

**Dissertation abstract**

**“Contemporary sacred architecture in Finland  
as an example of creative engagement with tradition”**

The dissertation discusses the topic of contemporary sacral architecture in Finland in the context of historical and socio-religious background and the country's geography. The aim of the thesis is to present contemporary sacral architecture in relation to the tradition of vernacular construction and the Lutheran religion, which is rooted in the solutions and symbolism of Christian architecture. For detailed research the author has selected 12 buildings designed by Finnish architects and built between 1995–2023.

First stage consisted of analysing the available source materials: subject literature, documents, legal acts, photographic and design documentation - which served as a background for the subject. Subsequently the author carried out field research, during which selected objects were analysed *in situ*. Furthermore, during the field trips the author conducted interviews with clergymen, architects and everyday users, which supplemented the research material. Finally, the author conducted case studies of the selected buildings using the narrative method. The method provided complex historical background which influenced architectural solutions.

The progressive secularization of European society affects institutions of the Church, making them face choices regarding the directions of further development. Membership of the national church – Evangelical Lutheran Church of Finland is declining by 1% yearly. Most of the members who remain in the parishes might be defined by the term "belonging without believing", which reflects the importance of being a part of community in the Nordic countries despite the lack of activity in its religious life. As a result, churches possess complex layouts supporting the community life of the parish, whereas smaller buildings are often places of serenity and solitary contemplation. Designed forms and material solutions refer to Finnish historical sacral buildings. In many aspects the peripheral nature of the country enabled to draw on the experience of other countries, adapting selected ideas and solutions and combining them with the Finnish architectural heritage.

**Keywords:** sacral architecture, sacrum, Finland, church, chapel, Lutheranism

