International Conference

Bound for Devotion: The Prayer Book as Object and Practice, 1300–1800

1-3 July 2026



Detail from *Getijden van onser liever vrouwen* (Paris: Wolfgang Hopyl, 10 September 1500), Brussels, KBR, INC A 2.188 (RP)

Prayer was central to religious life in the late medieval and early modern period. Despite growing scholarly interest in religious texts, devotional practices, and spirituality, prayer and prayer books remain comparatively understudied. Prayer could take on a multitude of forms and occur in a range of spaces, from public to secluded and private; from monastic, liturgical prayer to short, indulgenced invocations and meditative prayers that evoked a rich scala of emotions and mental images.

To pray, devotees – whether clerical or lay – often took a book to hand. Prayer books played a vital role during many moments in a person's life in the performance of prayer and prayer-related practices. While the act of prayer is inherently transient, the books held or touched by late medieval and early modern devotees form codified and material evidence of the practices in which they engaged. Still extant in large numbers and containing a vast variety of textual and visual materials, these books – through both content and appearance – reflect the diversity of prayer practices as well as developments in book production. Taking the book as the central artefact for the study of prayer allows for an analysis that encompasses all aspects and components of prayer books, along with the actors involved in their production and use. This, in turn, enables us to chart the 'cultural ecosystem' in which prayer books were produced, circulated, and used.

This three-day international conference, hosted at Leiden University by the PRAYER project (ERC Starting Grant), with keynotes by Walter S. Melion (Emory University) and Kathryn M. Rudy (University of St Andrews), aims to bring together researchers working on books that were (intended to be) used in any form of prayer practice in the late medieval and early modern era (up to the eighteenth century). This conference aims to shed new light on prayer across late medieval and early modern Europe by exploring the broader ecosystem of prayer books. This includes a wide range of interactions between the material book, texts and images disseminated through it (and their connections to other types of objects, such as rosaries, small pipe clay figures, and single-sheet prints), the devotions inspired by these texts and images, the producers and buyers/readers of the books, and the communities they belonged to.

This conference is part of an ERC Starting Grant Project (PRAYER, no. 101041517) funded by the European Union. Views and opinions expressed are however those of the author(s) only and do not necessarily reflect those of the European Union or the European Research Council Executive Agency. Neither the European Union nor the granting authority can be held responsible for them.

Programme

Wednesday 1 July

Location: **Leiden University Library (Vossius Room)**

09:00 – 09:30	Registration & Welcome Coffee (CaféUBé)
09:30 – 09:45	Opening Remarks
09:45 – 10:45	**Keynote Lecture**: **Walter S. Melion (Emory University) -** Reflecting on Prayer in the *Passio domini nostri* (1523) of Alardus van Amsterdam and Jacob Cornelisz van Oostsanen
10:45 – 11:15	Coffee break (Faculty Club)
11:15 – 12:45	**Session 1: The Multifunctionality of Prayer and Prayer Books: Narrative, Play, and Identity** **Chair: Seán Vrieland (University of Copenhagen)** **Björn Klaus Buschbeck (Zurich University)** - Storytelling and Prayer in Late Medieval Scroll Manuscripts: The Case of Colmar, Les Dominicains, Ms 832 **Daniel Swift (Northeastern University London)** - The Players and the Prayer Book: The Book of Common Prayer on stage in early modern London **Marco Sergio Narducci (Università di Torino)** - Prayer Books and Civic Identity under Siege: Turin 1706
12:45 – 14:00	Lunch break (lunch for speakers at Pakhuis, Doelensteeg 8, 2311 VL Leiden)
14:00 – 15:30	**Session 2: Text & Image in Prayer Books** **Chair: Renske Hoff (Utrecht University)** **Tilleane Charavel (University of Lausanne)** - Exploring the Temporalities of Philip the Good's Breviaries ad usum Parisiorum pars hiemalis and pars aestivalis (Royal Library of Belgium, mss. 511 and 9026) **Jakov Đorđević (University of Belgrade)** - To Hell and Back Again: An Unexpected Journey through Words and Images of the Office of the Dead in the Très Riches Heures

