



CENTER FOR THE STUDY OF LUTHERAN THEOLOGY AND CONFESSIONAL SOCIETIES

ANNUAL REPORT 2025

Centre Director: Bo Kristian Holm

Steering Committee: Bo Kristian Holm, Nina Javette Koefoed, Jette Bendixen Rønkilde

This Year in LUMEN was first of all marked by the visit of professor Lee Palmer Wandelse on a grant from Aarhus University Research Foundation, and the celebration of 25. Anniversary of two leading members of LUMEN, head of LUMEN, Bo Kristian Holm and Member of the steering committee Nina Javette Koefoed. LUMEN used the opportunity and invited another guest, professor Andreas Holzem, Tübingen, to participate in both a seminar on confessional culture and an afternoon with open lectures on the same topic and a reception hosted by the School of Culture and Society.

Bo Kristian Holm attended the second meeting in the Joint Working Group between the World Council of Churches and the Roman Catholic Church, and is now member of the subgroup dealing with understandings for salvation in the global splits between conservative and liberal positions. A theme that relates very well to the LUMEN interest in the social imaginaries formed by religion.

Fredrik Thue, who visited LUMEN last year for two months, returned to LUMEN to present the progress in his work on the role of profession in the Lutheran Welfare State.

The digitization project *Voices of the People*, led by LUMEN member Nina Koefoed, has made substantial progress during 2025 with four decades of petition protocols now published open access on our platform. The project is now heading into its last year.

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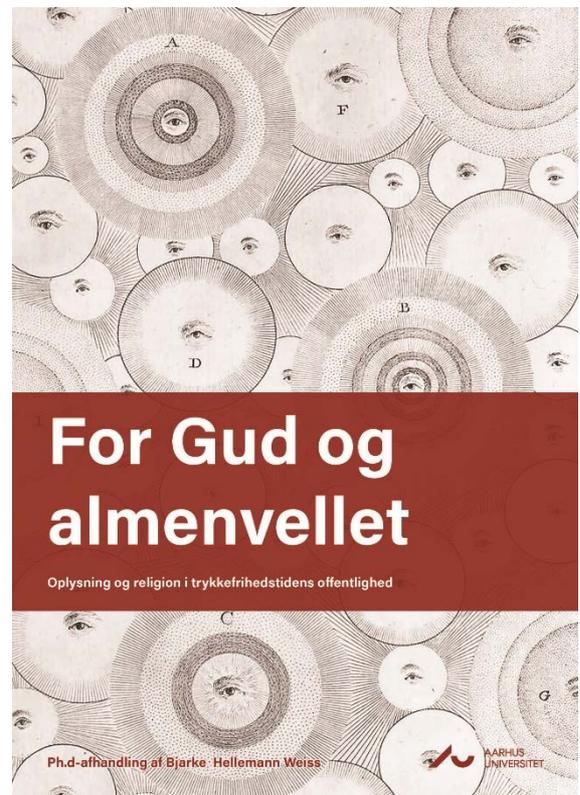
New PhD Thesis: Bjarke Hellemann Weiss:

For Gud og almenvellet. Oplysning og religion i trykkefrihedstidens offentlighed (For God and the Common Good. Enlightenment and Religion during Full Press Freedom)

On 15 December, Bjarke Hellemann Weiss successfully defended his PhD thesis in History in a public defence.

In his PhD thesis *For God and the Common Good. Enlightenment and Religion during Full Press Freedom*, Bjarke Hellemann Weiss studies the relationship between Enlightenment and religion in the public debates during full press freedom in Denmark-Norway from 1770-1773. Through an examination of Bolle W. Luxdorph's collection of pamphlets from the era of full press freedom, Weiss studies how religious and political ideas were rhetorically connected and intertwined across several different debates.

In the dissertation, Weiss proposes a revised understanding of Enlightenment that contains ideas about societal betterment, the individual as a citizen, and the public sphere as a means of both improvement and truth. Weiss argues that religion (in addition to political and economic ideas) played an important role in such an Enlightenment in a Daneo-Norwegian context. According to Weiss, the Enlightenment was not necessarily build on a religious foundation, but religion often played an important role in qualifying the Enlightenment in the Danish and Norwegian context. Thus, Weiss argues that religion played a much more prominent role in the Daneo-Norwegian Enlightenment than previously shown in the research literature.



In this way, Weiss's thesis has contributed yet another important aspect to the interrelatedness of religion and culture in Lutheran confessional societies.

The members of the assessment committee were Associate Professor Charlotte Appel (Aarhus), Associate Professor Juliane Engelhardt (Copenhagen) and Associate Professor Håkon Evju (Oslo). Weiss' supervisor was Professor Nina J. Koefoed.

