

SUCCESS HAS MANY FRIENDS

A while ago Härnösand bishopric, where Höga Kusten is included organised conferences around the Church of Sweden's role in rural districts. Elected representatives, employees and volunteers from the various parishes met and shared experiences and thoughts about the future.

We listened to the good initiatives for entrepreneurship and community spirit, to quality of life described in closeness to nature, to people who have swapped the hectic city pulse for a life with more time for family and other pursuits. But we sadly also heard of the sorrow at the unfair distribution of the resources produced in rural Sweden and the need for a united fight for these rights.

Our land is built in the rural districts; the raw materials for the food, the houses, clothes, toilet tissue, the energy for heating, lighting, computers, white goods and kitchen utensils; all of this originates and is produced outside the urban centres. All of this is built on inventiveness and creativity; and to a large extent they are found in the 70 per cent of the Swedish population living outside the urban centres.

My clearest memories of the conferences on the rural issues are not the obstacles we saw but the hopeful trend report delivered by a few young entrepreneurs. It depicted how the environmental concerns of the young and their efforts towards quality of life, in combination with the opportunities made available by the digital development, may serve to turn around the trend of urbanisation. Their positive report I continue to consider in my mission as a bishop to promote the preservation of the church and its contribution towards the good life in rural districts.

For us in the Church of Sweden this is to a large extent about creating the conditions for communal efforts around our resources and competences so that we are able to preserve our cultural heritage while still being relevant in the present day and age and society. I mean that we need to ensure that the church's resources are used in a way to support, encourage and empower joint efforts between villages and communities. The church must not contribute towards narrowmindedness that complicates cooperation and the sharing.

Assuming joint responsibility we generate the strength necessary for the rural districts to survive and be welcoming new entrepreneurs, new generations and new ways of making a life and providing sustenance. The young entrepreneurs at the rural conference gave me hope for the rural districts, for the church that is part of it and for the small-scale life with nature and humanity in concert, for a reality beyond the urban norm.

For me personally life in Höga Kusten is about being able to live in closeness with the nature that sustains us. Liberated from the stressful urban life and demanding life pattern, to be allowed to live in harmony with a natural, genuine setting, makes me touch the deepest sense of being human and able to source energy and inspiration before my undertakings.

Life in rural districts, not least here in Höga Kusten, entails a quality that brings fabulous opportunities for socializing, creativity and productivity. This is a good place where to live; I sincerely wish more people will grasp the opportunity.

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