WELCOME TO CHURCH

Tohmajärvi



KESKI-KARJALAN SEURAKUNTA

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www.keskikarjalanseurakunta.fii

The Tohmajärvi parish was originally founded around 1650. This parish included Pälkjärvi (1727–1794), Kiihtelysvaara, which became independent in 1857, and Värtsilä, which practically became its own parish in 1909 and was re-joined to the Tohmajärvi parish in 2003. The Tohmajärvi parish joined the Kitee parish on 1 January 2025. The new parish is called the Keski-Karjala parish and includes the nearby churches of Kitee, Kesälahti, Rääkkylä and Tohmajärvi. The Keski-Karjala parish has approximately 11,000 members (at the beginning of 2025).

Tohmajärvi church

The first Lutheran church was built in the 1650's and it was situated where the bell tower is standing now. That church was in use about 90 years. The present church is the oldest wooden church in the North Karelia. Its construction began in 1751 under the direction of master builder Eskil Collenius. The church was completed in 1756. Church was named after Gustaf III who were the Swedish crown prince of that time. In more than 200 years, the church has been repaired several times.

Unfortunately the paintings made by well-know church painter Mikael Toppelius during years 1783-1784 are mostly gone. Only altarpiece is left in the church.

During repairs in 1952 to 1956 electric lighting and heating were installed as well as an organ with 17 registers. The last renovation was done in 2005.
The church includes seats for approximately 650 people.

In the churchyard there are the graves of 240 Finnish soldiers fallen in WW II. Monuments are designed by Ilmari Virkkala. There are also memorials of the men from Tohmajärvi and Pälkjärvi who felt in the Finnish War of independence in 1918.

Close to the grave area there is a family lot of government official Gabriel Wallenius. He was the <King= of Karelia (1725-1808) and he had a strong influence on the economic and intellectual life of Tohmajärvi and the whole Karelia. On other preserved memorials several well-known Finnish names can be read: Järnefelt, Toljander, Stenius etc. On the vestry side of the church there are a tomb and the memorial of bishop and Mrs. Eino Sormunen (1893-1972).

The bell tower right close to the church was built in 1760. To its wall is attached a memorial plate of the people (30) died in the boat accident on their way to church in 1810. Bell tower got a new roof and paint in 1994.

Outside the churchyard there are a monument of the war-time Sword Division by sculptor Veikko Jalava, and a relief presenting the route of the 7th Division in the WW II.

In the east of the church yard there is the former Pitäjäntupa which was built in 1856. The house served as a place where to stay the night after a long trip to church, to hold confirmation school, parish meetings and sessions. Pitäjäntupa currently has a summer café open from June to August.

About 200 m from the church is the old parsonage which was built in 1841. The old parsonage is now privately owned.

It may be said that the church of Tohmajärvi with its surroundings and cemeteries (the new cemetery and the old one a bit farther away) is especially in summertime one of the most beautiful church areas in Finland.

In winter services are held principally in the Kemie parish hall in the densely populated area of Kemie. The hall was built in 1964, and has also been consecrated as a church.

In Tikkala, about 20 km from Kemie in the direction of Joensuu, there are a chapel (built in 1947) a cemetery and the graves of 34 Finnish soldiers fallen in WW II.

In Värtsilä, about 20 km from Kemie is church of Värtsilä, (built in 1950), and Parish house (designed by Veikko Larkas).



Tikkala’s chapel 2007, Katriina Puustinen.
Kemie’s parish house,
former parish house, vicarage 2009, Henna Partanen.
Värtsilä’s church 2009, Soile Luukkainen

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