

# The Church of Lokalahti and a short history of the parish

Believed in the early Middle Ages Lokalahti was the place of the Church for the Swedish settlement in Vehmaa. It is believable that Lokalahti would have had a chapel soon after Christian swedes had moved here by the year 1000. The first sanctuary of Lokalahti was also called a Viking church. The current church is very likely to be on the same spot as the first sanctuary.

The Lokalahti area slowly became the chapel of Vehmaa. This happened in 1490, when the bishop Mauno Särkilähti consecrated the cemetery and the lairds Gunnar Eilifinpoika and Albrekt Henrikinpoika Görszhagen built a chapel of wood consecrated to St. Catherine on the place where the church now stands. The form of this chapel is not known, but many of the wooden sculptures in the church today are from that chapel.

In 1639 a new wooden church was built on the spot, apparently because the old church was decaying. The pulpit that still stands in the church today was probably made from this church. At the same time Lokalahti became an independent church municipality for the first time. This independence lasted until 1691 when Lokalahti joined the congregation of Vehmaa.

The current church is made by the drawings of sacristan Joh. Höckert from Lappi of Rauma. The church was built in 1763. The interior was painted by Gabriel Prychteen when the church was completed in 1969.

The most significant repairs were made in 1857 by the plans of the county architect G. Th. P. Chiewitz and 1950 by Totti Sora. The latest interior modifications were made in the 1990's. In the spring of 2008 the alteration of the church apse was completed. Some already familiar things are gone, like the Cross of the Winner. Some new and old things have come to replace, for example the peasant-style crucifix that was acquired to the church in 1835 and the altar from the previous church, dated in the early 18th century.

From the apse by windows one can see the village of Lokalahti, changing by the seasons. The exterior painting of the church has been renewed many times. It has been red twice. In 1904 the church was painted gray, and later on with a green shade. The shingle roof was dismantled 1926 and replaced by a tin roof. In the summer of 2006 the church was renovated from the outside and back to one of the earlier colours. The church lives by the parish: carrying the past and carrying to the future.

## The Pulpit

The Pulpit was probably finished 1639. It was discarded in 1768, but it was put into service again in 1861. Three sculptures were later on attached to the exterior sides of the pulpit. The sculptures portray The Redeemer, John, Peter and a Saint from the Middle Ages, which is likely to be St. Catherine. The sides of the pulpit also have the latin words: *Nisi prius ordeat qui praedicat non potest accendere eum cui praedicat.*

## The Altarpiece

By the history records, the altarpiece was bought in 1774 from Uusikaupunki. The price was 200 thalers. After the renovation in 1859–1862 the other altarpiece was kept in the vestry. The current piece was attached to a new fabric because the altarpiece was stored in a moist shed. From under the current altarpiece can be seen another painting, dated 1651. The painting, portraying the Supper and apparently Finnish made, was placed on its original place in 2008.

## The Belfry

The wooden belfry is much older than the church, maybe even from the 16th century. The Swedish style shape is from the Middle Ages. In the biggest of the bells there is a text: "anno 1691. Glory belongs only to God". The smaller bell is from 1866. The bells were played by hand until the Pentecost of 2008.

## The Cemetery

Around the church there is a cemetery which has been expanded at least in the years 1833 and 1868. It is surrounded by a wall built in 1833 from big blocks of rock. The gateway is in the south side, in front of the belfry. In 1910 a staircase was built from rocks, with entrances in the west part of the south wall and in the southwest. Before 1830 the cemetery was significantly smaller and the fences were made from timber.

## The Parish building Paanula

At the center of the parishes operation is Paanula, finished in the year 2000. At the same spot was the old vicarage and its garden until 1960's.

## The phases of the parish of Lokalahti

The next time Lokalahti parish became independent with the order of the Imperial Senate was 1906, but in practice it happened in 1931, when Reino Vare became the long time vicar of the parish. He served in Lokalahti until his retirement in 1967.

Since 1981 the parish of Lokalahti with about 1000 members was united with the parish of Uusikaupunki, formed by the parishes of Uusikaupunki and Pyhämaa. The parish of Kalanti was also united with this association of evangelical churches. In the beginning of 2009 the association was dismantled and Lokalahti became the chapel parish of the Uusikaupunki church.



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The church tells a tale through it's existence and artifacts about the people and history of it's location.

An amazing protection has followed the artifacts, from which the oldest wooden ones have been preserved for nearly 500 years. The old and new artifacts together serve the church. They give us something to think about – what is our place as a parish member in the chain of generations, in this time which God has given us.

*May the almighty God, Father, Son and the Holy Spirit bless everyone visiting our church!*



*The Lokalahti church has an organ built in 1982 by Erola. They have 12 organstops. Fasade built in 1895 by K. G. Wikström.*



*St. Anna 15th century*



*God, Father 16th century*



*The Pulpit*

*The Altarpiece*



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