



Fredrik Gabriel Hedberg

The significance of baptism is emphasized in the Church of St. Catherine. In baptism a person is called into membership with the congregation and into communion with God, becoming a part of the great tree of life.

Fredrik Gabriel Hedberg, who served as the vicar of Kaarina from 1854 to 1862, highlighted the importance of baptism in his teachings:

"Baptism is not a cheap human act or ordinary, powerless washing with water. It is a divine act and a cleansing rebirth in the Holy Spirit. - - When the holy, triune God commands the baptism of a poor, sinful person in His exalted name, it truly means that God Himself baptizes and adopts them as His child and heir to the kingdom of heaven."

F.G. Hedberg is particularly known as the founder of the evangelical revival movement. In his youth, he experienced a revival while reading the writings of Martin Luther and became convinced of the perfection of Christ's atonement and God's grace.

As the vicar of Kaarina, he initiated a traveling school, improved confirmation school practices, and organized Bible study sessions on Sunday afternoons. It is said that during these sessions there were as many people present as the church could hold.

Hedberg's time as the vicar of Kaarina was marked by difficulties and sorrow. In January 1857, the Hedberg family lost their young son Gottfried, and a year later, in March 1858, his wife Maria passed away. Their tombstone still stands to the north of the church. In the spring of 1860, the vicar experienced another bitter loss when his son Gabriel passed away. Despite everything, he trusted in God's goodness and care.

The Åland war, taking place between 1854-1856, also affected the Kaarina parish shepherded by Hedberg. During the war, English navy ships arrived in the region's waters, and Russian and Finnish troops moved through the parish. Troops were even quartered in Kaarina's vicarage and nearby houses and cottages.

During the war, Hedberg continued his literary work. In 1855, his work "Baptismens Wederläggning" was published in Sweden. In his book Hedberg defended and profoundly taught the Lutheran view of baptism. From Kaarina, he also edited an evangelical publication called Christian News (Kristillisiä Sanomia).

In late 1855, English ships left the waters of Turku and Kaarina. During these uncertain times, the congregation wanted to observe the great celebration of Christendom in brightness and splendor, and on that Christmas, the church was illuminated by as many as 340 candles and a newly acquired neo-Rococo style chandelier, which still hangs from the ceiling of St. Catherine's Church to this day.

Jesus says: "I am the light of the world. Whoever follows me will never walk in darkness, but will have the light of life." John 8:12."