	Eleanor Jackson (York Art Gallery) - The Wounded Good Shepherd in 15th-century Prayer Books
15:30 – 16:00	Coffee break (Faculty Club)
16:00 – 17:30	**Session 3: Space & Prayer**
	Chair: Thor-Oona Pignarre-Altermatt (UCLouvain)
	Marianne Ritsema van Eck (VU Amsterdam) - Expanding the ecosystem of prayer: from sacred mountains to prayer books and vice versa
	Stefaniia Demchuk (Taras Shevchenko National University of Kyiv) - Prayer in the Garden of the Soul in early modern Lviv: The Boim Chapel and the Hortulus Animae polonice (1513)
	Marta Battisti (UCLouvain) - Prayer Books and Sacred Steps: A Material, Textual, and Sensory Approach to Holy Staircase Devotion in Early Modern Rome

Thursday 2 July

Location: **Leiden University Library (Vossius Room), Herta Mohr Building (room 1.80) & KB, National Library of the Netherlands (The Hague)**

09:00 – 09:15	Coffee
09:15 – 10:45	**Session 4 (Vossius Room): Social and Medical function(s) of Prayer**
	Chair: Walter S. Melion (Emory University)
	Cynthia Turner Camp (University of Georgia) - Praying in (War)Time: The Suffrages in William Porter's Prayerbook
	Barbara Müller and Niklas Voltmann (University of Hamburg) - Prayer Books as Instruments for Dealing with Death and Dying. The Example of the Late Medieval Prayer Books from the Hamburg Convent near St. Jacob's Church
	Daniel Bennett Page (Independent researcher) - Queen Mary I's Manual of Healing Prayers
10:45 – 11:15	Coffee break (CaféUBé)
11:15 – 12:45	**Parallel Session 5A (Vossius Room): Hybrid prayer books**
	Chair: Youri Desplenter (Ghent University)

Jeske van Dongen (Radboud University Nijmegen) - Prayer in Late Medieval Dutch Songbooks

Thor-Oona Pignarre-Altermatt (UCLouvain) - Hybrid Prayer Books: The Rosary of St. Anne across Print and Manuscript

Francesco Mele (Pegaso University Rome) - Images in Prayer: The Vita Christi Engravings in a Rosary Book from the Early 16th Century

11:15 – 12:45

Parallel Session 5B (Herta Mohr, room 1.80): Animation, Interaction and Performance

Chair: Karl Enenkel (Universität Münster)

Elizabeth Sandoval (Williams College) - The Book as Soul: Animated Codices in Margaret of York's Fifteenth-Century Apocalypse Manuscript

Clara Humrich (Universität zu Köln) - (Un)Dressing for Devotion

Carolin Gluchowski (University of Hamburg) - Cradling Christ: Illuminated Prayer Books from the Benedictine Convent of Neukloster Buxtehude

12:45 – 14:30

Lunch break / **travel to The Hague**

14:30 – 15:30

Production and Methodologies Panel I (KB Atelier)

Chair: Carolin Gluchowski (University of Hamburg)

Suzan Folkerts (Athenaeumbibliotheek Deventer) - Made in Deventer? Geert Grote's Book of Hours and the Production of Prayer Books in the IJssel region

Eyal Poleg (Queen Mary University of London) - Unfolding the Materiality of Devotional: New Technologies in the Study of Prayer Books

Parallel: Special Collections session I (Special collections, 1st floor, Groot & Klein Colloquium)

14:30 – 15:30

Anne Margreet As-Vijvers (Illuminare scribendo - Research and projects in Art History) - Introduction to Dutch Books of Hours, and Viewing Session

