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KESÄLAHTI

THE NEW CHURCH



KESKI-KARJALAN SEURAKUNTA

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History of Kesälahti Parish

Kesälahti is located on the isthmus between western Puruvesi and eastern Pyhäjärvi in Central Karelia. The island of Sirnitsa, located off Ruokkenniemi, was already inhabited in the Stone Age about 5,000 years ago. Flint finds prove that this region had trade connections with Eastern Europe; on the other hand, they perhaps indicate that Finnic peoples came to these regions already in the Stone Age, earlier than previously thought.

Sirnitsa Käräjäkallio is mentioned in documents in 1556; at that time, our reformer Mikael Agricola was on apeace negotiation trip to Moscow. The border of the Peace of Täyssinä of 1595 passed through Käräjäkallio.
At that time, Kesälahti remained in the Uukuniemi chapel of the Kurkijoki pogost in Käkisalmi County. After the Peace of Stolbova in 1617, five villages in Kesälahti were annexed to the Swedish Empire along with Käkisalmi County. Immediately after this, a strong Lutheran conversion campaign began in these regions. Several Greek-speaking families left their homes and moved to Aunus and Tver.
The Greek believers had atsasouna here.

The Valaam Monastery gave up its land holdings here on June 9, 1630.
A Lutheran parish was founded here in the early 1630s under the name Kesälahti-Uukuniemi. The date of the parish's foundation has not been preserved anywhere, but the account books of 1632 mention that the Lutheran vicar of Kesälahti, Martinus Martinpoika Fabritius, had been paid asalary.
This entry is the starting point for the history of the Kesälahti parish. Initially, parish life and activities in Kesälahti-Uukuniemi were led by acommon vicar. In 1725, Kesälahti got its own vicar. The current vicar is the 27th pastor of the parish.

There is also no documentation about the construction of the first Lutheran church in Kesälahti, but amap drawn in the early 1640s shows Kesälahti Church. After the first church fell into disrepair, anew church was built in Uukuniemi; however, it burned down in the summer of the same year, probably due to alightning strike.

The construction of anew church was initiated by the people of Kesälahti in 1746.
The church was built on the site of the first church on the hill where the old rectory is now located. The builder was Eskil Kallenius. In 1770, a belfry was built next to the church by Matti Petrelli, which was then moved to the side of the third church in 1836 and is still in place.

In 1815, the congregation received an order to build anew church, but when no consensus was reached on the location of the church, the construction was postponed. Finally, in 1830, adecision was made to build the church in Kapakanga, where a new cemetery had already been established. The place is the same as where our current church is located. The church's drawings were made by Italian-born Charles Bassi, the first superintendent of private buildings in our country. The master builder was Daavid Rahikainen from Savitaipale, who was also the master when moving the belfry and putting it in its new appearance.

The ground plan of the third church was an isosceles cross, with the corners between the crossbeams beveled for volume and visibility. The church had acentral tower with a domed roof. The interior of the tower opened into the church, allowing light into the church from above.
Old residents of Kesälahti still remember with longing the bright and beautiful interior of the former church, which spoke of the skills of the 19th-century church builders, carpenters, and carpenters, as well as the love of our fathers and mothers for the parish.

In the summer of 1941, on July 2nd, the church burned down when the Russians dropped incendiary bombs on Kesälahti. Only three concrete stairs remained. The rectory, which had been built on the site of former churches and which was located on the site of the current old rectory, also burned down. Many other buildings here also burned down at the time. The old belfry, which was brought to the churchyard in 1836, was spared from the fire.

Reconstruction work began while the war was still ongoing, and in the summer of 1943, a temporary church building for services was assembled from four military barracks near the burned-down church. At the parish's request, the Savonlinna Civil Service District headquarters had promised to help the parish by handing over 3-4 barracks "for the time being, on the condition that the appearance and structure of the barracks are not changed, only the windows may be enlarged, because if the situation requires it, they can be taken back into use by the Civil Service District". The temporary church was located "on the northern outside of the churchyard fence", i.e. between Ruoman and Mäntyniemi roads. The church was consecrated on 12 September 1943, and it was allowed to serve the parish for the next seven years. The church was quite modest, small and cold in winter, but cozy - the altar wall was decorated with asimple wooden cross.

In the autumn of 1949, construction of anew church began in Kesälahti. -Already on September 3, 1950, the fourth church in Kesälahti was inaugurated, built on the site of the previous burned-down church, and the construction of which had been made possible by donations from the Lutheran churches of America.

The way of life in Kesälahti has been strongly marked by the sense of the border -even to the point that the parish has often been fragmented by the border of the kingdom. The "battle" between the cultures of the East and the West has played apart in the history of the parish -until the 17th century, Greek religion was dominant.

The number of people present in Kesälahti parish was 2,906 at the beginning of 1990; 2,574 at the beginning of 2001; the maximum number was around 4,500 in 1950. Year 1750 -1844, year 1847 -2860, year 1900 to 3400.

MAIN CHURCH IN KAPAKANKA

On September 3, 1950, the current, fourth church in Kesälahti was inaugurated. The church was designed by architects Aili and Niilo Pulkka. The church building represents abeautiful and traditional church building style in its simplicity. The chandeliers in the church hall were also designed by the Pulkkas.

The church's current, second organ dates from 1984, it is amechanical 23-stop organ manufactured by the organ builder Hans Heinrich. -The current altar is from 1997. The altar crucifix was made by Leo Karppanen.

Initially, the altarpiece of the church was the altarpiece of the former Sakkola parish, painted by Alexandra Såltin "The Ascension of Jesus", which was very popular with the people of Kesälahti, since the subject was the same as the altarpiece of the church that burned down in the bombing. Today, this painting by Såltin is the altarpiece of the village church, and according to the agreement, it is in the care of the Kesälahti parish until the Sakkola parish is re-established in Karelia. The altarpiece of the main church is now the altarpiece of the former Jaakkima church, Erik Johan Löfgren "Christ on the Mount of Olives". -On the wall of the old parish hall is acopy of Albert Edelfelt's painting "Christ and Mataleena" by Alli von Boehm.

The church's violet altar cloth and pulpit bookcase cloth were donated by the Lindebergs of Mäntyniemi Manor. The founder of the manor, Klas Johan Molander, was the vicar of Kesälahti from 1761 to 1777. The manor has remained in the ownership of the same family. This family has significantly influenced the history of Kesälahti.

The church was last renovated in 1991, the roof was renewed in 1997. The new parish hall, kitchen and downstairs club room were built in 1990 -1991. The church has approx. 450 seats; additional space is available from the parish halls for a total of approx. 200.

The text on the side of the old church bell, made in Stockholm in 1774 and donated to the congregation, urges: "As the sound of this bell is heard in your ears, small and great, hurry to the temple, with apure heart, to hear the word of the Lord, to learn the precious truth that is in every time."

VILLAGE CHURCH IN VÄÄRÄSSÄMÄI

At the end of 1955, the barracks church, which had served as atemporary church, was moved next to the Väärämäki cemetery, which had been established in 1955. 1947. Thus, this modest, but all the more valuable barracks church still serves the people of Kesälahti, and especially the residents of the northern end, as avillage church, where mass is held about once amonth, and where the deceased who are buried in the village church cemetery are blessed.
The church bells are two from Jaakkima Church. The church has approximately 150 seats.



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