



WELCOME TO  
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Stenåsa church

# 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 as well. 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.



## ABOUT STENÅSA CHURCH

Located along the eastern land road with a wide view of the Baltic Sea and the alvar landscape, Stenåsa Church stands in a long row of villages that form the old Stenåsa parish. A church has existed on this site since the Viking Age, as the burial fields in the villages indicate early Christian influence.

A stone church was built in the late 12th century around the original wooden church. A western tower was added soon after, as was common on Öland. The tower had a southern portal, which provided access to its lower level where the nobility's quarters were located.

In the mid-13th century, the church was extended with a chancel featuring a straight east wall. The east gable had a threepart window with stained glass.

Frescoes of St. Olaf and Mary Magdalene adorned the window recess. Stenåsa Church was likely one of many dedicated to St. Olaf. As usual, this church eventually became too small, and discussions about a new church continued for decades. The present church was completed in 1831, again built around the old structure, whose walls were subsequently demolished.

The new Stenåsa Church is a bright hall church in the traditional neoclassical style. The interior features elegant decorative paintings on the ceiling and around the windows. A 13th-century baptismal font, one of the few preserved medieval artifacts, and a 17th-century church ship, one of the oldest on Öland, are also found here.



# A CHURCH IN THE COMMUNITY

Stenåsa Church is one of two churches in the Hulterstad–Stenåsa parish. Services are held here every other Sunday, often followed by social gatherings. Sometimes, the parish choir participate with beautiful music. The church also hosts baptisms, confirmations, weddings, funerals, and musical concerts. We warmly welcome you to visit our church, experience the serenity of the church space, or take part in the church community.

## The Bell Tower

The church tower houses three bells: the great bell from 1780, the middle bell from 1757, and the small bell from 1845. They ring for holidays and devotions. After a death, the tolling of the bell echoes through the parish. The muffled ringing on Maundy Thursday foretells Christ's suffering and death.



## The Church doors

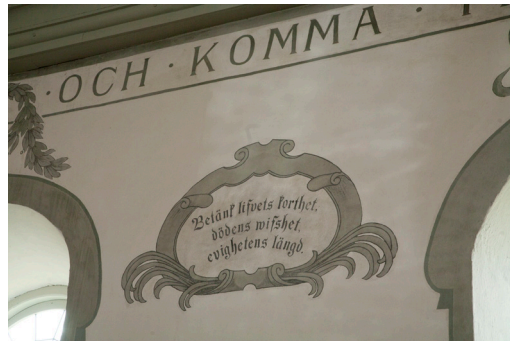
During the 1956 restoration, the old exterior doors were replaced with new copper-plated ones. The motifs depict *"The Good Shepherd"* (southern entrance) and *"The Great Catch of Fish"* (vestibule entrance). The doors were donated by then-pastor Hugo Håkansson.



*The Church doors*

# WELCOME INSIDE

The church is bright and spacious, featuring a richly decorated altarpiece and pulpit. The interior is characterized by decorative paintings in gray-green shades on the vaulted ceiling, as well as leaf garlands above the windows. Bible verses are also inscribed in a band forming a ceiling frieze, along with cartouches containing thoughtful biblical quotes. These paintings were created in 1902 and have been preserved during later renovations. Today, they give the church its unique character.



## The Altar

Around the altar rail, we gather for communion and prayer. Here, we see a richly sculpted altarpiece created by the sculptor Jonas Berggren in 1766. It consists of three panels stacked vertically. The lowest and largest panel was replaced in the 19th century with the same motif as before, depicting Jesus in the Garden of Gethsemane — painted by Carl Oscar Christiernin.

On the altar stands a newly acquired silver cross crafted by Fredrik Ingemansson, along with four candlesticks and two silver vases. During communion, a chalice from 1825 and a ciborium from 1875 are used.





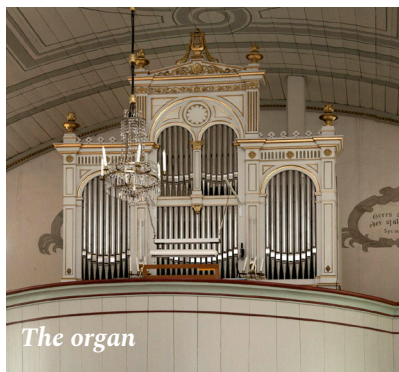
## The Pulpit

The pulpit dates back to the early 18th century and was decorated by Jonas Berggren at the same time he created the altarpiece in 1766. It features the four evangelists: Matthew (angel), Mark (lion), Luke (ox), and John (eagle). On the edge of the sounding board, small angelic figures hold instruments of the Passion. At the very top rests the crowned globe.



## Music

For many years, the church lacked an organ. In 1878, the congregation commissioned an organ from P.L. Åkerman in Stockholm. In 1953, the old mechanism was replaced with a new one, while the facade remained original. To the powerful tones of the organ, we sing "*Var hälsad, sköna morgonstund*" during the early Christmas morning service.



## Baptism

The church has three baptismal fonts, two of which date back to the Middle Ages. The oldest, located in the vestibule, is from before the 13th century. Near the church entrance stands an oak baptismal font from the 19th century. Today, baptisms are conducted using the font placed in the chancel, a "*paradise font*" from the 14th century. This often takes place during a main worship service. The congregation presents each baptized child with a baptismal candle and a limestone holder as a gift.



## The Candle Holder

Inside the western door, we light candles in memory of the departed. Hanging from the ceiling under the gallery is a chandelier donated in 1831 by Captain E. Lillia of Frösslunda.

The church's votive ship is an armed threemasted brig, likely from the 17th century. It has been rerigged and restored several times.

An altarpiece, painted and donated by Erling Fredriksson from Slagerstad, depicts the plain Alvaret, envisioned as the Garden of Eden.

The altar frontal and chancel rug in röllakan weaving were designed by Sigrid Birgitta Synnergren and crafted in 1961.

The church's oldest chasuble is made of black velvet with silver embroidery and dates back to 1839.

## Welcome back any time

Hulterstad-Stenåsa congregation hopes this information has been valuable to you. Before you leave the church, feel free to sit down for a moment of rest and reflection.



*The Votive Ship*





The Joint Parish of Southern Öland consists of 7 parishes that together manage 18 churches and 1 chapel. The church of Algutsrum is situated in the Parish of Glömminge – Algutsrum.

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