



More than a prayer for change

Church and science leaders to start national bell ringing in Svalbard during climate gathering

Global leaders say they're abandoning hope of a treaty at next month's climate summit, but scientists still urging immediate action will get a boost locally this weekend from those literally in the business of miracles.

A bell-ringing ceremony starting at Svalbard Church at 4 p.m. Saturday and resonating at churches throughout Norway will serve as the emblematic moment for "Rop Fra Arktis" ("Cry From the Arctic"), a three-day gathering of scientific, educational and religious leaders seeking to focus attention on the effects of climate change in the north. Songs, prayers and a petition seeking action at United Nations climate summit beginning Dec. 7 will be offered, although top world leaders stated earlier this week they are giving up on a binding agreement among the 192 participating nations.

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Leif Magne Helgesen delivers an All Saints Day message during a torchlight vigil in Longyearbyen Cemetery as part of a Svalbard-based television series about the church and climate change airing on NRK in November and December. Helgesen will be among those leading a bell-ringing ceremony Saturday as part of a three-day "Rop Fra Arktis" gathering Friday through Sunday.



Artists and art fans take in new exhibits and music during the opening reception Thursday for KunstPause at Galleri Svalbard. The four-day event celebrating a return to the quiet of polar night also featured lectures, food, bonfires and other events throughout Longyearbyen.

Polar night brings an appetite for art

Creations for the eyes, ears and stomach energize KunstPause

Paintings and music nourish the soul, but there's also something to be said about art that illuminates the palate.

Satiating all those senses meant the onset of the three-month polar night was anything but gloomy in Longyearbyen during the

eighth annual KunstPause Svalbard. Promoted as a chance to take a break from everyday routines, the four-day festival featured events big and small at venues indoors and out throughout town.

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Musical holiday tale a cultural mix of the stars

Geirr Lystrup, Moscow folk quartet to perform Christmas concert with local choirs Sunday

He's heard his father perform an annually acclaimed Christmas concert of Russian songs numerous times over the years and is a longtime musician himself. But Sveinung Lystrup Thesen has never shared a stage with his dad.

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Editor

Mark Sabbatini

Copy editor

Kristan Hutchison

Psychiatrist

Irene Gallion

Mailing address

Icepeople
Vei 210 -2- 13
Longyearbyen, Svalbard
9170
Norway

Telephone

Norway: +47 41 51 46 38
U.S. +1 (970) 673-4472

E-mail

marksabbatini@yahoo.com

Web site

www.icepeople.net

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Corrections policy

When we screw up you'll know about it – on the front page. One of the big complaints about newspapers is they tend to bury corrections and clarifications deep inside where few people who read the original article see them. If we need to fix something, an alert box on the front page will state what story is in error and where the full correction is printed.

Submitting material

Letters, columns, photos and other material are welcome, but we can't offer pay for published items since nobody here is getting paid at the moment. Submissions in electronic form (text, Word documents, JPEGs, etc.) are highly preferred, although typing and/or scanning of items will be considered on a per-case basis. We reserve the right to edit submissions for length, clarity, accuracy, libel and other reasons, but we will also make every reasonable effort to contact the author about any changes prior to publication.

Church, scientists find common ground

CLIMATE, from page 1

Those declarations aren't discouraging Svalbard Church Priest Leif Magne Helgesen, who is leading many of the local events that begin Friday.

"I think our small action is even more important to give the politicians the effort to go for an agreement," he said.

The statements from global leaders may simply be an attempt to play down expectations, Helgesen added. Even if nothing substantive results in Copenhagen, "there is something to be said for progress going into next year."

A historical rift between science and church has emerged among some factions on climate change, but those participating in the "Rop Fra Arktis" weekend share a common ground whether achieved through an empirical or ethical foundation. Coming to Svalbard to start the bell ceremony – which will be broadcast nationally on NRK as part of a five-part series focusing on climate change and the church in the Arctic – recognizes northernmost areas are where warming is most pronounced.

"We are a church where the ice is melting," Helgesen said. "We have a moral and ethical responsibility to draw attention to it."

