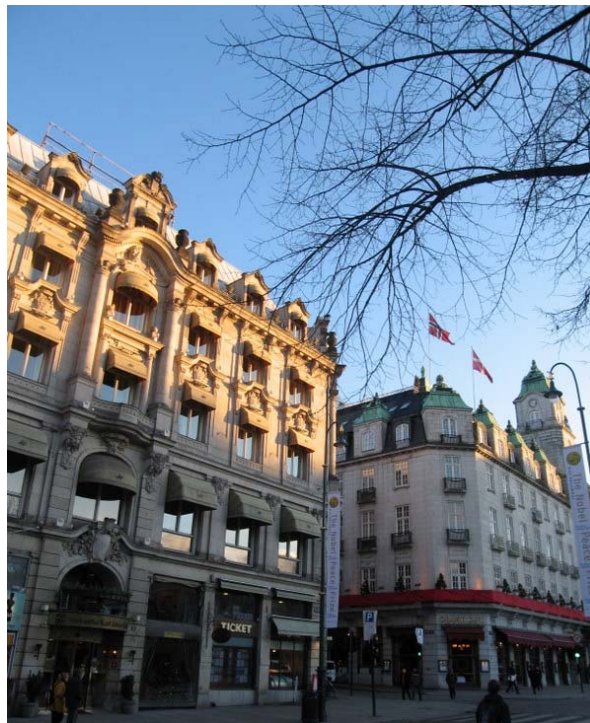


## VIGNEC VISIT to NORWAY, SWEDEN AND ESTONIA



In May 2007, the Greater Tacoma Peace Prize Committee announced they had selected Ron as the 2007 Peace Prize laureate. The Committee honored Ron during its September 29 banquet at Pacific Lutheran University's Scandinavian Cultural Center. Through the generosity of supporters, the Committee gave Ron and me a trip to Oslo, Norway, to attend the December 2007 Nobel Peace Prize activities. We are very grateful!

We arrived in Oslo on December 7 and were immediately impressed by the city's excellent public transportation system. We walked through the airport, picked up our luggage at the baggage claim, proceeded to the train ticket counter, purchased our train tickets, rode down the elevator and stepped into the train. Within 45 minutes we emerged at the National Theater station. Then we walked a little more than a block to our hotel, the Norlandia Karl Johann.



**Norlandia Karl Johann and Grand Hotels**

On Saturday morning, December 8, Turid Johannessen from the Norse Federation met us in the hotel lobby.



She walked with us to the Norwegian Nobel Institute where we met with the Head Librarian Anne Cecilie Kjelling. Anne told us there are a number of possible reasons why Alfred Nobel chose to have the Peace Prize awarded in Norway. She said none of these reasons has been proven conclusively to be the one and it's most likely Nobel had several motives for choosing Norway. Anne stressed that the Norwegian Nobel Committee selects the Peace Prize laureates. She showed us the boardroom where the committee deliberates. We admired the photos of the laureates displayed on the walls in this room. Anne also showed us the banquet room with copies of the laureate awards, featuring work by a different artist each year. Then she showed us the room used for the press conference when the Norwegian Nobel Committee announces the laureates they have selected.

After we said goodbye to Anne, we asked Turid to help us find the American Lutheran Church. Karen and Dan Erlander (former Pacific Lutheran University Pastor) had told us that Stephen and Kirsten Kienberger were serving at the American Lutheran Church. Stephen and Kirsten were students at PLU when Ron was a campus pastor there. As we approached the church, Turid recognized a man standing in the doorway. She said his name was Eric, someone she knew from her work at IBM. I got the impression Eric's position was something like the Education Director at the church. He said they were preparing for the Christmas program scheduled for the next day, Sunday. When he realized that we knew the pastors of the church, he invited us inside. Stephen and Kirsten recognized Ron right away. We talked for a while about PLU days.

Then Turid walked with us to the nearby library where we used the computers to check emails. She pointed out Aker Brygge, Akershus and various other landmarks. She also suggested several different area restaurants we might find enjoyable and affordable.

That afternoon Ron and I took the subway to Vigeland Park.



Ron proposes to rename the park by inserting the letters N and C on either side of the E to create VIGNECLAND.



On Sunday morning we decided to look for Our Savior's Orthodox Church. We walked up Akersgata and Akersveien. Big fat snowflakes were falling all around us. The road forked around a large brick church, which we later learned was the Trefoldighetskirken. We took the path to the right and approached a flat-roofed church building. The congregants appeared to be Vietnamese or perhaps Chinese. Further up the road we passed St. Olav's church on the right. We guessed it was a Roman Catholic congregation with Slavic worshippers. A little further on, we saw a lot of graffiti on a small grocery store door.



We found Our Savior's church at the edge of the cemetery. It was a squarish brick structure and its cross did not have the typical Orthodox slash at the foot. Several men were standing about smoking. Ron approached them and said, in his one-word communication style, "Orthodox." The men nodded yes.



