

SCANDINAVIAN SCENE

Pacific Lutheran University
Scandinavian Cultural Center

The SCC Celebrates
Syttende Mai
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A Long-Awaited Journey:
Heading to Oxford
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AUGUST 2026



OPEN HOURS

Sundays

1:00 p.m. - 4:00 p.m.
(year-round)

Tuesdays & Wednesdays

12:00 p.m. - 3:00 p.m.
(academic year only)

Office: 253-535-7349

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TBD for 2026/27

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SCANDINAVIAN SCENE

Editor: Sarah-lynn Bennett

Design: Scott Beilke

Photos: Pacific Lutheran University unless otherwise denoted

Please direct questions to scancntr@plu.edu



PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE



Greetings Scandinavian Cultural Center (SCC) members, donors, and friends,

July flew by and now, as I write this, August is flying by, too! I hope you are enjoying the last of this beautiful summer.

And speaking of flying... there's no place like home, and I am so glad to be safely back from our "Great Italian Adventure!" My husband and I traveled to Italy and London with our daughter, Laura, her husband, Jon, and the two granddaughters to celebrate Laura and Jon's 20th wedding anniversary and for them to remember their honeymoon to London, Paris, and Rome. Despite the heat (104 in Florence, most days 90 and above), we were grateful for being included in this wonderful trip. We saw so many beautiful art masterpieces and ancient artifacts, heard Vivaldi in Venice, Italian arias in Rome, concerts, and The Phantom of the Opera in London, and so much more!



Now that I am home and recovered from the cold I brought back with me, I am busy getting ready for the 2026/27 year in the Scandinavian Cultural Center. There are many exciting events planned, new exhibits in the works, and a few major changes happening.

First, mark your calendars for a Member Open House:

September 27th from 3:00 - 5:00 pm in the SCC

We'll welcome you to the SCC, invite you to see and hear about the new exhibits, and share the plans for this year's events.

See you this year in the SCC,
Gerda

THE SCC CELEBRATES SYTTENDE MAI: FROM PLU TO BALLARD!

The annual celebration of Norway's Constitution Day kicked off early on May 16th at Pacific Lutheran University's Scandinavian Cultural Center (SCC) with a procession of the Norwegian flag followed by the singing of "Ja, vi elsker dette landet," and a reception. For Gerda Hunter, SCC President, her favorite moment of the day was "seeing the SCC filled with pride in our Norwegian heritage, the PLU tradition, and our own USA." Her sentiment is echoed in the link between the two countries since Norway's constitution is the second oldest, active national constitution in the world, crafted less than thirty years after the United States.

The Nordic Museum describes the parade in Seattle as the "largest 17th of May celebration outside of Norway." Throughout the day, the community gathered for live music at Bergen Place Park, a gathering at Skål Beer Hall, an open house at the Leif Erikson Lodge, and the official 17th of May Luncheon hosted by the National Nordic Museum.

As 6:00 pm approached, palpable excitement emanated from the thousands of attendees who lined the streets of Ballard for the main event, the annual Syttende, to watch performances from marching bands, dancers, and cultural groups, as well as





the presence of former Prime Minister of Norway, Erna Solberg, who took the honor of being 2026 Grand Marshal. It reminded Gerda that “we are all immigrants here in America. People everywhere, no matter their country of origin, are the same. They hope for a happy life filled with love, family, traditions, and home.”

The event relied heavily on community support, with the SCC proud to serve as a “Valhalla” level sponsor. Members of the SCC, council members, students, and community members walked the route, waving Norwegian flags to the cheering crowds. As they made their way through the heart of Ballard, they saw a friendly face amongst the judges’ panel! Our very own SCC President, Gerda Hunter, joined the panel as all high-level sponsors got

to participate in evaluating the groups. Looking back on the day, she sees a bright future: “I would like to see more student involvement sharing the history of the celebration...learning about Syttende Mai and drawing their own conclusions about the lessons to be learned.”

The SCC extends its heartfelt gratitude to all volunteers and attendees for making this celebration possible, with special thanks to Gerd-Inger McDougall for organizing the SCC’s participation in the events and to Gerda Hunter for dedicating her time to the parade. This year’s Syttende Mai celebration served as a powerful reminder of Pacific Lutheran University’s Scandinavian roots and the vibrant Norwegian community of the Pacific Northwest.



2026 SPRING LUNCHEON CELEBRATES GROWTH, ART, AND COMMUNITY EXCELLENCE

A traditional rainy June day in Washington could not dull the shine of all the new, wonderful changes happening at the Scandinavian Cultural Center (SCC)!

On June 6th, over 75 members of the SCC council, PLU staff and students, and the greater Parkland community gathered together to celebrate the opening of the newly replanted Nordic Garden, an effort made possible by the Helen Gorenson fund with plants researched by Keith Hunter. The group also celebrated the raising of the new horse statue lovingly referred to as “Olaf,” which was designed by local Washington artist Stan Smitherman, and now serves as a welcoming sight to all who walk Park Avenue past the SCC.



