A church in the middle of Puumala throughout the ages
Church of St. John the Baptist
The church has served as the centre of Puumala and a significant landmark for hundreds of years. The locality already had its own church in 1616, when the parish was established. It is not known whether the church was built then or whether it dates back to the 14th century. The first church was demolished by the Russians during the Greater Wrath in 1712 when they invaded Finland. The poor parish could not afford to repair the church and so it decayed even more over the years. In the end, a new church had to be constructed and was completed in 1751. Like its predecessor at the beginning of the century, this church was also destroyed, this time by Gustav III’s war that took place between Finland and Russia in 1788-90.
The beauty and ruggedness of the surrounding countryside with its seasonal changes touches everyone in Puumala, both the current inhabitants and the builders of the church.

Austere and beautiful

The construction of the third, current church was a long-term objective and test of strength for the parish. The blueprints were completed in 1823, the construction started six years later, and the church was inaugurated at midsummer in 1832. The most recent renovation took place during 2006 and 2007.

The interior of the church is plain and simply decorated. In addition to the locals, it welcomes all summer dwellers, tourists, and other visitors.

“He will cover you with his feathers, and under his wings you will find refuge; his faithfulness will be your shield and rampart.” (Psalm 91)
The lily-of-the-valley, bell, and angel shaped ornaments on the ceiling of the church were made by a local carpenter.

The church seats over 1000 parishioners.
Phases of the church

• Construction started in 1829
• Inaugurated at Midsummer in 1832
• Designed by Gustav Wilhelm Viksten, technical drawings were verified by Charles Bass, the head of the state intendent office.
• The construction was managed by renowned church builder Taavetti Rahikainen
• The ‘Christ on the Cross’ altar-piece was painted and presented to the parish in 1878 by Johannes Luukkonen, a sawmill manager born in Puumala.
• The organ front panel belongs to the instrument that was manufactured by the Zachariassen’s organ factory in 1898; today, the front panel hides a 36-stop organ that was supplied by Kangasala organ factory in 1962.
• The most recent renovation was conducted in 2006–2007 by Jaakko Merenmies (architect) and Aslak Sarre (master painter).
Church yard

The old cemetery located between the church and the belfry features a soldiers’ graveyard area, which is the last resting place of 231 local soldiers fallen during the war. The ‘Future’ monument by Armas Tirronen was erected in 1959. Nearby is a place dedicated for reminiscing, and an urn grove.

The belfry was completed in 1806. It was constructed and probably also designed by Jussi Salonen from Savitaipale. The belfry has one large bell and one smaller one. It is not known when the latter was made, but the bigger one was moulded in Stockholm in 1801. The text engraved on its side (upper left corner of this page) manages to touch the hearts of visitors even today.

"Come, ye children, hearken unto me: I will teach you the fear of the LORD."

(Psalm 34, King James Version of the Holy Bible, 1611)
“And now these three remain: faith, hope and love. But the greatest of these is love.” (I Cor. 13)