Lee Palmer Wandel, who is a newly emeritus professor in history from the University of Wisconsin-Madison, was visiting LUMEN on a three-month grant from the Aarhus University Research Foundation.

Lee Palmer Wandel, who has an impressive track record as a professor of history, arrived in Aarhus on September 5 and remained here until the end of November. Her stay has been made possible by a visiting researcher grant from Aarhus University Research Foundation.



During her stay she worked on a new project on Creation in the Reformation.

“My current research grows out of a book I have just finished: *The Reformation of Liturgy: Matter and Time Reconceived*. I had found that the medieval liturgical commentator William Durand held the created world to be integral to the liturgy: from stones of the walls of churches to the colors of vestments, each was a scriptural res, connecting human experience, worship, and Creation. Sixteenth-century Protestants sundered that connection, rejecting matter as itself a medium of divine revelation and construing the liturgy as largely verbal. That book left me with the question: what happens to Creation in the Reformation? To begin to answer that question, I have begun reading Luther’s *Lecture on Genesis*, as well as other commentaries; collecting images of Creation from churches and Bibles. I shall also return to Gerard Mercator’s *Atlas*, in which he sees his work as representing the traces of divine acts of Creation.”

Her current research project is a fine example of her innovative and interdisciplinary approach, and her time at LUMEN was a great source of inspiration for our current and future work, as her way of approaching her material has many similarities with the way we work in LUMEN.

“I first visited Aarhus University in 2019, when I was invited to share my work on the Eucharist. I found there a wonderfully rich community of scholars who share my own intellectual commitments to interdisciplinary thinking and approaching Christianity as lived by diverse individuals in distinctive places. I therefore enthusiastically accepted the opportunity to return and spend more time, to begin this next question thinking interdisciplinarily and with a sense of Christianity’s protean power to shape human lives.”

During her time at LUMEN, Lee Palmer Wandel worked on her new research project and immersed herself in the daily life of the Departments of History and Theology. This culminated in her contribution to the seminar and public lectures on confessional societies on 24 November.

LUMEN lectures in 2025

November 2025: Andreas Holzem, Lee Palmer Wandel, Nina J. Koefoed, Bo Kristian Holm: "The Study of Confessional Characteristics in Theology and Practice"

LUMEN Seminars in 2025

September 2025: Lee Palmer Wandel: Genesis Lectures Seminar

October 2025: Lee Palmer Wandel: Genesis Lectures Seminar

November 2025: Andreas Holzem, Nina Koefoed, Bo Kristian Holm, Lee Palmer Wandel: Seminar on confessional societies

Morning meetings in 2025

February 5 2025: Maria Nørby Pedersen: "A Philosophical Cure: Scientific enlightenment through fictionality in 18th century Danish periodicals"

March 5 2025: Nina J. Koefoed: "Digitalisering af skriftlig kulturarv: Hvorfor, hvordan og for hvem"

April 4 2025: Erik Sporon Fiedler: "Paternal Care? A contemporary intellectual history of Lutheranism, gender, and welfare"

May 5 2025: Mattias Sommer Bostrup: "Lutherske oversættelseskulturer i de danske riger, ca. 1526-1850"

June 6 2025: Odile Panetta: "Discipline and Punish: Civil Authority and the Corporeal Sphere in Early Modern Protestantism"

September 10 2022: Lee Palmer Wandel: "What Happened to Creation in the Reformation?"

October 3 2024: Kristian Mejrup: "Studies of Danish-Lutheran sermons and the changing genre of the postilla"

November 7 2025: Odile Panetta: "Discipline and Punish: Civil Authority and the Corporeal Sphere in Early Modern Protestantism"

November 12 2025: Fredrik Thue: "Velferdsstatens profesjoner: sekulære hyrder?"

December 12 2025: Leonora Lottrup Rasmussen: "Carlsberg og de kristne værdier: Laura Jacobsens tro og virke"



Fredrik Thue, who visited LUMEN last year for two month, returned to LUMEN to present the progress in his work on role of profession in the Lutheran Welfare State.

V. Seminar and Lectures on Confessional Societies

SEMINAR AND LECTURES ON CONFESSIONAL SOCIETIES

25 year anniversary for Nina J. Koefoed and Bo Kristian Holm

On the occasion of a double 25-year anniversary and the presence of Professor Lee Palmer Wandel, LUMEN invited Professor Andreas Holzem from Tübingen to participate in both a research seminar and a open lecture event on the theme 'Confessional Societies and how to study them'. With both Professor Wandel and Professor Holzem present, we had the opportunity to discuss conceptual and methodological issues with two of the most prominent scholars in the field. At the end the School of Culture and Society hosted a reception

LUMEN Seminar “What is a confessional society an how should it be studied?”

