



*Description of the church*

## *Welcome to the church of Västra Tunhem!*

*Here follows a brief history of the church. If you want material to what I would like to tell you, go down to the window furthest down to the left. There you will find some models exhibited.*

*You are now by the northern wall of the church and we start looking at the 12th century church:*

Probably the first church was erected here around 1180. The building was a little more than 13 metres long and scarcely 9 metres wide. It had a chancel that formed a square of 5 x 5 metres.

The southern wall of the longhouse is still part of the present southern wall of the church. Deepened lines in the plaster of the exterior of the church characterize this oldest part. The entrance was at the same place as the entrance to-day. The northern wall was approximately where the present aisle is.

*Now we go to the next model which is from the 15th century:*

When the two sister-churches at Randhem and Malöga were closed, an extension and a remodelling at Tunhem were carried out. The church was made longer towards west and got a tower or a bigger ridge turret. The church bells were never moved to the new tower but remained in a belfry, whose basis has been found to the northwest of the present tower. A sacristy of stone was erected on the northern side of the chancel and a wooden porch in front of the entrance of the southern wall. Below the floor under the chancel a little cellar-room of 1x1 metre has been found, where the wine for the Holy Communion was kept.

In 1557, when Gustav Vasa was king, the reverend of Tunhem was appointed Superintendent of a diocese including Värmland, Dalsland and parts of Västergötland. The church of Tunhem was a Cathedral but only for three years. When Gustaf Vasa died in 1560, the district went back to Skara diocese.

*The next model is from the 18th century:*

After the extension that took part between 1736-1740 the church room was twice as big. The expansion was both towards north and east, where the chancel got a tripartite end in line with the taste of that time. To the east of the church room a new sacristy was built. A new entrance towards north was opened and a porch of stone was built there. Now the church had two porches, a wooden one in the south from the 15th century and the newly built one of stone towards north.

*Finally the fourth and last model:*

In 1810 the present tower connected to the western gable was erected. Through this the church got a new main entrance and a big porch. The old porch to the south was gone, but the entrance was kept. The porch and the door to the north were removed. When the tower was finished, the old ridge turret was torn down and the bells got the place they have today. The small bell is of medieval origin and the other was recast the last time in the middle of the 18th century.

In 1912 the tower got the fairing and the prong, it has to-day.

*Now I suggest you move to the aisle, so you can watch the church as a whole:*

In the 1870's the old benches were replaced by new ones. One of these pointed rows is still there, but it is in the porch. During the years 1907 to 1908 a new restoration was done. New benches and a new altar ring were acquired. The pillars were lined with boards to the four-edges-form they still have today.

*Walk forward in the aisle, please!*

In 1937-1938 big changes were made inside the church. The wooden floor was taken away and was replaced by a massive concrete foundation. The chancel was raised, the baptizing altar was plastered and the benches got doors. The gallery

was enlarged to give room for a bigger organ and the choir. Benches, pillars and gallery were painted in a grey-green colour.

In 1990 by the latest restoration the church room was made shorter to make room for cloakroom, toilet and a closet for robes below the gallery. The windows of the chancel, bricked up in 1937, were reopened.

Preservation work was carried out on ceiling pictures, pulpit, altar-piece, trumpet angel, epitaphs and paintings. The church got a new colour and the architect in charge of the restoration was Jerk Alton.

*Now let us go forward in the aisle as far as possible and look towards the pulpit:*

In 1654 Lennart Torstensson's widow Beata de la Gardie gave the pulpit to the church.

The coat of arms of Torstensson and de la Gardie are at the front of the pulpit.

On the pulpit itself you can find Christ in the middle surrounded by the four evangelists with their symbols: Matteus and the angel, Markus and the lion, Lukas and the ox, and Johannes with the eagle.

The angle that carries the hourglass is made by Anders Person from Hol and the hourglass itself was given by the horseman Norrman in Önan.

