



RESEARCH CONFERENCE

MAJORITY CHURCHES AND CONTEMPORARY SPIRITUALITY

Integrations, Negotiations and Demarcations

DECEMBER 5–6, 2024
KARLSTAD UNIVERSITY



CALL FOR PAPERS

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In the last fifty years, new spiritual practices have emerged in Church settings in the Nordic countries. Even though the practices themselves might stem from an older Christian heritage, or from other religious traditions, they are new to the Lutheran churches. In Norway and Denmark, yoga practices have been christianised and integrated into worship services, branded as “Kirkeyoga” in Norway and Denmark, “Christfulness” in Denmark, and “Tikva” in Sweden. In Iceland, individual priests combine dream work and yoga. In Finland mindfulness has been introduced in churches, but with stricter regulations than we find in Sweden.

In previous research such practices have been studied when they have taken place outside of established religious institutions. Thus, they have been researched as part of new age or new religious movements, or understood as part of a holistic milieu with a focus on individual spirituality. At the same time, these practices may not necessarily be perceived as religious, but can also be understood as various forms of “secular sacralisations” on the borders of religion, entering secular institutions like the health care sector and schools. Now, as these practices have entered the established majority churches in the Nordic countries the distinction between (institutional) religion and (individual) spirituality implodes and needs to be critically assessed.

The Nordic folk churches, being majority churches with the aim to embrace the whole population, face several contemporary challenges. The “folk church” theology emerged in the early 20th century when almost the whole population belonged to the church and had basic knowledge about Christianity. Today, when the populations are more diverse both culturally and religiously, and where many church members are “belonging without believing”, this theology needs to be negotiated anew. One way of doing that is to espouse a “low threshold religiosity” which is open to new spiritual practices, where secular spirituality, health and wellbeing are intersecting.

The conference *Majority churches and Contemporary Spirituality - Integrations, Negotiations and Demarcations* gives attention to both individually centered practices and the social institutions where they are practiced, how these are linked and how they influence each other. Some of the questions the conference wants to highlight include the following: Which strategies have Protestant churches in the Nordic countries developed to meet a growing quest for spirituality and new spiritual practices? How have new spiritual practices been integrated in the activities and rituals

of majority churches? How have they been negotiated theologically and ritually? Are there any demarcation lines, and if so, where are these lines drawn, and by whom? What theoretical implications can we draw from the empirical observations? Is it time to revise the Spiritual revolution-thesis that Heelas and Woodhead formulated?

We encourage papers that explore the tension between orthodoxy and heteropraxis on both individual and institutional levels, as well as empirical studies that explore religion as practice that acknowledge the possible discrepancy between religious doctrines and behavioral norms, and what individuals actually do and believe.

Selected papers from the conference will be published in a thematic volume of *Temenos – Nordic Journal for the Study of Religion*. The journal is published by the Finnish Society for the Study of Religion. The journal was founded in 1965 as a joint-publication with the learned societies of Comparative Religion in Denmark, Finland, Norway and Sweden to promote the research and communication of ideas between scholars. *Temenos* publishes scholarly articles, academic discussions, conference reports and book reviews within the field of the study of religion and culture. *Temenos* is a Nordic journal and a primary focus is on Nordic topics and researchers. *Temenos* is a peer reviewed open access journal. It is published twice a year (one volume, two issues). In the Finnish Publication Forum it has been rated on top level (3) and on the Norwegian list it is ranked with the scientific level 2.

The conference is organized by the research project *The New Faces of the Folk Church – new spiritual practices, lived religion and theological legitimacy*. It will take place at Karlstad University, Karlstad, on December 5th and 6th, 2024.

Abstract for a paper presentation should not be longer than 250 words.

Deadline for submitting an abstract is 1st of March 2024.

The early deadline is necessary since we intend to apply for a network grant from Riksbankens jubileumsfond, which then would cover all conference expenses.

Please send your abstract to Katarina Plank, katarina.plank@kau.se

Contact

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