

December Greetings!



Richard Ondicho's Newsletter 8/2025
10.12.2025

“Sing aloud, O daughter of Zion; shout, O Israel! Rejoice and exult with all your heart, O daughter of Jerusalem! The Lord has taken away the judgments against you; he has cleared away your enemies. The King of Israel, the Lord, is in your midst; you shall never again fear evil.” (Zephaniah 3:14-15, ESV)

Dear friends,

As we enter this blessed season of Advent, these words from Zephaniah remind us of the joy and hope we have in Christ. Even in the midst of uncertainty and trials, God is with us. He has removed what would harm us, calmed our fears, and calls us to rejoice, for the Lord Himself is in our midst.

Advent comes from the Latin word meaning “come in” or “arrive.” It is the season when we celebrate Christ’s coming into the world as a child in Bethlehem and prepare our hearts for His promised return. Advent begins four weeks before Christmas, guiding us in reflection, anticipation, and hope. This year, the season has come quickly. We are already at the Second Sunday in Advent, yet here in the south, snow is still nowhere to be seen. Even so, the rhythm of the Church year reminds us that Christ’s coming is certain, regardless of the season or circumstances. Advent is a blessed time of expectation that fills our hearts with hope and joy.

Outwardly, we gather for special midweek Advent services at St. Paul’s or at the International Lutheran Congregation in Helsinki to hear God’s Word and sing of Christ’s coming. The Advent wreath marks each Sunday with a candle representing the prophecies, Bethlehem, the shepherds, and the angels. Advent calendars, with Scripture and devotions, help us count the days and prepare our hearts for the Savior.

Advent is a season of reflection, repentance, and faith. We acknowledge our need for a Savior, remember God’s promises, and rejoice that He sent His Son at Christmas. We celebrate Jesus’ death and resurrection for our salvation and look forward to His return to make all things new.

This season also guards us from “Christmas creep” and exhaustion. While many rush toward Christmas in hopes of bringing light into the winter, Advent guides us to prepare meaningfully. Each candle we light reminds us of the growing hope in Christ. Week by week, the Light of the world shines brighter, leading us to rejoice in the Savior who has come and who will come again.

Last Sunday at the Luther Church International Congregation, we witnessed two children being baptized into the Christian faith. It was a warm and meaningful moment, reminding us all of our own baptism. In this season of waiting, these baptisms beautifully show how Christ continues to come to His people—through water and the Word—claiming us as His own.

At the same time, November brought heavy challenges. Five members of my congregation were deported to Iraq despite appealing all the way to the Supreme Court. I thank God for allowing me to teach and baptize them before they were taken away. I also coordinated with Pastor Omar in northern Iraq to receive and support them, as they cannot return to their families, who now regard them as traitors. Pastor Omar has graciously cared for others in similar circumstances, and he continues to watch over these brothers facing persecution. During Advent, we hold them especially in prayer, trusting that Christ—the Light who shines in the darkness—is with them even now.

On Christmas day we have invited people who are not members of our International Congregation. The response is that we have a confirmation of over 70 People from Sir Lanka who will attend our Christmas day Divine service and also Christmas dinner although we can't fit downstairs, but some might remain at the entrance of the Church so that we operate from both floors during dinner. By the help of the connection of brother Krishan from Sir Lanka we are getting to know some people who are Buddhists, but we want to be active in evangelizing.

I also want to take this opportunity to sincerely thank you for your prayers and financial support throughout the year 2025. I look forward to continuing to serve in the year ahead, 2026, and pray that I will grow more focused, faithful, and diligent in all that God calls me to do.

In Christ, I remain His servant and yours.

Richard

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.
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