

March Greetings!



Richard Ondicho's Newsletter 2/2025
13.2.2025

March 5 marked Ash Wednesday, signalling the start of Lent in the Christian church. I always find it important to understand the reasons behind our practices—whether in the church or in everyday life. Lent term used for the church season when believers are encouraged to reflect on their faith and deepen their connection with God and others Christians. This period is regarded as one of preparation, self-examination, growth, and transformation. In the Lutheran church we observe this tradition, the colour of the alter linen is purple is used as the liturgical symbol of Lent. Our Christian faith is centered on the life, death, resurrection, and ascension of Jesus Christ.

Today, many Christians see Lent as an opportunity for spiritual growth and renewal. While fasting or giving up certain foods or activities remains a common practice, others dedicate more time to prayer and meditation. Additionally, many choose to focus on acts of kindness and service, demonstrating God's love in meaningful ways.

I have been wondering what I can do differently as a pastor of International Church. I then started to read of what other Lutherans have done during this season. Much has been shared how others celebrate Lent season.

I learn that there are three practices that have shaped Christians during Lent for centuries: prayer, almsgiving (giving to the poor), and fasting. All these three taken together, they are intended to push Christians away from sin and into a right relationship with God, neighbours, and self. In prayer we approach God as sinner and speak to Him to forgive us and lead us to Himself. In almsgiving puts inequality to death, and lastly fasting puts selfishness to death. In Christ, we then are raised to new life to continue in trust toward God and love toward our neighbours.

Further, prayer is one of the most common habits for us to take on during Lent. Often, Lent is a season when I take time to pray for each member of our congregation-- at even five minutes for each person, that's over 30 hours of prayer for my International Congregation.

I pray and hope you'll join me in prayer: for each other, for our Mission organization and especially members of LEAF in Finland, the board of LEAF the directors of LEAF, Rev.Tom Saila, Dr.Ville Auvinen and Rev.Juhana Tarvainen, those working in our main office in Freda 42 and our Missionaries around the world. I pray to God he will continue to give me the heart of prayer all the time during this lent season.

Coming to work at Luther-Church Helsinki, God in His wisdom has called people from Sri-Lanka. Three of these people are Christians while others are Buddhists. I don't have any prior experience with Buddhists, but I have taken time in teaching them at the baptism class. It has taken two months now but I feel that they are overlapping their faith and the Christian faith. This another good school for me to know people of this faith. It is during this time that I

can understand that we have huge presence of people from Sri-Lanka in Finland. It is another eye opener that there are many foreigners in Finland to be reached with the gospel.

During this lent please pray for us that God will continue to use me and the congregation at Luther-Kirkko so continue in this important work.

God's blessings to all of you

In Christ I remain His servant and yours.

Riku

Would you like to participate in mission work? If you want to support Richard Ondicho's work, you can choose an amount to Leaf's donation bank account: IBAN: FI13 8000 1500 7791 95 BIC: DABAFIHH.

- Use your personal reference number, so that your support will automatically be shown in your local congregation's mission support total or write into the transaction message field "Richard Ondichon rengas" + your home congregation.
- You can find further information about donating monthly from <https://www.taivaallinenlahja.fi/kuukausilahjoittaminen> or from Leea Gröhn, leea.grohn@sley.fi / 09 2513 9228.
- For a personal reference number please contact Anu Laine anu.laine@sley.fi / +358442982601

**Your support enables to share the Gospel to those who do not know Christ yet.
Thank you for your support! May God bless your gift.**

Collection Licence: RA/2021/1127