**Our Savior's Orthodox Church**



We went inside and stood at the back. The church was full of people of all ages and numerous ethnicities. We lit candles for Ron's mother, Christina, and grandmother, Tekla. Outside the church, we found a side door leading to their icon exhibit.



That evening we attended a Christmas concert, "In dulci jubilo," at the Trefoldighetskirken. Four choirs from the Oslo Domkirke sang. Janet Ruud's cousin, Kari Bergem, was one of the soloists. The music was inspiring and beautiful.

The next morning, December 10, Sigmund Lindekleiv and Trygve Jordheim met us at our hotel. Trygve is an editor with the VÅRTLAND newspaper. His uncle, Kjell Jordheim, was Ron's pastor at Our Savior's in Brooklyn. Sigmund also knew Pastor Jordheim from his days serving in the Seamen's ministry in Brooklyn. Pastor Jordheim had alerted both Trygve and Sigmund about our visit to Oslo. Trygve and Sigmund contacted the Bishop of Oslo, Ole Christian Kvarme, and arranged for us to meet with him for an hour before the Nobel Peace Prize ceremony. We took a taxi to the bishop's office. Sigmund explained the property surrounding the office building is the site of an ancient Oslo cathedral built in honor of St. Helvard. While we were waiting for our turn to meet with the bishop, Sigmund showed me the ruins of the cathedral walls. We spent about an hour with the bishop. He is very personable and asked a lot of questions about Ron's ministry at Salishan, the challenges of an increasingly diverse population and welcoming newcomers to the church. He also mentioned that his wife is a criminologist, and they are both very concerned about housing for people coming out of prisons.

We rode in the taxi with the bishop to City Hall. He told the taxi driver to drive right past the police barricades. He said, "I am the bishop. I am authorized to go here." He was in a bit of a rush to be promptly on time for the ceremony. After he gave us both a warm embrace, he sprinted into the building through a side entrance.



**City Hall**

Now we were inside the police barricade, so we stood at the main entrance as Al Gore and Rajendra Pachauri walked from the Grand Hotel to City Hall.



**Al Gore and Rajendra Pachauri approaching City Hall**

We watched the Nobel Peace Prize Ceremony on television, toured the Norse Federation offices with Turid, and then returned to City Hall for the CNN interview. There were about 1000 people in the audience. Many were young people in their 20s and 30s. We were impressed by their obvious concern for the future of the planet and their vigorous support for the peace prize laureates.



**Inside City Hall after the CNN Interview**

After the interview, Turid escorted us up the marble stairs for a close up look at the building's artwork.

The next day, December 11, Trygve's article about our visit appeared in the VÅRTLAND newspaper, along with a great photo of Ron and the bishop.

Turid, Ron and I rode the streetcar to the Oslo Center for Peace and Human Rights. We met with Executive Director Einar Steenasnaes and Ambassador John Bjørnebye. John mentioned his friendship with Janet Rasmussen (former Director of PLU's Wang Peace Center).



That evening, Ron and I attended the Nobel Peace Prize Concert at Oslo Spektrum Arena. The show featured performances by Alicia Keys, Melissa Etheridge, Annie Lennox, Earth Wind & Fire and others. Many of the performers were celebrated activists and humanitarians, as well as accomplished musicians. Melissa Etheridge sang 2007 Academy Award winner "I Need to Wake Up," which was featured in Al Gore's environmental documentary "An Inconvenient Truth." Annie Lennox closed the show with "Sweet Dreams are Made of These."



On December 12, Ron and I took the train to Sweden. We met several of my father's first cousins, the Sjögrens, and their spouses in Gothenberg, Alingsås, Ödenäs and Stockholm.

