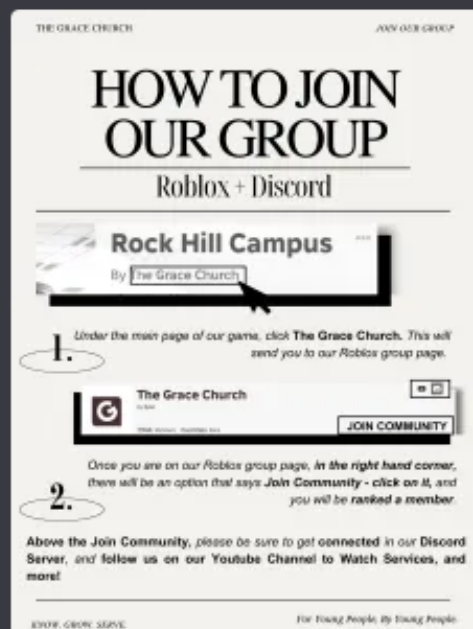
A: Everyone is welcomed and encouraged to come and attend one of the services throughout the week.

Q: What is the church's view on the Trinity and Holy Spirit?

A: We believe in the Trinity - Father, Son, Holy Spirit. We believe the Holy Spirit indwells each and every believer who confesses Jesus as their Lord and Savior.

Q: Are we solely a digital ministry?

A: Yes, we are a digital ministry!



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11



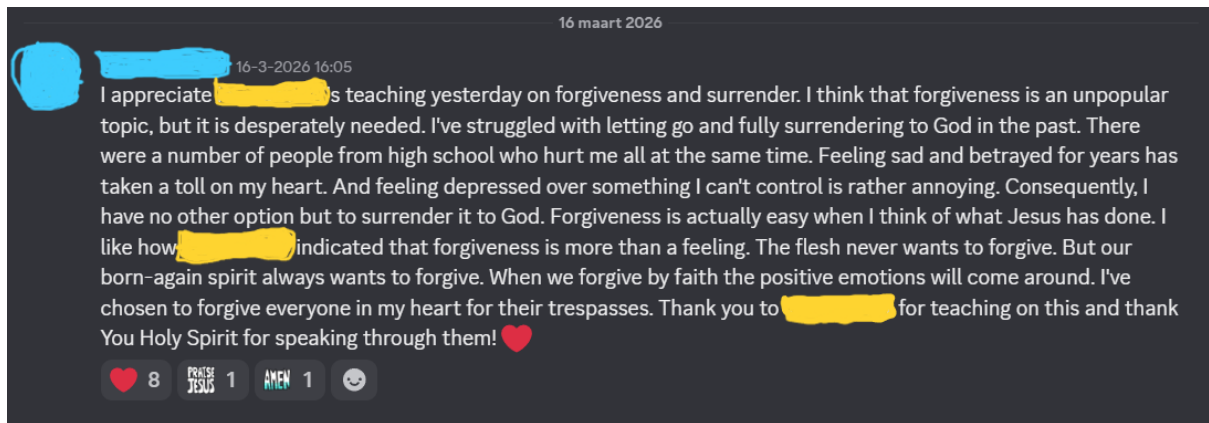
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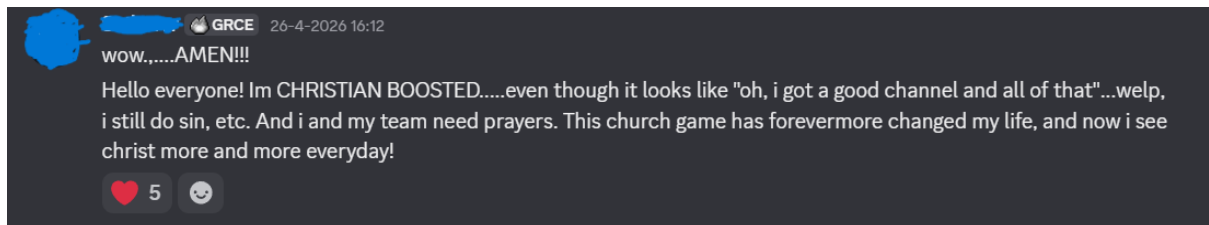
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APPENDIX 3 – 16TH OF MARCH

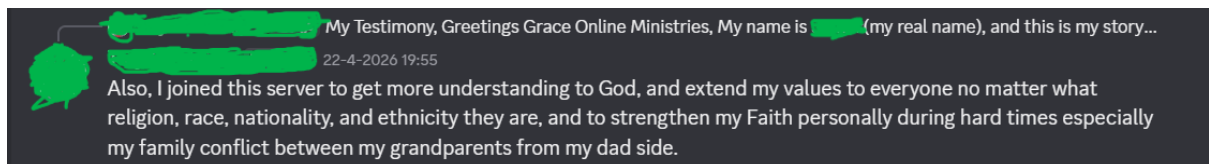


APPENDIX 4 – CHRISTIAN BOOSTED



APPENDIX 5 – GREEN

The first half of this testimony was left out of the thesis for privacy reasons



APPENDIX 6 – VOLUNTEER

