

## **KONTIOLAHTI LUTHERAN CHURCH**

Kontiolahti, part of the old parish of Liperi, was separated as a subordinate parish in 1737 and in 1857 it gained its independence. The first church of the village, built between 1776 and 1780, was located on the place of the present-day old cemetery. The church burned down in 1879.

The present church was built in 1881 after the drawing of Georg Wilenius, supervisory architect. The style, typical of the latter half of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, follows that created by E.B. Lohrman combining the old Finnish long-type church with international Gothic features.

Landowners gave logs for the building and horses hauled them to the site, sometimes even thirty kilometres. The shingles for the roof were also made by local people. For the foundations, sharp-angled blocks of stone were carried in rowing-boats from a nearby island. All baptised parishioners were to give a certain sum of money as well as do their share in the actual building. We appreciate their skilful work and wanted to respect the traditional colours and woodwork while renovating the church in 2009.

The church is 42 metres long and has three naves. The lattice windows have wedge-shaped arches. The total length of the pews is more than 700 metres. The altarpiece painted by Yrjö Ollila in 1929 represents the basically neo-classic style of the 1920's. The organ was built in 1877 by Gustav Norman from Tallinn. The oldest chandelier was made by a local artisan in 1881, and today the three chandeliers are lit on special occasions.

According to the tradition, you can find the last resting places of the war victims in the churchyard.

Most people in Finland belong to the Evangelical Lutheran Church. Since the 12<sup>th</sup> century the church has had an important role in Finland. The development of the national language, the school system, medical and social services started within the church.

The central church activity is the Sunday service, which often includes Holy Communion. In addition, there are different activities for children, young people, families and the elderly, for example Sunday schools, Bible teaching, study or discussion groups, outings and camps, singing, retreats. The church serves people far and near doing diaconal and missionary work as well as providing emergency aid when needed. Kontiolahti congregation has about 11000 members. There are about 30 full-time workers: pastors, church musicians, child, youth and diaconal workers as well as administrative and assisting personnel.