The ecclesiastical parishes of Umeå have a long history, from the 1500s through to the present day. The region is full of interesting buildings, objects and graveyards. They are designed and decorated with great architectural and artistic ambitions, often by the most skilful architects, craftsmen and artists of the time. The symbolically-charged settings tell us about the lives of different generations and about the role of the church in society. The ecclesiastical settings represent a priceless cultural heritage, which is explored in a series called "KULTURHISTORIA, Svenska kyrkan i Umeå"/"HISTORICAL CULTURE, the Swedish Church in Umeå".

The Medieval stone church of Backen has an eventful history. Today, this modern parish church has strong links with the history of the local area and the history of the building. There's plenty to discover!

Backen Church

a brief description
The church has undergone changes over the course of time. In the mid-18th century, the original windows were widened to admit more light to the church. The old pulpit dating from 1645 was replaced in 1749. In 1805, the entrance porch with a door in its south-west corner was taken down and the west doorway was constructed. The windows were enlarged again (to their present size) and remodelled with rounded arches. It was probably at this time that the northern door, the Door of Mary, through which women entered the church, was blocked up. A two-storey gallery was constructed in the chancel. In 1893, the church was damaged by fire and the vault was replaced by a wooden roof. However, the sacristy’s medieval roof vault was spared. Major renovation work in 1953 included the construction of new brick vaults with a medieval design – so skilfully crafted that they survived the fire in 1986, when the entire church, organ, art treasures and fittings were destroyed. The church silver, textiles and other items that were kept in the sacristy were fortunately protected from the ravages of the fire. The medieval stone walls withstood the heat incredibly well and the parish decided to rebuild the church. Jerk Alton, the Swedish architect, was commissioned to design the new building. The aim was not to reconstruct the medieval church, but to achieve the emotive effect that the builders of the Middle Ages achieved using traditional materials and colours. The church should be a glimpse of what is beyond words – a place in which people may find repose and tranquillity as well as fortitude and strength. A paradise on earth.