Presentations by

Prof. Andreas Holzem, Tübingen, Prof. Nina Koefoed, LUMEN, Bo Kristian Holm LUMEN and Lee Palmer Wandel.

Public LUMEN Lectures

In the afternoon, the whole School of Culture and Society was invited to attend open lectures on the topic of 'confessional societies'. Under the title 'The Death of a Farmer's Wife and Her Child', Andreas Holzem gave a lecture on the characteristics of a 'confessional society' in Catholic Germany during the 17th and 18th centuries. Lee Palmer Wandel demonstrated how the Reformation changed our perception of the world, under the provocative title 'We are all Protestants now'. Nina Koefoed presented a Lutheran counter-narrative to Holzem's lecture, also focusing on the religious impact on everyday life. She focused on forced marriage and conjugal duty from a Lutheran confessional perspective, using the story of Anna Lauritz Datter as an example. Bo Kristian Holm based his lecture on discussions about the societal impact of the Eucharist, viewing it as a counter-economy that differed confessional and, consequently, in its social impact.



Andreas Holzem giving a lively lecture on every day religiosity in Catholic Germany in the 17th and 18th century.

Bo Kristian Holm: "Nadverens flermedialitet: Religionsmødet som teologisk og liturgisk udfordring i folkekirkens nadverpraksis", *En verden til forskel: Religionsmøder og religionsteologi i et mangfoldigt samfund*, ed A. K Brandt & S.L.C. Sonne, S. L. C. Copenhagen: Eksistensen Akademisk, 47-74

Per Ingesman: "'... saa stor er echteskaffs krafft ...' Ægteskabsideologi og ægteskabsret i efterreformatorisk tid", *Liv, rejse og erindring. Festskrift til Agnes S. Arnórsdóttir*, ed. Pernille Hermann, Nina Javette Koefoed, Rósa Magnúsdóttir og Hrefna Róberts dóttir, Copenhagen: Nord Academic, 2025, 295-313.

Per Ingesman: "Djævelitteratur på dansk", *Skalk*, no. 4, 2025, 14-19.

Per Ingesman: "In Principio Erat Error, et Error Erat Apud Lutherum? Paulus Helie on Luther and his Adherents in the Danish Reformation", *On the Matter. Studies on Manichaeism and Church History Presented to Nils Arne Pedersen at Sixty-five* (Corpus Fontium Manichaeorum. Analecta Manichaica, IV), Brepols, Turnhout 2025, 399-415.

Per Ingesman: "Guds hellige ordning. Ægteskab og trestandslære hos især Peder Palladius og Niels Hemmingsen", *Kirkehistoriske Samlinger*, 2025, 29-66.

Sasja Emilie Mathiasen Stopa: "A Dialogue of Mutual Recognition - Rephrasing Martin Luther's Doctrine of Justification in the 21st Century", *Neue Zeitschrift für Systematische Theologie und Religionsphilosophie* 67:1, 2025, 64-86.

Sasja Emilie Mathiasen Stopa: "A Lutheran Theology for the Exiled: Interpreting Deus Absconditus and Deus Revelatus Today", *Lutherjahrbuch*, 2025.

Sasja Emilie Mathiasen Stopa: "Kan et samfund leve af tro? Om forholdet mellem Romerbrevet 1,17 og luthersk tillidskultur", *Dansk Teologisk Tidsskrift* 88:1, 2025, 47-75.

Forthcoming: Thematical issue on Justification in *Kerygma und Dogma*

In November 2024, Piotr Malysz, who at that time was a visiting scholar at the LUMEN centre, funded by the Aarhus University Research Foundation and Bo Kristian Holm co-organised a seminar under the title Justification: Recognition, Gift, Personhood.

Four of the lectures will be published as a thematical issue in *Kerygma & Dogma*, co-edited by Piotr Malysz Vainio, and Bo Kristian Holm in 2026.

Table of Contents:

- Bo Kristian Holm: "The Multi-Dimensionality of the *promissio*."
- Piotr Malysz: "Martin Luther's Ontology of the Promise: Perspectives and Fundamentals."
- Olli-Pekka Vainio, "Justification and Vagueness."
- Sasja Emilie Mathiasen Stopa: "Fides facit veritatem? Martin Luther on Recognising God sub contrario through Faith in Christ."

Voices of the People. A digital platform for 18th century petitions

The digitization project *Voices of the People: A Digital Platform for 18th-Century Petitions*, funded by the Carlsberg Foundation, was launched in August 2023. The aim of the project is to make petitions sent to the absolute monarch in Denmark during the 18th century accessible on an open-access platform through the digitization and transcription of the handwritten letters.