OUTSTANDING SERVICE AWARD

In addition to celebrating new additions to the grounds, the SCC honored the work done by its members who help or who have helped the center thrive. A standout moment of the afternoon was the presentation of the prestigious **Outstanding Service Award to Karen Hundven Chapman**. Karen, who is “always coming up with good ideas” according to President Gerda Hunter, was recognized for her exceptional dedication and longstanding commitment to the Scandinavian Cultural Center. Throughout her time, she has demonstrated leadership, especially through her work with Hospitality as well as serving on the Joint Collections Committee. She will be honored with her name engraved on the Outstanding Service Plaque on display for all members and visitors to see in the center.

SCC SCHOLARSHIP RECIPIENT KEYNOTE PRESENTATION

Attendees of the banquet also got the chance to hear a keynote presentation from Scandinavian Scholarship recipient, Eleanor Sherry. Eleanor shared about her study away in Oxford, illustrating the direct impact of donor support and the importance of the SCC’s recognition of “the importance of global education, the growing interconnectedness of our world and the transformational experience of learning from, about and within other cultures and communities outside of our own.”

When asked about cultural differences she noticed between the environment in Oxford and her hometown of Tacoma, Eleanor shared that people might be surprised to learn about “the composition of the ways that people get around. The roads were there before cars were there!” as she referred to the small roadways. “Bicycles of all shapes, any number of wheels. There would be side cars, there would be dogs in baskets. People would deliver the mail... and someone would be pedaling the mail around. It was beautiful.”

Now back in Washington, Eleanor continues her relationship with the center by serving as the SCC intern and can currently be found helping rehouse artifacts following the 2025 reconstruction.

LOOKING AHEAD

The Spring Luncheon certainly highlighted the work and dedication of its community. Whether it's strolling through the new Nordic Garden, attending upcoming lectures, or visiting the new exhibits coming this year, members and friends are invited to stay connected and celebrate the progress happening at the SCC.



A LONG-AWAITED JOURNEY: HEADING TO OXFORD

By Eleanor Sherry

My name is Eleanor Sherry, and I'm starting my senior year at PLU this fall. I am currently on track to graduate in May 2027 with a major in jazz performance and composition, and a minor in writing. I am also the Student Intern for the SCC this summer. Last year, I was awarded an SCC Study Away scholarship, which helped fund my 2025 fall semester in Oxford with the PLU International Honors program. The experience was one I had been considering ever since I was a freshman, and it was rewarding beyond what I could've imagined.

LITERARY FOOTSTEPS FROM LONDON TO CANTERBURY

For the first two months of the program, my cohort of Honors students and I took a class with PLU English professor Dr. Jenny James, where we discussed literature, politics, and British geography. I spent the second two months taking a primary and secondary tutorial from two different Oxford faculty members. The class I took with Dr. James was Towards a Politics of Mobility, which started as soon as we arrived on August 12th. In this course, we learned all about the history of the

activity of walking in England. We read the books NW, by Zadie Smith, Wanderlust, by Rebecca Solnit, Mrs. Dalloway, by Virginia Woolf, and Chaucer's epic The Canterbury Tales (Though not all of it, and not in the original Old English). The focus of the course was to use travel and reading to understand the southeast of England. We got to visit some truly special locations. We spent two days in London to understand the tube system; we took long walks in the large chalk hills of the South Downs over the course of three days; we visited Virginia Woolf's beautiful house with all the original furnishings, and we went to Canterbury Cathedral where we got an incredible tour through centuries of layered architecture.

I am so grateful for the unique lens this class gave me on geopolitical mobility, class mobility, and the history of England. Through walking in such fascinating locations, I gained an intimacy with the city and with the countryside. It grounded me in where I was. I was reminded how walking is not a luxury for everyone, and that some people don't do it for leisure, but because they have no other choice, or they feel they have a duty of pilgrimage. Walking



is linked to a million other issues, and considering it forced me to consider much larger questions, including: Why is “going on a walk” such a popular activity? What are the politics of building apartments and highways on top of “picturesque” views, and who is the scenery for? What does walking give us, and what does it lack?

MICHAELMAS: THIRTEEN ESSAYS AND A NEW ACADEMIC PATH

The second half of my semester was during Michaelmas, which is the start of the Fall term for Oxford students. At the start of October, the city livened up with the flood of young adults, and this is when I began to really feel at home. Tutorials started, which are one-on-one classes between a student and professor, and are quite intense. I met with Dr. Rikky Rooksby each week for my primary tutorial and every two weeks for my secondary tutorial. We discussed the previous week’s material for an hour, then we departed with the expectation that by the time I saw him next I would have 1,600 to 2,000 words written on whatever he assigned me for that week. The primary tutorial, or “tute” if you’re a local, was on media analysis across mediums, and the secondary one was on classic British ghost stories, which also contained more reading and writing.

