

CHURCH OF SWEDEN RESEARCH SERIES | VOLUME 17

What Really Matters

Scandinavian Perspectives on Ecclesiology and Ethnography

editors

Jonas Idestrom and
Tone Stangeland Kaufman

foreword by

Christian Scharen

This volume is about ecclesiology and ethnography and what really matters in such academic work. How does material from field studies matter in a theological conversation? How does theology, in various forms, matter in analysis and interpretation of field work material? How does method matter?

The authors draw on their research experiences and engage in conversations concerning reflexivity, normativity, and representation in qualitative theological work. The role and responsibility of the researcher is addressed from various perspectives in the first part of the book. In the next section the authors discuss ways in which empirical studies are able to disrupt the implicit and explicit normativity of ecclesial traditions, and also how theological traditions and perspectives can inform the interpretation of empirical data. The final part of the book focuses on the process of creating “the stuff” that represents the ecclesial context under study.

What Really Matters is written to serve students and researchers in the field of ecclesiology and ethnography, systematic and practical theology, and especially those who work empirically or ethnographically—broadly speaking. The book might be particularly helpful to those who deal with questions of methodology in these academic disciplines. This volume offers perspectives that grow out of the Scandinavian context, yet it seeks to participate in and contribute to a scholarly conversation that goes beyond this particular location.

“This book represents the next step in the fascinating and relatively new field of ethnographic ecclesiology, which seeks to bring theological reflection on the church out of the library and integrate it with qualitative fieldwork. . . . The book is full of engrossing and theoretically sophisticated reflections on the excitement and messiness of engagement with real church communities. I recommend it highly to anyone interested in how theology is done.”

—WILLIAM T. CAVANAUGH, DePaul University

978-1-5326-1811-6 / \$36 / 310 pp. / paper

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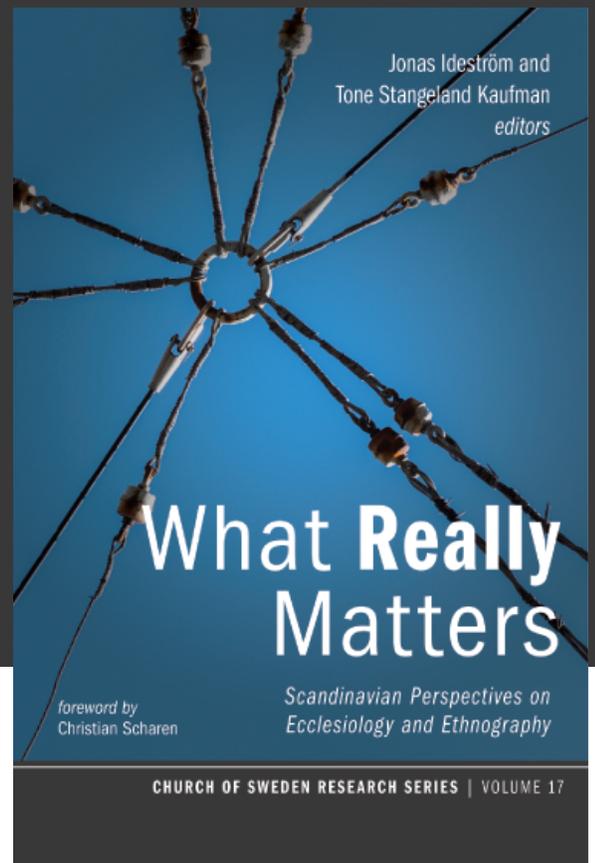
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“*What Really Matters* displays the importance of ethnography for the theological world. Exploring methodological challenges in sociological and theological approaches, the essays provide compelling ways to take lived faith seriously. As the book shows, by combining ‘normative’ and empirical research, ethnographic theology moves beyond limiting Christian theology and faith to the creedal and cognitive, enabling attention to long-ignored stories of ‘practical’ ecclesial community such as the ‘digitization of Christian life.’”

—MARY McCLINTOCK FULKERSON, Duke Divinity School

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