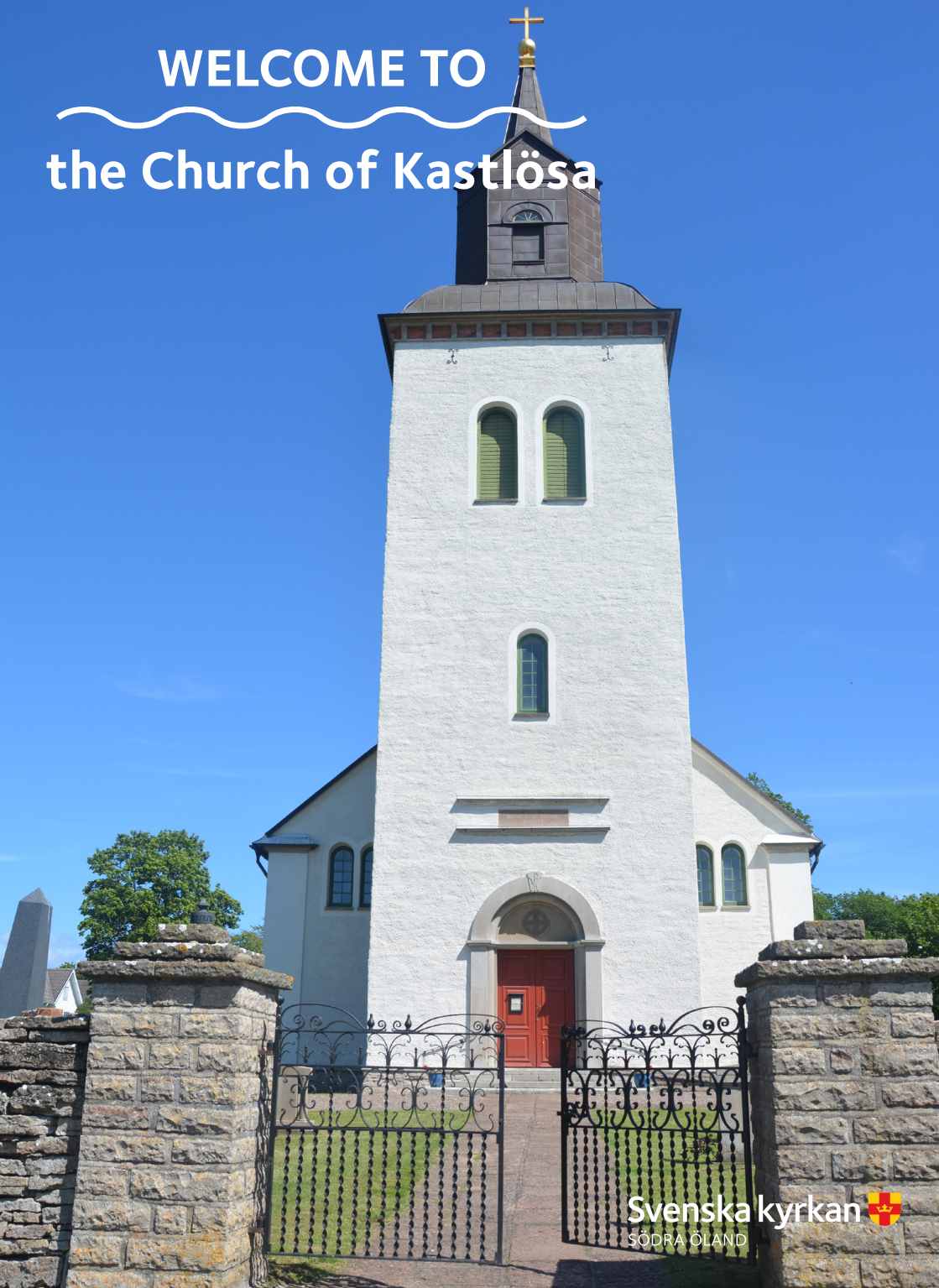


WELCOME TO

the Church of Kastlösa



CHURCHES ON ÖLAND

If you live on an island, you must be able to sail. Living by the Southern Baltic Sea has brought extensive contacts with the nations to the South.

Already in the Viking Age, the change of religion became obvious on Öland, not least because Christian graves began to appear on the village burial sites. The first churches were built during the 11th century, using wood and stave technique. A few scattered stave church planks still remain. Monuments engraved with runes have withstood the ravages of time and are preserved in six churches.

During the 12th century, 34 stone churches were built here. Soon after that, seven chapels were added at fishing villages and trading places. The earliest churches had windows and porches facing both the North and the South. A few even had a tower at the West end, and if so there would also be a porch there. Around each church, a burial place was provided for the dead and a stone wall surrounded the holy place. These churchyards are still in use.

In the 13th century and the Middle Ages many churches were provided with secular top floors and to almost half of them, a tower was added at the East End. The church buildings served as places for worship as well as storage space and for overnight accommodation. The role of the church during the Middle Ages shows

how the church and the world went hand in hand.

The following centuries saw only interior changes to most of Öland's churches. They were provided with arches and sometimes with new quires or porticos. Following the Reformation, new demands were made on church buildings. Preferably, the congregation should be seated, but the small medieval churches were short of space. Additions widened many churches, but towards the end of the 18th century, the thought of new buildings gained ground.

The churches on Öland have very few medieval artefacts. Numerous wars and the ravages by the Danes in 1677 left little behind. Today only one medieval church on Southern Öland is preserved intact. In another three, medieval rooms have survived. Seven churches have medieval towers.

