

INVITATION TO WEBINAR SERIES ON 'BAPTISM IN TIMES OF CHANGE'

churchesintimesofchange.org

The project "Baptism in times of change" is part of the joint Nordic initiative Churches in Times of Change (CITC) which focuses on changes in ecclesial practice and theology in the Nordic region. In the Nordic region, the situation for the churches is quite comparable theologically, historically, and sociologically. This calls for common reflection and increased ecumenical cooperation between the Nordic folk churches. The CITC is an important step in the realization of our common Lutheran identity.



WHY BAPTISM?

Why focus on baptism? Due to falling numbers, much attention has been given to baptism in recent years. The pilot project is a meta-study, aiming at gathering and analyzing existing material and experiences. In this way, the pilot project facilitates joint reflection and aims to develop recommendations by researchers, church leaders, and practitioners.

HOW TO ENGAGE?

In spring 2021 we are planning a series of 5 webinars on each of the main areas of the discussion: Statistics, empirical and qualitative research on baptism, rituals and practice, communication and campaigns, and theological development. Again, the list and details of the webinars is found at the webpage:

churchesintimesofchange.org

The first webinar takes place 10. March 2021 13:00-15:00 (CET). Additional webinars will later be announced for the fall. Finally, a concluding conference is planned to take place 18-19th January 2022 in Copenhagen. Webinars are open to all and registration for webinars is needed through this link:

<https://forms.gle/wUr7sbDroeKvfXWD7>

A. WEBINAR I

Title: The future of baptism in the Nordic countries. What does statistics tell us, and what is the response of the churches?

Date: Wednesday 10th March 13-15 (CET)

Contributors:

1. Josephine Ganebo Skantz, Analyst, Department of Analysis and Research, Central Church Office, SE
2. Jarmo Kokkonen, Rev., Dr., Director/Education and Family Affairs, National Church Council, ELCF, FI
3. Steinunn Björnsdóttir, parish minister, ELCI, IS
4. Bjarke Mortensen, information worker at Centre for Pastoral Education and Research, DK

Chair: Harald Hegstad

Introductory text: Statistics show a steady decline in the number of baptism in the Nordic folk churches. In the first part of this webinar, statisticians will present analyses of this numbers, and discuss future scenarios of this development. In the second part of the webinar, researchers

from the project «Baptism in times of change» will reflect on how churches have reacted to this development.

B. WEBINAR 2

Title: Why should I baptize my child? Qualitative perspectives on new patterns in infant baptism

Date: Wednesday 24th March 13-15 (CET)

Contributors:

1. Ida Marie Høgh, Professor in sociology of religion, University of Agder, NO
2. Karen Marie Sø Leth-Nissen, Researcher, ph.d., at University of Copenhagen, DK
3. Comment: Hanna Salomäki, Director at Church Research Institute, FI

Chair: Jonas Adelin Jørgensen

Introductory text: While infant baptism used to be a tradition that was taken for granted by most people, in our time baptizing one's child is today more often a result of a conscious choice. Through empirical data, researchers have been able to analyze reasons for such choices and the cultural pattern they are embedded in. In this webinar, recent research will be presented and discussed.

C. WEBINAR 3

Title: Bless, not baptize. Could blessing of children be an alternative when parents choose not to baptize?

Date: Wednesday 7th April 13-15 (CET)

Contributors:

1. Kristján Valur Ingólfsson, bishop em., ELCI; IS
2. Christina Grenholm, Secretary for the church, professor of systematic theology, Church of Sweden
3. Comment: Terje Hegertun, Professor in systematic theology, MF Norwegian School of Theology, Religion and Society, NO.

Chair: Karin Tillberg

Introductory text: Many parents who choose not to baptize their child, still want to have a connection to the church for themselves and their children. Often they want the child to choose for itself when it gets older. Others are influenced by a Baptist understanding of baptism, in which a conscious choice is important. The Evangelical Lutheran Church of Iceland has developed a liturgy for blessings of children as an alternative to baptism. Other Nordic churches do not want to use such liturgies. In this webinar we will discuss sociological, theological and ecumenical aspects of this question.

D. WEBINAR 4

Title: Marketing and communication: How have churches found new ways of communicating baptism?

Date: Monday 10th May 13-15 (CET)

Contributors:

1. Ingeborg Dybvig, Director of communication department, Church of Norway National Council, NO
2. Lena Andersson, project leader, Project Baptism, the diocese of Lund, Church of Sweden
3. Marcel Salinder, communications officer for Project Baptism, diocese of Lund, Church of Sweden
4. Halldór Reynisson, project leader, ELCI, IS
5. Comment: Laura Hanna Kokkonen, Doctoral Researcher, Study of Religions, Faculty of Theology, University of Helsinki

Chair: Steinunn Björnsdóttir

Introductory text: As a response to the decline in the number of baptisms, Nordic churches has developed new form of communication about baptism. This includes printed material, use of social media, advertising in magazines, and cinema commercials. In this webinar people responsible for communication in the churches will present what they have done and the thinking behind it. Their presentation will be commented from a media scholarly perspective.

E. WEBINAR 5

Title: Theology. Where are the resources for a contemporary baptismal theology?

Date: Thursday 20th May 13-15 (CET).

Contributors:

1. Anna-Karin Hammar, Revd. Dr., Church of Sweden, SE
2. Harald Hegstad, Professor in systematic theology, MF Norwegian School of Theology, Religion and Society, NO
3. Niels Henrik Gregersen, professor in Systematic theology, Copenhagen University
4. Pekka Metso, Associate Professor of Practical Theology, School of Theology, Philosophical Faculty, University of Eastern Finland

Chair: Jyri Komulainen

Introductory text: A traditional theology of baptism does not always make sense to people today. Ideas of salvation, eternal life, forgiveness of sins etc is often difficult to connect to daily life experiences. A promise of salvation for those who are baptized raises the question for the status of the non-baptized. Are there resources in a theology of creation that can be exploited for a more relevant baptismal theology?