It's not new for the church to be involved in issues about nature, he said, but efforts are often overshadowed as more attention is paid to issues like homosexuality.

The weekend is intended to raise awareness among citizens rather than climate summit attendees who've likely studied and heard years of arguments about the climate issue. But convincing the harsher skeptics will be a formidable challenge.

There's more! Visit www.icepeople.net for the complete story.

More flu vaccine arrives; shots limited

More vaccinations for H1N1 flu arrived Longyearbyen this week, but shots will be limited to those in at-risk groups, officials said.

"We will vaccinate children under the age of 6 this Saturday" and school-age children next week, wrote Aksel Bilicz, a supervising nurse at Longyearbyen Hospital, in an e-mail. "Barentsburg will get 150 doses (they have not received any yet), so we will not have any doses left for the general population as I can see until (the) next delivery."

The hospital will also administer shots to about 35 Longyearbyen residents with high-risk health conditions such as chronic respiratory or heart disease, diabetes and severe obesity, he wrote.

Officials were concerned the shipment of vaccine for the ailment, also known as swine flu, would be delayed due to high demand na-

'Rop Fra Arktis' schedule

(All events free and open to the public)

Nov. 20

- 7 p.m.: Introductory meeting with Pastor Leif Magne Helgesen, Norwegian Polar Institute Director Kim Holmén and Bishop Per Oskar Kjølås. Svalbard Church.

Nov. 21

- 10 a.m.: Opening of climate seminar at UNIS by university director Gunnar Sand and music by Geir Egil Larsen.
 - 10:15 a.m.: Main hearing featuring Holmén, Svalbard Environmental Minister Guri Tveito and Dean Herborg Finnset Heiene.
 - Noon: Panel input for Copenhagen climate summit, featuring biologist Inger Alsos, geologist Alvar Braathen, Bishop Tor Bergen Jørgensen and Nobel committee head Ole D. Mjøse.
 - 1 p.m.: Discussion: "Is the Light at the End of the Tunnel?" featuring Kjølås, Sand, Longyearbyen school teacher Priita Trøen, and students Heidi Lian and Ida Lund.
 - 2 p.m.: Summary presentation by Stig Lægdene, rector of church education for northern Norway.
 - 2:15 p.m.: Thai lunch available for purchase in UNIS cafeteria.
 - 3:30 p.m.: Torchlight procession to the church bell at Skjæringa.
 - 4 p.m.: Ringing of the church bell, with songs, prayers and appeals for action.
- Nov. 22**
- 11 a.m.: Liturgy focusing on climate issues with bishops Hans Stiglund, Kjølås and Jørgensen, and Svalbard priest Helgesen.

Note: Seeing red – or, in this case, not

Anybody notice the past two print editions have looked like crap?

If not we're in more trouble than usual because it means our esteemed editor lacks the photography skills of a trained monkey (set to automatic, press shoot). But we're hoping to blame the abundance of yellow and other gar-

ish shades on a malfunctioning printer. Either a repair, replacement or box of crayons should be in place in time for this issue.

Our apologies to everyone in the pictures who thought they couldn't possibly look that ugly. You're right – thankfully the eternally alive Web versions are much better.



Geirr Lystrup, second from right, and the Moscow Balalaika Quartet will join about 50 Longyearbyen musicians for "Stjerna Fra Øst," a holiday concert mixing traditional Russian folk songs and Norwegian tales at 7 p.m. Sunday at Huset. Photo provided by Geirr Lystrup.

Russian music, Nordic stories come to stage

CONCERT, from page 1

That will change at 7 p.m. Sunday at Huset as Thesen and about 50 other Longyearbyen choir singers help Geirr Lystrup perform "Stjerna Fra Øst" ("Star From the East"), a Nordic Christmas story Lystrup presents annually throughout Norway with the Moscow Balalaika Quartet.

"The concept is Russian folk songs and my father wrote new texts to those merry legends," Thesen said, noting there are many historic and artistic similarities among both northern cultures.

This is Lystrup's second performance of the concert in Longyearbyen, following a 2005 trip when he also appeared in Barentsburg. Backing Lystrup and the Moscow quartet at this year's concert are the Longyearbyen mixed choir, Store Norske men's choir and singer Liv Mari Schei as a featured soloist.

