



On behalf of Stange parish council, I would like to welcome you to Stange church, the oldest building in Stange municipality and one of Norway's 160 remaining mediaeval churches. The present building dates from about 1225. Archaeological excavations carried out in 1986 concluded that it stands on the site of at least one earlier church.

There have been a significant number of changes to the church throughout its eight-hundred-year history. In this short guide I point out some of the original features and relate some of the changes.

Let's start our short tour by the main west door. Here we can see the original impressive Gothic entrance. The doors were removed to accommodate the porch, which was added around 1800.

If we walk along the nave towards the altar and stop before we enter the chancel, we can see on the left hand side, the only surviving fragment of original mediaeval chalk painting over the baptistery. If we look behind the altarpiece, we can see on the east wall, one of three narrow windows (now bricked up – only the centre window is visible inside). The original windows would have had no glass, just a linen screen to keep out birds. Imagine how cold it must have been in the church without heating! In this part of Norway temperatures frequently fall to minus 30°C in winter.

During the excavations in 1986, a symbolic saint's grave was uncovered. This might have contained a relic from a saint, although there is no way this can be confirmed. The grave is directly behind the altar. Going back into the chancel, to the right is the door to the *sakristi* (the vestry). This addition to the church was made in 1320. The paving-stone floor here is original.

On the 17<sup>th</sup> June 1620 the church was struck by lightning and burnt down. The tower, the roof and everything in the building date from after this time. Two of the earliest and most impressive pieces from this period are the *Prekestol* (pulpit) from 1630 with motifs from Christ's birth, crucifixion and resurrection and the *altertavle* (alterpiece) from 1652, which depicts Christ on the cross, the Resurrection and the apostles.

After the fire of 1620, the chancel was closed off and used as a small church. A new bell was needed, so in 1623 a bell cast in Copenhagen (and originally destined for Kongsberg church) was procured for Stange.

The next major addition to the church came in 1703, when the *nykirke* (the new church) was added to the north of the building. Stone was used from Hamardomen, the old cathedral of Hamar (the ruins of which can still be seen

under glass in Hamar). At this time the windows were enlarged, the chancery entrance widened and the ceiling decorated with clouds.

An interesting feature in the new church is the imposing epitaph on the north wall from 1680. Parish priest Christopher Stockfleth died at the age of 40 in 1679, leaving a widow and their children. In 1680, his successor Niels Müller was appointed, on the condition that he married Stockfleth's widow! Here they are: Stockfleth, Müller, the widow and the five children.

During this period, it was common for wealthy families to commission works of art for the church. If we go back into the nave, we can see over the chancel an impressive carving depicting the Crucifixion. This was given to the church in 1685. On the south wall is a painting depicting the miracle of the Pentecost from 1709.

To the left of the chancel we can see an impressive structure that many assume is a "royal box". In fact this was constructed in 1719 as a baptistry, housing the font and was originally at the entrance of the church. It is decorated with the magnificent crowned monogram of Frederick IV (King of Denmark/Norway 1699-1730). Norway remained in a union with Denmark for a total of 436 years, until 1814. This period is often referred to as the "400-Year Night", as all royal, intellectual, and administrative power was centred in Copenhagen.

In 1772, the belfry and steeple – as we observe them today – were constructed, 34 metres over the roof and almost 60 metres from ground level. The belfry houses two bells, the first cast in 1623 and the second in 1751.

The porch - *våpenhus* (literally "weapon house", originally a place where swords and guns were left before entering the church) was added in 1800, and the pews and gallery around 1840.

Stange church is well-known throughout Norway, largely due to two paintings by Harriet Backer: *Barndåp* (baptism) from 1899 and *Altergang* (Holy Communion) from 1903.

The stained-glass windows in the chancel are by Gabriel Kielland, and date from 1928.

The Norwegian organ builders *Jørgensen* built the organ in 1957 and the Bechstein grand piano is from 2012.