The tutorials were punishing, but they sharpened up my writing and gave me a deeper appreciation of so much art that I might’ve never encountered otherwise. I read novels like *Dracula*, *Orfeo*, and *An Equal Music*, watched movies like *Manhattan* and *Blow-Up*, and deeply listened to Sgt. Pepper’s Lonely Hearts’ Club Band and Ralph Vaughan William’s 5th and 6th symphonies. By the plane ride back home on December 8th, I had written thirteen



long essays, with twelve of those being written in two months. After I got back home, I figured if I had done all that writing, it would be a bit silly for it to not be on my diploma, so I declared a writing minor.

This semester abroad was one of my favorite things I’ve done in my life so far, and it’s nearly impossible to neatly sum up the ways it’s changed me. I made lifelong friends both in and out of the University, I gained experience living independent of my parents for the first time, and I got to go to places I had always dreamed of visiting, like London’s Dover Street Market and Oxford’s Bodleian Library. I’m also proud to say that when I come back to visit, I can give whoever I travel with an absolutely stellar tour that nobody else could. Thank you so much to the SCC for supporting my studies abroad, and thank you for supporting the SCC by reading the Scene!

UNITED BY VYSHYVANKA

by Shan Rayray



The Ukraine House in Washington, D.C. celebrated the 20th anniversary of World Vyshyvanka Day, which is a worldwide celebration in more than 100 countries, by officially launching the “United by Vyshyvanka” cultural project. They realized how much Ukrainian culture has in common with other nations around the world and therefore wanted to find a meaningful way to unite our cultures and demonstrate the strength and shared support we all need during times of uncertainty.

This year, the Ukraine House decided to establish a connection with other countries through the shared tradition of embroidery. They invited artists from around the world to contribute embroidery for a collaborative artwork symbolizing unity and cultural dialogue. So far, eleven countries have joined the initiative, including Luxembourg, Latvia, Norway, Lithuania, Moldova, Slovenia, Sweden, Mexico, Romania, Poland, and Japan. I was honored, as an instructor for the Vesterheim Norwegian-American Museum, to have been asked to represent a Norwegian tradition and create the Hardangersøm piece for Norway (the Norwegian Embassy had reached out to the Vesterheim).

I was fortunate to attend the launch event in D.C. for this important project at the Ukraine House in May. I learned just how similar our cultures are across the world and, in particular, the art of embroidery. The Ukrainians celebrate their culture by wearing their Vyshyvanka shirts/dresses, which is unique only to Ukraine. (Similar to how Norwegians wear bunads.) These shirts are beautifully decorated with cross-stitching and/or embroidered with satin stitches and cut work. Some of the embroidery designs are so similar to Hardangersøm that they are virtually indistinguishable.

The Hardangersøm piece I submitted was inspired by a couple of my Aunt Barbro's pieces. My Aunt Barbro, who lived in Stavanger, Norway, taught me the art of Hardangersøm during her visit when I was a young girl. She spoke Nynorsk and no English, but taught me using traditional methods. I made the piece in her honor. The Norwegian Embassy told me that through my Hardangersøm embroidery, I helped represent an important part of Norway's cultural heritage while contributing to a project that promotes international dialogue, unity, and solidarity.

This is only the beginning. The Ukraine House has invited other countries to join in this growing initiative and contribute their own embroidered textile to create a complete, global map of embroidery traditions. Together, they want to show how truly united we are, transcending borders, languages, and cultures.

I'd like to thank the Norwegian Embassy for their support for this event.

MARK YOUR CALENDAR: UPCOMING EVENTS

2026

Sept 27

SCC Member Open House
— 3:00 PM

Oct 6

Thor Heyerdahl Annual Lecture
— 7:00 PM

Oct 14

Embla Cooking Class

Oct 28

Embla Cooking Class

Nov 3

Embla Cooking Class

Nov 29

Julgudstjeneste/Norwegian
Christmas Service — 6:00 PM

Dec 6

Sankta Lucia — 4:00 PM

Dec 12

Jul Banquet — 5:00 PM

2027

March 12-13

Heritage Festival

May 17

Syttende Mai

Every Sunday during Open

Hours: Children's Choir
Rehearsals



SCC MEMBER OPEN HOUSE

SUNDAY, 27 September, 2026 | 03:00PM - 05:00PM



SCC Spring Luncheon, June 6, 2026

**12180 Park Ave S,
Tacoma, WA 98447**

Phone: 253-535-7349
Email: scancntr@plu.edu
Instagram: @scancnterplu
Website: plu.edu/scancnter



Rosemaling Exhibit

"The SCC is a dynamic hub—
part gathering place, part
living classroom— dedicated
to preserving and sharing the
rich tapestry of Nordic and
Nordic-American heritage."
- Scandinavian Cultural Center: Connecting
Our Heritage, PLU News

Check out plu.edu/scancnter for more details.

SCANDINAVIAN CULTURAL CENTER

12180 PARK AVENUE SOUTH
TACOMA, WA 98447-0003

