

Stiklestad 26.07.08

Åpningstale Dialogkonferansen "*Holy Places – Places for Conflict or Dialogue.*"

Dear Church leaders.

Dear guests.

A hearty welcome to the town and township of Verdal to you all from the local authorities.

It is a great pleasure having you here at Stiklestad – which is the political and cultural cradle of the Norwegian nation - on such an important occasion as your conference is. I sincerely hope you will find both the facilities and the atmosphere here suitable for your highly important discussions and negotiations.

For me as the local mayor it is - as it always is - a great pleasure having prominent national guests and important visitors from abroad in town. As many of you already know Stiklestad is *the* site of *the* most important battle in the history of Norway as far as the longlasting – everlasting - consequences both in the political and the religious fields are taken into consideration. You will of course learn more about this under your stay here.

The modern town of Verdal is in addition to being a centre of commerce and public and private services the leading manufacturing town in Central Norway with more than 140 different share holding companies with more than 2500 employees in the rapidly developing industry park here. One of the biggest in Norway this is. The Aker Solutions Yard - building oil rigs and wind mill jackets and different kinds of similar heavy steel constructions - is the biggest of these companies both in size, in national and international networks and competence, setting standards also to suppliers, sub vendors and neighbouring enterprises, among which very many are internationally focused. Many of our other companies and enterprises also work on the global arena. This fact brings many ideas, many interesting people and a whole lot of opportunities with them and makes us much more exciting and expanding as a society.

The rapidly expanding business life, our fantastic history, and the richness and quality of our cultural life and heritage are the greatest assets of this local community. Relations are very good between the business life and the local authorities, as they also are between the town hall and the cultural sector. We firmly believe in partnership and cooperation.

The township of Verdal is also situated in one of the most important agricultural areas in Norway. In fact, these Central Norwegian districts south and east of the Trondheims Fjord are *the* full scale farming areas on the globe lying on the highest latitude. We are really now as far north as North Canada or Siberia. The climate, of course, is due to the Gulf Stream very much better, very much milder. This explains the early settlements in prehistoric times, the political power of the region in ancient times, and, of course, also the historical importance of our great pride Stiklestad in our nation's history after the famous battle in 1030 AD.

Once again: A hearty welcome to town.

You are going to do important work while staying here at Stiklestad.

Best of luck with your conference!

Thank you very much.