



# THE CHURCH OF HOLLOLA





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[www.hollolanseurakunta.fi](http://www.hollolanseurakunta.fi)

## BUILDING OF THE CHURCH

*The Church of St. Mary in Hollola* is one of the 86 Finnish stone churches completed during the Middle Ages. According to latest research, the present church – the first one built of stone instead of wood on this site – was built between the years 1495-1510: the vestry in ca. 1495, the main body in 1500, and armoury after 1505. The church belongs to the third generation of Finnish stone churches, which was built between ca. 1480-1560. The stone churches in Savo, Häme, Satakunta, Karelia and



Ostrobothnia that have many structural similarities, belong to the same generation. The church of Hollola is the third largest medieval parish church in Finland and the oldest public building in Päijät-Häme region.

The church, built in the mother parish of Greater Hollola, into the crossing of waterway Lake Päijänne - Lake Vesijärvi - Porvoonjoki river and the road Ylinen Viipurintie, was very centrally located. The massive stone church with high-pitched shingle roof, richly decorated gables, great cornerstones and strong granite walls, was a welcoming shelter for a traveller, kneeling down before the south side open-air altar or the altar in the armoury. Around the altar screen in the armoury, Christ is depicted sitting on the rainbow of the Last Judgement, telling about judgement and grace. Angels and devils are reminding the poor man of the importance of striving for Christian virtues.

## MEDIEVAL HERITAGE

The church was built in Roman Catholic times and signs of the bygone era can still be seen: four pillars divide the church into two naves and the ribs of the two easternmost circular star vaults are decorated with paintings that indicate the area of the then main altar. The dedication crosses painted on the walls, eleven in total, witness of the dedication of the building and of the fact that Church is built upon the teaching of the Twelve Apostles. Above the door to the vestry, remains of painting depicting two angels carrying a monstrance, can be seen. This reminds the visitor of the reality of Christ in the Communion and in the Holy Place. On the base of the easternmost pillar there is the oldest piece in the church. The baptismal font, carved by master of Vehmaa in late 14th century reminds us of baptism, the sacrament of joining the Church.

During the Middle Ages, the church was lavishly decorated with wood sculptures. Twenty-four figures still exist, however their original screens have been lost. The patron saint of the church, St. Mary, has for instance been the main figure in the altar screen consisting of eight smaller figures. Today these are scattered in all parts of the church. The present antemurale, with the same motive as in the painting above the vestry, gives us a glimpse of the splendour of the medieval furnishing of the building. The doors of the church are beautiful examples of medieval wood carving and forging work, especially the door between armoury and nave. This one, with motives of lilies and the hunt of St. Hubert, is generally admired.



## CHANGES IN MODERN TIMES

The Catholic age ended soon, for in 1527 *Gustav Vasa* ordered Sweden to join “the pure doctrine” and by the turn of the century, Lutheranism was a state religion. According to Reformation policies, the interior was remodeled in the 1600s: the handsome pulpit by the Turku-born carpenter *Nils Bengtsson* was originally on the south side, an altarpiece that was an imitation of a painting by the German *Christoph Schwarz* was put above the altar – which was moved to the eastern wall – and pews were installed for hearers of the Word. The coats-of-arms, originally from *Diedrich von Essen*’s funeral service, were left hanging on the walls. The ceiling is not original, because it was destroyed by fire in 1642.



## THINGS OF THE PRESENT

The church was renovated to its present form in the 1930s after careful research and according to plans of professor *Carolus Lindberg*.

The glass paintings in the windows surrounding the altar are by *Lennart Segerstråle* from 1929.

The organ is installed in 1994 and has 33 registers. It is designed and constructed by the organ building firm *Martti Porthan Oy*.

In the years 2004-2006 a conservation project was undertaken. The project was partly funded by (the) European Union and the State Provincial Office of Southern Finland. The inner walls of the church hall and armoury were cleaned and all medieval sculptures were preserved. There are old sacred items on display in a showcase in the back of the church.



The belltower was built in 1829-1831 according to C. L. Engel drafts. The ground floor of the tower has a cold room for the deceased as well as a room for close relatives.

The church of Hollola is the main church of the congregation and Holy Communion is taken every Sunday. In addition it is a popular venue for weddings as well as funerals, because there is no separate cemetery chapel in the parish.

The parish is geographically scattered and has more than 20 000 members. Therefore there must be facilities in several locations. The parish of Hollola has another meeting hall in the urban district of Salpakangas, and a third one is in Vesikansa, another side of Lake Vesijärvi. Since the beginning of 2007, Hämeenkoski was merged to the parish of Hollola and is now a chapel parish. There is a church in Hämeenkoski, as well as the ruins of the late medieval St. Lawrence stone church.



The church of Hollola is open for visitors from May 2nd to August 31st, Monday-Friday 10-18. During wintertime we are open on Sundays after service 11-16. Address: Rantatie 917, Hollola.



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