



FIND THE TRUE TREASURE OF THE CHURCH

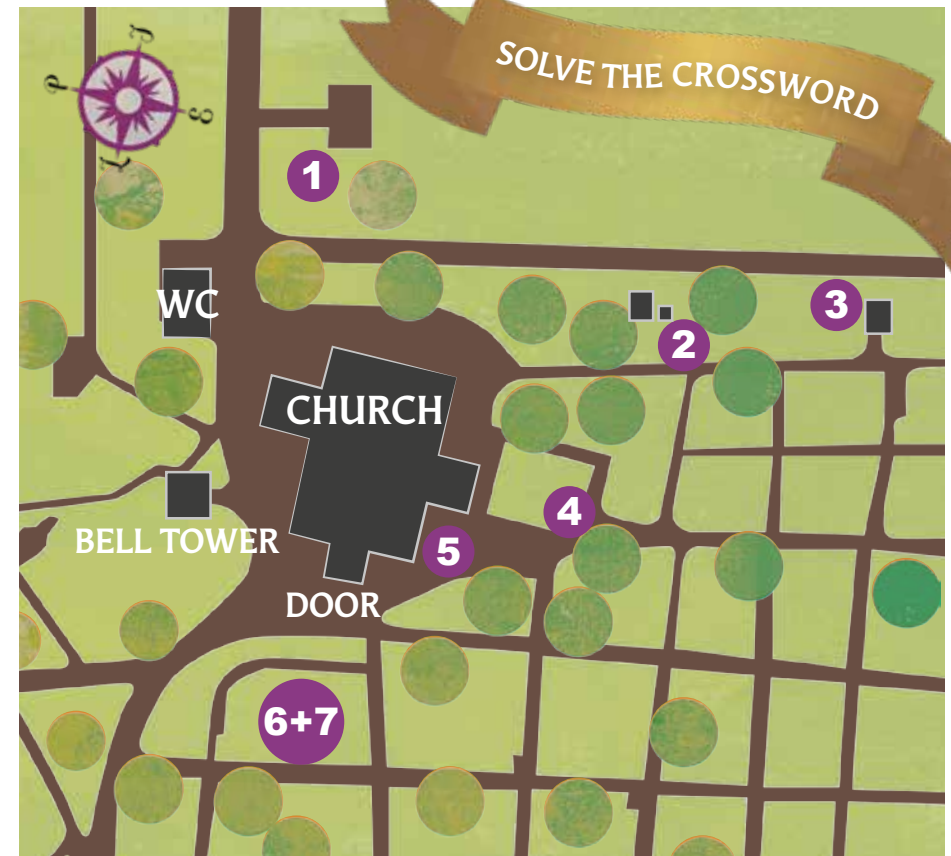
Schoolchildren at St. Lawrence Church

TREASURE OF THE CHURCH

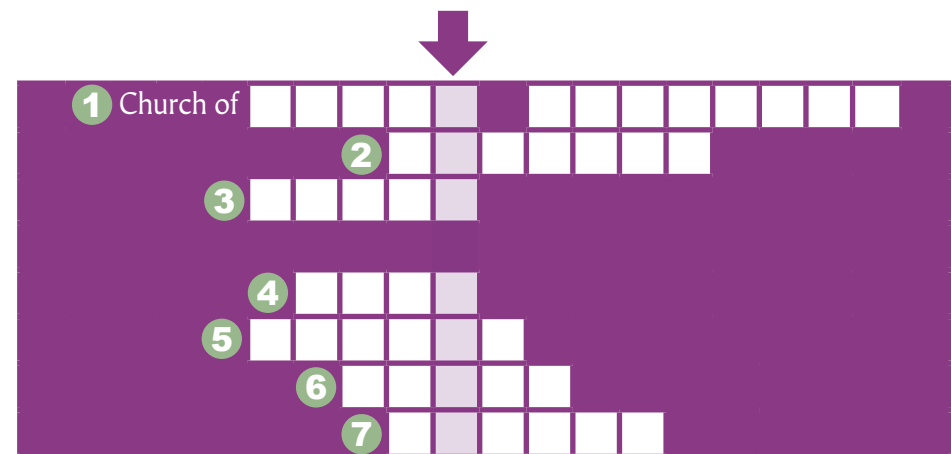
The oldest church in Vantaa was built so many years ago that the city of Helsinki didn't even exist. No one knew about America yet either! Columbus discovered America in 1492, but the church walls were being built back in the 1450's when Columbus was still a young boy. Back in the day that church was the only notable building in its area. People rode horse carriages from far away to attend church services. Not only did they come from all over Vantaa, but also from nearby areas we now know as Helsinki, Espoo, Tuusula and Nurmijärvi.

That church was **the church of Saint Lawrence**. The church's name pays respect to St. Lawrence who lived in Rome around year 200. Lawrence is a popular saint and many churches around the world have been named after him. In Finnish we know him as Laurentius, in Italy he is Lorenzo and in Swedish he is called Lars.

Lawrence practices diaconia. It means having a special calling to help the poor and the needy. He needed money to do his job, and he was allowed to use the church's money to help people. The Romans found out about the money and immediately thought that Christians and the church must have hidden treasures and wealth. Lawrence tried to explain that the church didn't own any gold or diamonds, but the Romans did not believe him. Instead, they ordered Lawrence to give the treasure to them. Lawrence acted like he was willing to meet the Romans' demand. He said he would bring them the treasure if they gave him three days. For three days Lawrence walked around the city of Rome gathering all the poor and the sick. He arrived in a court hearing with this ragged group and proclaimed: "This is the true treasure of the church!" The people laughed, but the judges were enraged. Lawrence had mocked the justice system and deserved a punishment. He was sentenced to death by burning, and that's why he is often pictured with a grill rack in his hand. St. Lawrence is the protector of the poor, the firemen and schoolchildren.



FIND THE TRUE TREASURE OF THE CHURCH!





DIACONIA IS HELPING

Everyone needs help sometimes. Fortunately people feel a need to help each other: we all have a little deacon in us. Although it has been a long time since Lawrence practiced diaconia, helpers are needed. About 40 diaconia workers and four hundred volunteers work in Vantaa. They try to alleviate people's distress. It can be loneliness, sadness or illness. You can help in many ways: a kind word or a smile can bring a happy mood. Listening to a friend can sometimes be the best comfort. Let's not abandon lonely people!



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