The Moscow Balalaika Quartet, promoted as one of Russia's leading folk groups, will perform several songs separately. Another concert by the group is planned Monday at a time to be announced during Sunday's performance.

Lystrup, 60, a singer, songwriter and instrumentalist living in Brumunddal, has recorded more than 20 albums since 1972, venturing into traditional, folk, children's, blues and other

genres. "Stjerna Fra Øst," released as an album in 2002, was praised by one reviewer as "a luminous poetic story about a child who found faith, hope and love of life, (and) puts the Christmas gospel in our Nordic forest landscape and our own mythical world."

Thesen said he's helped his father and the quartet arrange numerous appearances elsewhere, usually in churches fitting the concert's sacred theme. He said the Longyearbyen performance is at Huset since Svalbard Church is too small for a sizable audience.

The two Longyearbyen choirs, who usually practice separately, have been working together on the concert for the past few weeks, Thesen said. The character of the performance varies with the size and skill of the choirs in towns, but he feels good about the local talent.

"I think it's a pretty big choir," he said. Also, "in a lot of choirs in Norway they struggle to get men."

Rehearsing with Lystrup and the quartet will be limited, since they are scheduled to arrive only a few hours before the concert.

Tickets, available in advance at Huset and Næringsbygget, are 200 kroner for adults, 100 kroner for youths.

There's more! Visit www.icepeople.net for the complete story.

HEADLINES STOLEN FROM SVALBARDPOSTEN VERDENS NORDLIGSTE AVIS

Overnight stays in Svalbard down 10 percent for summer

Overnight visitors in Svalbard declined 10 percent during the summer months of 2009 compared to a year ago, according to officials. A large number of Norwegians choosing to stay on the mainland for holidays is cited as a potentially significant reason, since the northernmost mainland county of Finnmark saw an increase in visitors. The drop continued a trend from the winter months, with Spitsbergen Travel reporting 28.3 million kroner of income during the first three months of 2009 compared to 39.7 million the previous year. There were 37,539 overnight stays in Svalbard during June, July and August, compared to 41,105 in 2008. The decline continued in September, with accommodation days down 13 percent compared with a year ago.

Secondary school proposal continues rotating classes

A proposal offering Longyearbyen secondary students 121 periods of classes a week, compared to the mandatory 160 on the mainland, has been approved by the local administration committee. The plan, which must still be approved by the municipal board and the Norwegian Ministry of Education, continues a policy where fewer courses are offered due to relatively few students and therefore tighter budget restrictions in Longyearbyen. The reduction means some courses are only offered every other year. Longyearbyen Education Association leader Tom Ramberg said more funding should be sought instead since "we do not want students in Longyearbyen to be second-rate students just because they live here."

Man steals car and beer, then flips vehicle in accident

A 25-year-old man from the mainland stole a car and a few six packs of beer Saturday from Huset before losing control of the vehicle and crashing it onto the roof of the old museum, according to police. He was not hurt.

Weather forecast for Longyearbyen

Wednesday

Snow, then clearing. S winds at 16 km/h. High -1C (-4C wind chill), low -4C (-6C wind chill).

Thursday

Increasing clouds. E winds at 6 km/h. High -2C (-4C wind chill), low -3C (-4C wind chill).

Friday

Cloudy, snow and wind late. E winds at 28 km/h. High -3C (-5C wind chill), low -4C (-12C wind chill).

Saturday

Windy with snow. E winds at 33 km/h. High -2C (-12C wind chill), low -5C (-14C wind chill).

Extended forecast: Sunday, windy with snow, -2C (-13C), -6C (-16C); Monday, windy with snow, -3C (-16C), -8C (-20C); Tuesday, overcast with flurries -5C (-17C), -13C (-14C); Wednesday, mostly cloudy with a flurry, -4C (-11C), -8C (-14C).

Data provided by AccuWeather.com



A "miner," above, pours wine for diners during a multi-course meal, art auction and concert by the Valkyrien Allstars folk band Saturday at Brasseri Nansen as part of Kunstpause. At right, a members of the Longyearbyen Storbånd perform interpretations of hymns during a concert Friday by various local musicians at Svalbard Church.