Today's churches preserve ideals of style and function from the 18th and 19th century hall churches. The seated congregation listens to the service and sings together. Large windows make it easy to read from the Hymnal and the sermon spreads the Word throughout the entire building. Modern churches are gradually adapted to modern forms. Flexibility, participation and even technology make demands. On Southern Öland, one church has been adapted to modernity while preserving its medieval structure – the Church of Ventlinge.

SOMETHING ABOUT THE CHURCH OF KASTLÖSA

With its magnificent tower, the Kastlösa church can be seen from far afield. Appropriately, it is situated in the middle of the church village with the vicarage (previously the Kastlösa Diocesan Centre now called Allégården) and the school as its immediate neighbours.

The current church, built in 1855, replaced a medieval church just to the South of the present building.

With regard to its exterior, the Kastlösa church looks much like many other Swedish 19th century churches, but entering inside, the experience is quite different.



WELCOME TO THE CHURCH OF KASTLÖSA



Welcome inside

Entering through the West end porch, and stopping by the entrance, we see the spacious church and the monumental fresco on the East wall. The Kastlösa church is probably best known for its fresco. Before we take a closer look at that, there are quite a few other things to discover.

The church was rebuilt in the early 1950s. The interior was changed from having been a traditional neo-classicist large space to becoming a basilica with three aisles. Two rows of pillars made of Öland limestone divide the church lengthwise into three aisles with harmonious proportions.

When the Kastlösa church was re-inaugurated by Bishop Elis Malmeström on the Feast of Candlemas, 7th February 1954, many changes had been made. The ceiling, which had been vaulted, had become plain with visible beams. The large quire windows had been bricked up in order to make space for the large altar fresco.

The new items of Öland stone in the Kastlösa church are remarkable. Take a close look to see how the stonecutters at the Öland Sandvik factory have worked on the stone for the pulpit, showing the four Evangelists with their winged symbols: Matthew the Man, Mark the Lion, Luke the Oxen and John the Eagle.



The same skilled craftsmen have made the mighty columns, the altar, the altar rail, the built-in pews in the side aisle and the foundation for the baptismal font. In that font, the Kastlösa children, born in the 13th century, were baptised in the medieval church. Today the font is used for the same purpose.





The fresco by Valdemar Lorentzon: The Returning Christ

The fresco

The fresco has a strict composition with many triangles, through which the love of God breaks through like the rays of light through a prism. The central motif is the Returning Christ, which has also become the name of this fresco.

In all the down-pointing triangles, the love of God is searching for humanity. In the upward-pointing triangles, human love stretches towards God. We can see it most clearly where the hands meet: there the triangles take the shape of the Eucharistic chalice.

The rainbow, the arch of God's promise, binds together the new and the old covenant. On the top of it, Christ stands with hands outstretched in a gesture of invitation, blessing and sending. On each side of his head there are winged creatures holding the spire and the apple, the signs of his royal power.

Below the image of Christ, people from all places, cultures, faiths, classes, ages and races gather. They look at one another and offer each other their hands, the sign of friendship and belonging. In Christ we are all made one, regardless of our differences. The motif of this fresco rests on the ground of the Öland Alvar with its flowers, including orchids, arontorpe roses, (spring pheasant's eye), chicory, Öland rock-rose, dog rose, sloe and daisy.



The Halmstad Group portrayed by Stellan Mörner 1936

Waldemar Lorentzon 1899 – 1984

“Art is a kind of confession that can liberate man” These words by Waldemar Lorentzon are good to bear in mind as you reflect on his altar fresco, the Returning Christ, in the Church of Kastlösa. “At the cross, we all become equals” he said about another of his works.

Waldemar Lorentzon was born in the parish of Holm in Halland in 1899. He studied at the Carl Wilhelmsson and the Althin Art Schools, both in Stockholm, and then he travelled to Paris where he became a pupil of Fernand Léger at the Académie Moderne. Léger was a major name of art history, particularly of cubism.

Lorentzon was a professed Christian, influenced by the ideas of the Oxford Group Movement, which was about cancelling tensions between races, confessions and classes.

Other reredos paintings by Waldemar Lorentzon can be found in the churches at Rydaholm, Eftra, Månsarp, Hässelby and Ryssby in the vicinity of Ljungby. Waldemar

Lorentzon is represented at the Museum of Modern Art in Stockholm, the Museum of Artistic Process and Public Art in Lund and in the Mjellby Museum of Art in Halmstad.

The Halmstad Group

This group of artists, which has become a well-known concept, was formed in 1929 by the brothers Axel and Erik Olson, their cousin Waldemar Lorentzon, Sven Jonson, Esaias Thorén and Stellan Mörner, all with their roots in Halmstad. This group became a Swedish link to the cubism and surrealism of the Continent in the 1920s and 30s.

Fresco Painting

Fresco Painting. This is a technique of painting on a fresh wet plaster background. Therefore, only a small part can be painted at any one time. In the Kastlösa church, the stucco worker Stig Kling would lay on the plaster at a suitably sized area for Lorentzon and his assistant, the artist Hans Fagerström, to work on for a day. (fresco, from the Italian *al fresco* – fresh. Compare *al secco*, which is painted on dry plaster.)

The Joint Parish of Southern Öland consists of 7 parishes that together manage 18 churches and 1 chapel. The church of Kastlösa is situated in the Parish of Mörbylånga-Kastlösa.

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