The screenshot displays the Transkribus web interface. At the top, the title 'Enevældens supplikprotokoller 1699-1799' is visible. The main content area is split into two columns: the left column shows a scanned image of an open handwritten document, and the right column shows the corresponding digital transcription of the text. The transcription is in Danish and discusses petitions from 1740 and 1741 regarding trade privileges and taxes in the Kingdom of Norway. The interface includes navigation buttons like 'Back to document', 'Home', 'Search', and 'About', as well as page navigation controls.

These petitions provide a rare insight into the population’s perception of their position in society, their cultural and religious worldviews, their legal understanding, and their indirect participation in political processes. They will serve as a basis for further research within LUMEN on how religion influenced early modern Danish society.

Throughout 2025, we have made significant progress on the project. Most protocols from 1730 to 1770 are now published open access on our platform and we are working on the three last decades of the century. We have trained and published models for segmenting fields and baselines as well as our text recognition model with an error rate on 3.13%

In January we joined forces with Tine Ravnsted-Larsen Reeh from Church History at Copenhagen University. Tine and her group of researchers have worked with 18th century voting protocols from the Danish Supreme Court for years and their transcriptions of the protocols are now published on the same platform as the petitions, *Dansk Enevælde – centraladministrationen* (Danish absolutism – central administration).

<https://app.transkribus.org/en/sites/supplikker>

2026 (Preliminary list)

Morning meetings in 2026

20 February 2025: Sasja Emile Mathiasen Stopa: "The Modern Eve: The Development of Democratic Trust Culture in the Danish Popular Movements"

13 March 2025: Søren Broberg Knudsen: "Tjenestefolk og tjenesteforhold i herregårdens husstand 1750-1920" Digitalisering af skriftlig kulturarv: Hvorfor, hvordan og for hvem [Digitizing of written cultural heritage: Why, how and for whom]"

24 April 2025: Candace Kohli: "Theology and racial constructions in Christian societies".

22 May 2025: TBA

LUMEN Seminars

9 March: Seminar with Svend Andersen and Bo Kristian Holm on "The Happy Exchange in Lutheran Theology".

Seminar on Lutheranism and Anti-Islamism co-organised with AUFF Guest scholar Dr. Candace Kohli. TBA

LUMEN Lectures

4. May: Helen Rosil, PhD Uppsala University: Vokal konfessionalisering: barselskvinders salmer i Danmark og Sverige ca. 1550-1950 (Vocal confessionalisation: Churching Hymns Denmark and Sweden, 1550–1950)



Dr. Candace Kohli as Guest Researcher in the Spring term 2026

In the spring semester 2026 Dr. Candace Kohli will spend three months as a visiting researcher at the LUMEN Centre. Her stay is funded by the Aarhus University Research Foundation. Dr. Kohli is a scholar of early modern Reformation history and theology with particular interest in interplay between theological ideas and social-political life of religious communities. Dr. Kohli's research and engagement at the LUMEN Centre will focus on Martin Luther's theological engagement with Islam and Muslims, the role and function of Lutheran theology in late-medieval and early modern racial production, and the reception history of anti-Islamic and anti-Muslim attitudes in 20th and 21st century Denmark.

Candace Kohli will return later this year as a keynote lecturer at the 15. International Congress for Luther Research, underlining her position as prominent younger scholar.

IX. 15th International Congress for Luther Research 2026



15th International Congress for Luther Research

Aarhus 9-14 August 2026

The Luther Congress is coming closer and occupies more and more of the attention of LUMEN. The Congress will take place at Aarhus University August 9-14, 2026.

By choosing Aarhus as the venue for the 15th congress, the International Luther Research Congress is returning to its roots: In 1956 it met for the first time in Aarhus (Denmark). Its driving force was Regin Prenter, who a few years earlier had published his book *Spiritus Creator* on Luther's pneumatology. In connection with this, the present Congress is dedicated to the theme of the Holy Spirit in the horizon of today's world - a world marked in so many ways by anxiety and uncertainty. In light of the upheavals caused by war, pandemics and the climate crisis, the Congress found the title of the ancient Latin hymn "Come Creator Spirit" fitting, as it examines the understanding of trust and the future in Luther's theology.

14 invited keynote speakers will address the main theme from different angles and perspectives.

The first day will examine the relationship between scientific forecasting and biblical prophecy. The second day will focus on how the spirit and the body are linked in Luther's theology, a question that was particularly urgent in the disputes of the 1520s. After a day of short paper presentations, the fourth day will examine Luther's thinking about the embodied work of the Holy Spirit and its relationship to how one anticipates the future in both good and bad events, under the title "Fear and Hope". The congress will conclude with a consideration of the social relevance of these thoughts in the present day.

The registration is now closed and the number of participants is close to 185 with around 25 accompanying persons. So far, it looks pretty promising.

For further information please visit: <https://conferences.au.dk/luthercongress2026>

