

## Invitation

### **1<sup>st</sup> International Conference on Congregational Education in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century** *Reflection, Relevance, and Resilience in a Changing World from a Protestant Perspective*

**Date:** 29<sup>th</sup> September - 1<sup>st</sup> October 2025

**Location:** Joensuu, University of Eastern Finland

**Website:** <https://sites.uef.fi/icce21/>

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Congregational Education, often referred to as Christian Education or Religious Education within the context of parishes or other clerical institutions, combines theoretical-moral and technical-practical sides of knowledge and encompasses the processes and practices of imparting Christian beliefs, values, and practices to individuals and groups, within a congregational setting. This form of education is often directed to all groups of age and embraces among other approaches non-formal education and of lifelong learning (cf. Leganger-Krogstad 2019, p. 60). The question of what form of Congregational Education the 21<sup>st</sup> century needs has been hotly debated around the world (cf. Harris & Moran 1998, p. 167), and to some extent scholars and ministries are still perplexed today. As we are about to close the first quarter of the 21<sup>st</sup> century, churches and societies across Europe stand at the crossroads of unprecedented challenges and transformations. The ever-advancing secularization and pluralization, the scars of pandemics, and the specter of war in- and outside Europe have reshaped our societies and congregations in ways we are still coming to understand. In these turbulent times, protestant churches across Europe remain an enduring bastion of faith, hope, and community for many people and are therefore a relevant object for *Reflection, Relevance, and Resilience in a Changing World from a Protestant Perspective*. However, to navigate this complex and moving landscape, Congregational Education must evolve, adapting to the demands of the 'Zeitgeist' while remaining true to its fundamental mission. Amidst the backdrop of ongoing social uncertainties and intricate complexities prevailing in Europe, we recognize a pressing need – and, indeed, a promising opportunity – for academic dialogue. These tumultuous times provide fertile ground for innovative thought, prompting us to both question established paradigms and forge new pathways in our respective fields.

The **1<sup>st</sup> International Conference on Congregational Education** seeks to foster a collaborative research-based space for scholars, educators, and church leaders from across Europe. It aims to exchange ideas, share experiences, and derive empirical insights into the direction Congregational Education should take in this dynamic time. We wish to explore how Congregational Education can address the pressing challenges of this century while instilling a sense of purpose, resilience, and spiritual growth in its learners.

#### **Conference foci**

The multidisciplinary ICCE2025 conference invites academic contributions on all levels of congregational education from early childhood education to older adult education. Topics highlighted include:

- The Role and Relevance of Congregational Education in an ever-advancing Secularized and Diversified World
- The Impacts of Global Pandemics and Environmental Crisis on congregational Learning and Community Building
- Responding to Societal Conflicts: Congregational Education in War-affected Regions
- Innovations in Confirmation Training and Practice
- Pastoral Care: Addressing Emotional and Spiritual Needs in a Modern World thru learning
- Historical roots of non-formal Christian education in different European regions.
- Public Theology: Engaging with Contemporary Societal Issues for a Civil Society

- Methods, Pedagogies, and Approaches for the 21st Century
- Migration, Refugees, and Diaspora in Congregational Education
- Shifting Cultural Paradigms in Congregational Education: Toward Decolonizing Knowledge
- Ecumenism in congregational and public education

### **Submission Details:**

We invite scholars and practitioners engaged in Congregational Education, including areas such as confirmation, pastoral care, public theology, and other forms of church-focused education, to submit their research, case studies, and conceptual papers.

### **Schedule 2025**

<b>15<sup>th</sup> of January – 31<sup>th</sup> of March</b>	Abstracts (500 words) submission window
<b>5<sup>th</sup> of April</b>	Decision on acceptance for presentation
<b>February 1<sup>st</sup> – April 30<sup>th</sup></b>	Registration open
<b>15<sup>th</sup> of June</b>	Summaries submission deadline (3000 words)

Further information will be given in Autumn 2025. Please expect to submit your abstracts to [icce21@uef.fi](mailto:icce21@uef.fi) by **31<sup>st</sup> of March 2025**. All submissions should be in Word. Papers will be peer-reviewed, and authors will be notified in a timely manner. We aim for a publication based on selected presentations of the conference.

### **Conference Fee Announcement:**

To support the organization and execution of our multi-day event, there is a conference fee of €120 for attendees (€60 for Students). This fee helps cover the administrative, operational, and logistical aspects of the conference, ensuring a seamless and enriching experience for all participants. We thank you for your understanding and are dedicated to providing exceptional value for your investment.

### **Conclusion:**

By uniting our strengths, experiences, and insights, we aspire to shape the future of church education, making it more relevant, resilient, and responsive to the challenges of our age. We cordially invite you to be a part of this journey, as we endeavor to understand and illuminate the path ahead.

The conference will be hosted by the School of Theology, University of Eastern Finland.

### **Conference Committee**

M.A. Stefan van de Hoek, Protestant University RWL, Bochum, Germany  
 Dr. Martin Ubani, Professor of Religious Education, University of Eastern Finland  
 M.Theol., Heidi Toivanen, junior researcher, University of Eastern Finland  
 Dr. Eveliina Hellas, Diaconia University of Applied Sciences, Finland  
 Dr. Jarmo Kokkonen, Director of Church Service and Education, Evangelical Lutheran Church of Finland  
 M.Theol., M.Sci., Mikko Wirtanen, Advisor, Confirmation training and congregational education, Evangelical Lutheran Church of Finland

For further details and conference updates, please check out our [conference website](#) or send email to [icce21@uef.fi](mailto:icce21@uef.fi).