

7th L.I.F.E. Research Conference on Religion & Entrepreneurship

Call for Papers

Hosted by the Chair of Management and Organization
University of Augsburg

**April
22-23
2027**

Augsburg, Germany



KEY DATES

- Extended abstracts due
December 15, 2026
- Notification of acceptance
Late December 2026
- Conference
April 22-23, 2027, Augsburg

The L.I.F.E. Research Conference has convened scholars of religion and entrepreneurship in six online editions, reaching more than 1,200 participants from over 50 countries. The 7th conference will be the first to be held in person. We invite submissions for the conference, which will be held April 22 and 23, 2027, in Augsburg, Germany. **The conference will be limited to 30 papers.**

In cooperation with



Research on religious entrepreneurship has grown rapidly. More than a century ago, scholars such as Durkheim (1912/1965), James (1902), and Weber (1904–1905/2012) recognized the close relationship between religion and economic life. Yet, entrepreneurship scholars paid relatively little attention to religion. Scholars saw limited personal relevance in the topic, questioned whether religion could be studied rigorously, or assumed that secularization would reduce its importance over time (King, 2008; Tracey et al., 2014).

Over the last decade, this has started to change. Religion remains important in the lives of a large share of the world's population and continues to shape how people understand work, uncertainty, responsibility, community, and economic life. Research on religion can also draw on long-established literatures in sociology, psychology, anthropology, religious studies, and theology. These perspectives can help entrepreneurship scholars address questions that conventional economic approaches leave only partly answered (Dyck, 2014; Smith et al., 2021).

This change is visible in the journals. Publications on religious entrepreneurship in leading management and entrepreneurship outlets have increased by 136 percent over the last six years, and 38 of the 99 articles identified in a recent integrative review appeared in FT50 journals (Welter et al., 2026). Special issues in *Small Business Economics* and *Entrepreneurship & Regional Development* have further contributed to the emergence of religious entrepreneurship as a distinctive scholarly domain.

The growth of the field raises a further question: what is needed to further establish the field and strengthen its legitimacy within entrepreneurship and organizational studies research? There is still much to learn about how religion shapes entrepreneurship, how entrepreneurship affects religious beliefs and practices, and how these relationships differ across contexts and religious traditions. There is also a need to understand what religion adds to entrepreneurship theory rather than treating it only as another individual characteristic or contextual variable (Dejardin et al., 2024; Smith et al., 2019).

Smith et al. (2026, p. 491) define religious entrepreneurship as "the scholarly field that seeks to understand how, when, and why the discovery, evaluation, and exploitation of opportunities to create

future goods and services is reciprocally influenced by practices shaped by belief in, and connection to, superhuman powers; by whom, and with what consequences."

This definition gives rise to three broad research questions:

1. Why, when, and how do practices shaped by belief in and connection to superhuman powers influence the discovery, evaluation, and exploitation of opportunities, and vice versa?
2. Why, when, and how do some entrepreneurs and religious practitioners, and not others, integrate such practices into their entrepreneurial pursuits?
3. Why, when, and how are the economic, psychological, social, and spiritual consequences of this pursuit evaluated, interpreted, and configured by the pursuer and other stakeholders?

These questions emphasize that the relationship between religion and entrepreneurship works in both directions. Religion can shape entrepreneurial antecedents, processes, and outcomes, in the tradition of Weber. Entrepreneurship can also shape religious practices, identities, communities, and organizations, echoing Adam Smith's view of religious leaders as entrepreneurs competing for followers (Seabright, 2016; Tracey, 2012). This second direction has received less attention than the first (Block et al., 2020; Lehmann & Weiße, 2025; van Werven, 2024).

Considering both directions opens questions that are difficult to study when religion is treated simply as an individual characteristic or contextual variable (Chan-Serafin et al., 2013). Entrepreneurial success or failure, for example, may strengthen, weaken, or change religious beliefs (Smith, Lawson, et al., 2023). These changes may then affect how entrepreneurs deal with uncertainty (Pidduck et al., 2024), identify opportunities, understand responsibility, or approach later entrepreneurial decisions. The relationship between religion and entrepreneurship may therefore develop over time rather than operate in only one direction.

Religion may also help entrepreneurship scholars address broader questions in the field. Ideas such as meaning, vocation, community, responsibility, and faith are closely related to how entrepreneurs understand uncertainty, failure, motivation, and the purpose of their ventures. Research on religion and

entrepreneurship can therefore contribute not only to our understanding of religious entrepreneurs but also to entrepreneurship research more broadly (Smith, Gümüşay, & Townsend, 2023).

Scope

The conference is open to work on any of these questions, in either direction, and at any level of analysis. We welcome conceptual, qualitative, quantitative, and mixed-methods contributions from scholars at all career stages and across religious traditions and geographic contexts. Work on the tensions and unintended consequences of religious entrepreneurship is as welcome as work on its benefits, and work that shows what religion adds to entrepreneurship theory is as welcome as work that explains religious entrepreneurs.

Program

The conference runs over two days. Sessions will be organized around themes that emerge from the accepted papers. This allows us to group related work while leaving sufficient time for presentation and discussion. We will also have a number of keynote addresses.

Location

The conference will take place at the University of Augsburg. Augsburg is one of Germany's oldest cities and has an important place in the history of both religion and economic life. It was the site of the Augsburg Confession of 1530 and the Peace of Augsburg of 1555 and is home to the Fuggerei, the oldest social housing complex still in use. For participants who wish to stay longer, we plan to offer optional activities, such as a guided city tour and a visit to a nearby monastery. Further details will follow with the notification of acceptance.

Submission

Please submit an extended abstract of no more than 1,000 words, excluding references. The abstract should state the research question, theoretical positioning, method and data where applicable, and intended contribution.

Submitted work should not have been published at the time of submission. Submissions will be reviewed by the organizers and evaluated on the basis of quality and fit with the domain of religion and entrepreneurship.

Please send your submission to laurenz.weisse@uni-a.de by December 15, 2026.

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