*Look towards the altar, please!*

The altar piece was made in 1754 by Johan Peter Veber, Gothenburg. In the middle you see Maria and Johannes, who are standing on each side of the crucified Jesus. In the frame on the right side we see Petrus with the keys of Heaven and on the left side Paulus with the sword of the Holy Spirit. On the top is the lamb with the banner of peace and furthest down the performance of the Holy Communion.

In the middle of the chancel in the ceiling, there is a trumpet angel also made by Peter Veber.

*Now turn to the christening font, please:*

The christening font is from the 13th century and made by soapstone. Remains of an older font of sandstone is kept in the house of arms. The two angel sculptures, which were incorporated in the centrepiece of the altar are from the Middle Ages.

*Inside the church there are several gravestones, epitaphs and memorials. Now we want to look closer at some of them.*

*On the wall just to the right of the christening altar, you will find the first gravestone:*

In the 16th century noble families established bricked grave rooms under the aisle of the church.

Colonel Olof Silfwerlood set up a tomb outside the northern wall of the church, where the present cloakroom is. The artistically worked gravestone with pictures of Silfwerlood, his two wives and their children are on the southern wall beside the christening altar.

Olof S. was a Swedish military and nobleman. Especially in the 19th century he was mythically talked about because of his long military career during a time with few and short periods of peace. He took part in the Thirty Years' War and was wounded at the battle of Lützen.

He died on April 15 in 1676 at Fristorp, more than 90 years old.

On the opposite wall to the left of the pulpit, you can see the red funeral weapons with three cannonballs, belonging to the family Silfwerlood.

*Go on looking at the northern wall on the other side of the window:*

Here is a memorial in green marble to the memory of the African traveller Karl Johan Andersson, the son of the last bear hunter in

Sweden L.Lloyd. The memorial is from 1868. Karl made discoveries in the southwest of Africa and he sent home lots of birds. Many of them are to be seen at the museum of Vänersborg.

*We return to the southern wall and watch the next gravestone:*

Outside the southern wall of the church, the Forstena family constructed their chapel. Field marshal Lennart Torstensson's parents got their resting place there. L.T. was one of his time's most successful commanders, among other things during the Thirty Years' war. He himself is buried in the Riddarholmskyrkan in Stockholm.

The tomb is put up at the southern inner wall right before the grave chamber. A door led down through the wall into the room. To-day the place is marked with a niche in the wall on the inner side and a deepened line in the plaster outside.

A bit further down on the southern sidewall, you see more gravestones from this time. Earlier they were used as floors, but to-day they are on the wall.

On each side of the southern entrance you can see two stones. One belonged to Pehr Nilsson Kafle å Nygård who died in 1645 and the second is his wife's Carin Göransdotter of the Forstena family.

*Now we return to the chancel to watch two epitaphs:*

(An epitaph is a memorial board with an inscription of a dead person.)

On the northern wall to the left of the pulpit there is an epitaph of colonel Strömschöld. It is cut in wood around an epitaph of stone. On the south chancel wall, to the left of the baptism altar, there is an epitaph of two clergymen serving at Tunhem: Petrus Grotte, dead in 1682 and Eric Omoenius, dead in 1701.

*As a finish of our tour, we raise our eyes to the fantastic ceiling picture, painted in 1754 and 1755 by master Johan Vahlin, Skara.*

The biblical performances in the hollow mouldings of the ceiling show in zig-zag-sequence from the northern side of the chancel: The creation of the World- the creation of Man-the Fall-the Annunciation- Jesu' birth- Jesu' bearing into the temple- the Crucifixion- the Resurrection- the Ascension and the Return. The picture of hell above the gallery is to the most part hidden by the organ.

The ceiling pictures are not there just to decorate the ceiling. The Church wants to tell about the Christian faith to those who are asking, searching and longing. Take time for your visit to our church so full of memories. It also wants to be a place today for people who need strength to live and inspiration to build on a basis already laid.

Hymn 56, verse 4, in the Swedish hymn-book is about the house of our Lord as an asylum, a home, a place to love and honour and there you listen to lovely things and meet our Lord.