

History of the Vormsi Orthodox Church parish and the Ascension church

Vormsi Orthodox church parish was the only one in Estonia of the kind. That was the only Orthodox Swedish church parish. The foundation of the community was very hopeful for future, but because of unfavourable circumstances in the end of 20 century it has lost the life strength and the most part of islanders came to Lutheran church.

The parish was founded in 1886, in that period of time (1883-1893) there were 18 Orthodox Church parishes founded in North Estonia. In 1886 about 200 of island inhabitants changed their faith for Orthodox. The quantity of the Orthodox Church members increased later on and was about 500 in 1890. The main reasons for changing their faith for local inhabitants were severe conditions of local peasants life and the hope for better life, grounds and more freedom. An important reason was that the authority of Lutheran Church was plundered by the free church missionaries and their rich activities.

The most members of the Orthodox parish lived in Sviby. The next large center was in Förby. First Church services were conducted in peasant's huts. The Church in Hullo was built in 1889-1890 and sanctified on 29 July 1890 for the Christ Ascension. To North-West from the Church the another church building built, the graveyard was founded near the Church. A part of the church appointments suffered in 1918. When the primary church school ended activities in the church building, Vormsi primary school was moved there.

In 1905 when in Russian Empire the free choice of faith was increased, the most part of Orthodox church parish members came back to Lutheran Church. This way 271 islanders changed their faith that year. The main reason for their return could be insufficient Swedish language knowledge of the priest and the Lutheran roots of local inhabitants.

After the I World War, the Orthodox Church community was small, about 10 persons. As a rule, only 3-4 prayers visited the Church services but some Lutheran also visited for listening church choir and sermons. The most part of the sermons was in Swedish. It was the requirement for the parish priest to speak Swedish language. This requirement was difficult to fulfil because part of church services and texts was not accessible in Swedish. So the church services were also conducted in Estonian and church Slavonic languages.

Priests that serviced in the parish:

1886-1887 Nikolai Orlov

1887 Karp Tiisik

1888 island was visited by bishop Arseni

Jakob Varask

Jakob Mutt

1934-1936 Aleksander Maripuu

1944-1946 Juulius Niinemets

1946-1947 Joann Meltsaar

1947 Augustin Ruus

1948 Vladimir Ignaste

1948-1951 Vjatseslav Jakobs

In 1950 Haapsalu priest Aleksander Tarkmees attempted to resume the parish spiritual life but had no success. So the parish activities ended for a long period of time and the empty Church was used as kolkhoz storehouse.

Now the church is in ruins. In 2009 Vormsi Õigeuskiriku Taastamise MTÜ was founded for church reconstruction. More information www.maria-magdaleena.net, www.eoc.ee

You can send any help to the following bank account:

Vormsi Õigeuskiriku Taastamise MTÜ, SEB 10220120195018