15:30 – 15:45	Short break
15:45 – 16:45	**Production and Methodologies Panel II (KB Atelier)** **Chair: Carolin Gluchowski (University of Hamburg)** **M. Jakubek-Raczkowska & J. Raczkowski (Uniwersytet Mikołaja Kopernika w Toruniu)** - Netherlandish Prayer Books as Serial-Produced Artefacts: a Case Study of a Set of Manuscripts from the University Library in Toruń **Noam Lefler (Queen Mary University of London)** - Erasures as Evidence: A Material-Analytical Approach to Erasures in Devotional Codices
15:45 – 16:45	**Parallel: Special Collections session II (Special collections, 1st floor, Klein Colloquium)** **PRAYER-project** - Viewing session with manuscript and early printed prayer books
17:00 – 18:00	**Keynote and Public Lecture (Aula KB): Kathryn M. Rudy (University of St Andrews)** - How Lay Book Owners Handled Devotional Manuscripts in Europe, 1300-1550

Friday 3 July

Location: **Leiden University Library (Vossius Room), Herta Mohr Building (room 1.80)**

09:00 – 09:15	Coffee (CaféUBé
09:15 – 10:45	**Parallel Session 6A (Vossius Room): Books of Hours in Canada** **Chair: Irene O'Daly (Leiden University)** **Dorothea Kullmann and Alison May-Kosiewski (University of Toronto)** - The database "Books of Hours in Canada" and the definition of the genre **Brianna Daigneault (University of Toronto)** - Prayer Fragments: Trials and Triumphs of Studying Fragments of Books of Hours **Devon Sherwood (University of Toronto)** - "*Il alegera et soulagera des peines de purgatoir*": Variations in Indulgences in Four Fifteenth-Century Books of Hours

09:15 – 10:45	**<u>Parallel Session 6B (Herta Mohr, room 1.80): Between Private and Communal</u>** **Chair: Irene Van Eldere (Leiden University)** **Dafna Nissim (Ben-Gurion University of the Negev)** - At the Empty Altar: Personal Devotion and Princely Authority in Philip the Good's Hours **Wybren Scheepsma (Leiden University)** - Regular Canonesses of Maaseik and ms. Leiden BPL 2145 **Clarck Drieshen (Independent Scholar)** - New Insights into the Prayer Culture of the St Agnes Convent in Arnhem
10:45 – 11:15	Coffee Break (Faculty club)
11:15 – 13:15	**<u>Session 7 (Vossius Room): Translation and Adaptation</u>** **Chair: Anna Dlabacova (Leiden University)** **Youri Desplenter (Ghent University)** - Not (only) by Geert Grote: Middle Dutch Books of Hours from the southern part of the Low Countries **Kateřina Voleková (Charles University Prague)** - The Fifteen Oes and Their Czech Adaptations **Sean Vrieland (University of Copenhagen)** - Vernacular Prayer in Late Medieval Denmark **Evelyne Verheggen (Independent Scholar/Ruusbroec Institute Antwerp)** - The Dutch Book of Hours after the Reformation in the Dutch Republic, first half of the seventeenth century
13:15 – 14:30	Lunch break (lunch for speakers at Pakhuis, Doelensteeg 8, 2311 VL Leiden)
14:30 – 16:00	**<u>Session 8 (Vossius Room): Materiality of and beyond Prayer Books</u>** **Chair: Lieke Smits (Leiden University)** **Veronika Sladká (The Czech Academy of Sciences Library)** - Preparing the Heart: Material Culture and Prayer Practice in Unity of Brethren Hymnals **Iliana Kandzha (University of Copenhagen)** - Customising Prayer Practices in Late Medieval Denmark **Katelin Marit Parsons (University of Iceland / Árni Magnússon Institute for Icelandic Studies)** - Something Old and Something New: The Prayer Book of Helga Sigurðardóttir

16:00 – 16:30	Coffee Break (CaféUBé)
16:30 – 17:30	Closing Discussion
18:30	Reception and Dinner for speakers at Het Prentenkabinet (Kloksteeg 25, 2311 SK Leiden)