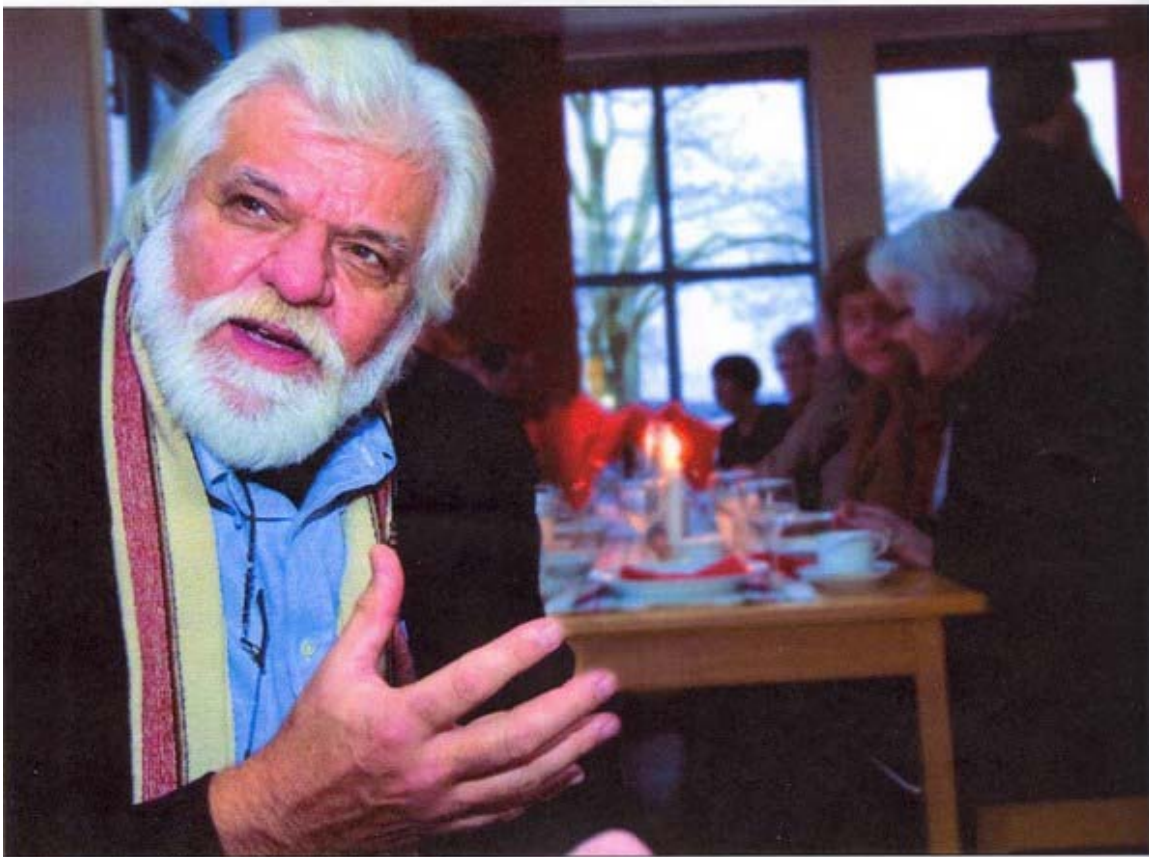


**St. Lucia Singers Serenaded Us**



**The Sjögren Home in Ödenäs, Sweden**

An article about our visit to Norway and Sweden appeared in the December 17 issue of the Alingsås newspaper.



PASTOR Ron Vignec fick resan till Skandinavien som ett pris.

FOTO: BOISSE ÅSTRÖM

## Celebra gäster på jullunchen i Ödenäs

**Torsdagens jullunch i Ödenäs församlingshem fick celebret besök. Pastor Ron Vignec med hustru Nancy kom direkt från Oslo och utdelningen av Nobels fredspris.**

**ÖDENÄS:** I Ödenäs fick de uppleva ett ganska exotiskt lusse-tåg bestående av medlemmar i Hemsjö medarbetarlag och äta traditionell svensk julmat.

Orsaken till besöket i Ödenäs var att Nancy tog tillfället i akt att hälsa på släkten. Nancys farföräldrar härstammar från bygden och vid ett bord i församlingssalen satt ett drygt tiotal släktingar.

Pastor Ron Vignec berättade att han hade fått resan till Oslo som ett pris för sitt arbete i bostaden Tacoma, Washington. Han är inspirerad av det arbete som Al Gore lägger ner och mycket imponerad av hur många personer han mött som uppskattar Gores arbete.

**1985 STARTADE** pastor Vignec Salishan/Eastside Lutheran Mission och hans arbete består bland annat i att hjälpa etniska minoriteter, till exempel immigranter från Kambodja, Vietnam, Mexiko och Ryssland - människor som talar väldigt lite engelska.

- Jag arbetar inte bara i kyrkan utan besöker i stort sett

varenda möte som är i stan för att få en uppfattning om vilken hjälp människor kan behöva, sa pastor Vignec.

**HANS ARBETE** har uppskattats väldigt mycket och han utsågs bland åtta nominerade till 2007 års pris, Greater Tacoma Peace Prize. Priset instiftades 2005 till minne av unionsupplösningen mellan Norge och Sverige. Tacoma med omnejd är en bygd dit många norrmän utvandrat från sitt gamla hemland.

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**ÖDENÄSANKNYTNING.** Nancy Vignec, här med maken Ron, har sina rötter i Ödenäs.

On December 14, we traveled by overnight boat from Stockholm to Tallinn, Estonia.

Ron visited Tallinn twenty years ago when he participated in a Lutheran World Federation peace study tour. At that time of communist domination, the people of Tallinn were not allowed to openly worship or study the Bible, but they were allowed to participate in choirs. Ron observed people at the Holy Ghost Lutheran Church using choir practice as a way to communicate religious beliefs.

From 1987 to 1991, Estonia engaged in the “Singing Revolution,” and regained its independence from the former Soviet Union by singing. On Sunday morning, December 16, we worshiped at Holy Ghost Lutheran Church. We also visited Alexander Nevsky Cathedral.



**Alexander Nevsky Cathedral, Tallinn**

We flew from Tallinn to Oslo on December 17 and returned to Tacoma on December 18.

This trip renewed us and inspired us to reflect on the future. Ron and I are committed to investing in young emerging leaders in our local community and worldwide. We welcome the opportunity to continue working with the Greater Tacoma Peace Prize Committee to acknowledge and encourage efforts that make for peace.