



Editorial Note

The theme for this special issue of *Temenos* is *New Spiritual Practices in Nordic Lutheran Churches*. It is the result of a conference held at Karlstad University on 5–6 December 2024 investigating *Majority Churches and Contemporary Spirituality: Integrations, Negotiations, and Demarcations*. The conference brought together scholars from the Nordic countries researching new spiritual practices within the Nordic Lutheran churches. The presentations during the conference covered all the Nordic countries. They highlighted how a variety of practices could be found, ranging from enneagram, sound healing, yoga, dance, meditation practices, dreamwork, and retreats to what a secular spirituality might entail.

The conference aimed to draw attention to individually centred practices and the social institutions in which they are practised, how these are linked, and how they influence each other. The conference addressed the following questions: 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 into the churches' activities and rituals? 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?

During the conference Minna Opas from University of Turku offered an important reflection on terminology. Translating empirical findings from one cultural context to another can be challenging, as English concepts may not fully capture the nuances, connotations, or historical layers of terms used in the original cultural sphere. This can lead to misinterpretations or oversimplifications, where key ideas are either lost in translation or forced into conceptual frameworks that do not entirely fit the local reality. The Nordic vocabulary gives slightly different meanings to the concept of spirituality. Swedish, Norwegian, Danish, and Icelandic are all North Germanic languages, stemming from a common tongue spoken by the Vikings. They are part of the Indo-European language family, and they use the same words *andlig* and *andlighet* (Swedish), *åndelig* and *åndelighet* (Norwegian and Danish), *andlegt* and *andlega* (Icelandic) to express what is thought to

be connected with the soul. Finnish and Sámi, as part of the Finno-Ugric language family, use three different words to express spirituality: *henkisyys* for spirituality in general; *hengellisyys* for Christian spirituality, which is the preferred term in the Evangelical Lutheran Church; *spiritualiteetti* for older Christian spiritual and meditative traditions. In Sweden and Denmark the word *spiritualitet* has also been introduced and is sometimes used to connote different types of Christian spirituality – for example, ‘Ignatian spirituality’, equivalent to the Finnish *spiritualiteetti*.

The discussions during the conference pointed to several further themes that remained to be explored: therapeutic churches; the necessity of paying attention to embodiment; the blurring of boundaries; how authority and tradition were negotiated; whether churches had become actors in a spiritual market; and how other spiritual actors and settings might react to the practices in the churches.

This thematic issue features articles covering developments in Sweden, Norway, Denmark, and Finland.

The first article in this thematic issue, ‘An Immanent Turn in Protestant Spirituality’, is an overview of the development of new spiritual practices in Nordic churches. Based on data from the ‘The New Faces of the Folk Church’ research project focusing on the Diocese of Stockholm in Sweden, the authors, Katarina Plank, Helene Egnell, and Linnea Lundgren, argue that these new spiritual practices are part of a larger ‘immanent turn’ in Protestant spirituality that has been ongoing since the 1970s.

The second article, ‘Sound Healing in the Finnish Church’, explores how sound healing is being incorporated into the Evangelical Lutheran Church of Finland (ELCF) and reinterpreted within a Christian framework. Linda Annunen uses digital ethnography to examine the intersection of embodiment, therapeutic sound, and silence within Lutheran traditions. Using concepts such as acoustemology and esoteric sound, the study demonstrates how practices are framed as silent prayer and how churches are redefined as acoustic spaces. The article contributes to an understanding of how sensory and sonic experiences are granted theological legitimacy in a post-secular context.

The third article, ‘The Yoga of Stillness’, has a descriptive focus. Authors Marcus Moberg and Tommy Ramstedt present the first detailed analysis of the Yoga of Stillness® programme within the ELCF. It examines how the practice is structured, legitimated, and interpreted by instructors as explicitly Christian, and how it has become increasingly institutionalized. The article presents a case study of how non-Christian meditative practices

are adapted for traditional Christian contexts, providing an insight into the revitalization of contemplative spirituality within Lutheranism.

In the fourth article, 'Yoga in the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Denmark', Marianne Qvortrup Fibiger investigates the integration of yoga within the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Denmark (ELCD) and how religious actors navigate issues of cultural appropriation and adaptation. By detaching yoga from its Hindu roots and reconnecting it with Christian spirituality, a hybrid form emerges that blends bodily awareness with theological reflection. The study contributes to an understanding of how global spiritual practices are localized and reshaped within Lutheran frameworks.

The fifth and final article, 'Appropriating Yoga as Their Own', provides a rich analysis by Elisabeth Tveito Johnsen, Kristine Helboe Johansen, and Kristin Graff-Kallevåg. Drawing on a Vygotskian-Bakhtinian understanding of appropriation, the authors demonstrate how churches strike a balance between the dual impulses of making yoga 'their own' while respecting its otherness. The god-centrism of church yoga resonates with and complements the dominant holistic paradigm of self-spirituality. Based on empirical data from field visits and qualitative surveys, the article identifies the key mechanisms through which yoga is integrated in Christian contexts, especially through what the authors term 'linguistic' and 'material domestication'.

The articles in this thematic issue deepen our understanding of how Nordic churches are not merely passively absorbing global spiritual trends but actively reshaping them in ways that reflect both tradition and innovation.

We extend our sincere gratitude to the reviewers, whose critical and constructive feedback has sharpened the articles' analytical focus.

Katarina Plank and Helene Egnell, guest editors