Lighting all the senses as night begins

KUNSTPAUSE, from page 1

The theme was something of a contradiction, emphasizing the same historic and cultural aspects of daily life that is the focus of the Norwegian Year of Cultural Heritage 2009. Among the KunstPause events was a presentation of buildings in Longyearbyen and Pyramiden, modern and historic photo exhibits of everyday Svalbard culture, and a concert where a wide range of locals preformed equally broad interpretations of hymns at Svalbard Church.

Settings ranged from the rugged log benches at an outdoor bonfire to a fancy dress evening by a fireplace.

The opening reception offered a little of everything as about 125 people crammed into Galleri Svalbard, where owner Elise Hannaas reminded them of the art indulges to come.

"Stimulation for all senses – hearing, sight and taste," she said.

The welcome was followed by a mini-concert by local singer/songwriter Liv Mari Schei and Swedish guitarist Staffan Johansson. Attendees then nibbled on wine and snacks while exploring new exhibits and a range of creations such as clothes and jewelry by artists in the gallery's studios.

Blending the primitive and sophisticated, along with art aimed at multiple senses, was the focus of an evening of coal and long-stem

roses Saturday at Brasseri Nansen.

About 200 people filled the dining room for a three-course meal where food consisted of things like perfect squares of potatoes and stacked circles of venison. Local diners also saw a new wrinkle as waiters donned mining outfits, complete with helmet lamps, and dirtied their faces with coal dust – attire worn only once before during an event for people from out of town. That meant the challenges of formal serving were complicated by trying to keep battery cables and other accessories from bumping, snagging and otherwise disrupting guests.

An art auction and a concert by the Valkyrien Allstars during the evening were also presented in a novel way, even to the well-known Norwegian folk band that tours extensively. Meal courses alternated with music sets and, while some initial doubts existed about the approach, lead singer Tuva Livsdatter Syvertsen said it worked surprisingly well compared to other dinner shows.

"The audience is listening to us when we're playing," she said. At other banquet performances "they're holding a fork in one hand and a champagne glass in the other, so they can't applaud."

There's more! Visit www.icepeople.net for the complete story.

What's up

Nov. 18

7 p.m.: Meeting by Bydrift with homeowners to discuss new requirement for food waste disposals in sinks. Mediateket in Lompensenteret.

Nov. 20-22

Climate weekend ""Rop Fra Arktis" ("Cry from the Arctic"), featuring seminars and other activities in advance of the Copenhagen climate summit. See full schedule on page 2.

Nov. 21

6 p.m.: Concert by Berit Meland with Olaf Storø. Galleri Storø, Sjøområdet (Vei 608). Admission 100 kroner.

Nov. 22

7 p.m.: Concert "The Star From the East" by Geirr Lystrup, featuring Russian folk songs and storytelling combined with the Christmas gospel and Arctic winter. Also performing are the Moscow Balalaika Quartet, Longyearbyen Blandakor, Store Norske men's choir and soloist Liv Mari Schei. Tickets at the door 200 kroner adults, 100 kroner youths. Huset.

Nov. 23-27

5:33 a.m. and 8:27 a.m.: Svalbard Church Priest Leif Magne Helgesen offers morning devotions on NRK 1.

Nov. 24

10 a.m.: Meeting of the management committee. Næringsbygget 1, Tundra room.

Noon: Deadline for nomination of members to board of culture and leisure. Submit by e-mail to rogerzoe@lokalstyre.no.

Nov. 26

7:30 p.m.: Meeting of the cultural forum to select two member to board of culture and leisure. Also, information about proposed cinema use for 2010 will be presented. Næringsbygget 2, Smutthullet room.

What's online

Icepeople.net provides daily updates of news about Svalbard and the world's polar regions, plus extras for articles from the print edition. Among the latest news:

- *Oil execs: Arctic oil spills easier to clean*
- *Climate deal called vital in hunger fight*
- *Warming hits Norway's reindeer hard*
- *Cow dung to power more Dutch homes*