

# January Greetings!



**Richard Ondicho's Newsletter 1/2026**  
**21.1.2026**

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## **Dear friends and Missionary supporters,**

As we move forward into a new year, I would like to take time to reflect honestly on the year 2025, which has now come to an end. When I look back, I am often left wondering how we were able to accomplish all that we did as a congregation. It was truly by God's grace and strength that we were sustained throughout the year.

We experienced many encouraging moments. There were several baptisms, each one a powerful reminder of God's saving work in the lives of individuals. Week after week, Bible studies continued faithfully. When I account for all the Bible studies held on Tuesdays, Wednesdays, and Thursdays, the number is significant. It represents a great amount of labor, preparation, teaching, and pastoral care. Yet it is work that the Lord enabled me to attend to, even when strength felt limited.

December was particularly memorable. We had many activities, and one gathering stood out due to the overwhelming attendance of our Sri Lankan friends. I had anticipated around seventy people, but the number exceeded that expectation. We were unable to fit everyone into the youth hall downstairs, which led us to gather both downstairs and upstairs. Most of the attendees were Buddhists, and this provided a rare and meaningful opportunity to mingle freely, build relationships, and speak openly about Jesus in an atmosphere of respect and openness.

At the same time, 2025 was not without pain and complexity. Many members received approval for their asylum applications, and we rejoiced with them. Others were not approved. Some were deported, while others chose to return voluntarily after waiting for long period without resolution. These realities affected our congregation deeply and shaped the rhythm of our ministry.

I can openly confess that not everything worked out as I prayed or expected. There were moments of frustration, especially when the commitment of some church members became irregular, and when others moved away from Helsinki to different regions. There were times when I felt discouraged, even to the point of feeling anxious about Sundays and what challenges might arise. Ministry in a multicultural context can be emotionally demanding, especially when cultures clash in how pastoral counsel is received and understood.

Serving in such a setting is truly not a bed of roses. Many members come from environments where their religious upbringing is very different from the Christian faith. These differences often surface during casual conversations and even during Bible studies. Through all this, I have been learning continuously learning patience, humility, and how to listen more deeply.

There was one experience that taught me an important lesson about cultural understanding. On one occasion, I simply said to someone that I was sorry to hear about what had happened to him. This was not an apology, but an expression of concern. However, it was misunderstood and caused offense, leading the individual to walk away from the church. It took several weeks of prayer and conversation before understanding was restored, and eventually he asked me to forgive me. This incident reminded me how easily words can be interpreted differently across cultures.

Another ongoing challenge has been how sermons are sometimes perceived. Some feel that preaching is directed at their private lives, even though I have no knowledge of what they may be doing personally. This can lead to the belief that the message is meant to criticize or mock, rather than to teach, encourage, and build up the body of Christ. These are thorny realities of serving a multicultural church.

This summer will mark **ten years of our ministry**. Even after all this time, I continue to learn how to work with people and how to communicate more wisely. Despite the challenges, I can truly say that this ministry has been deeply rewarding—especially when I see people come to Christ and grow in faith.

There is one regret that remains with me. I was slow to baptize a Muslim woman who was under catechism training. She attended only four weeks before she was deported and did not receive all the teachings. This has occurred many times over the years, particularly as Migri has tightened asylum rules. These experiences have taught me the urgency of ministry among asylum seekers. I now work prayerfully, baptizing when the Lord allows me to see clearly that someone has understood the Christian faith and is ready.

My work within the Lutheran Church immigrant ministry is very different from serving those who have been Christians since childhood. I serve people who have been Muslims or followers of other religions for most or all of their lives. I am not writing to express success, but to share honestly the daily struggles and

challenges of this calling. Not that I have been successful, but that despite the difficulties, I continue to soldier on by God's grace.

I have never worked miracles, nor do I claim any special ability of my own. I simply recognize that I have been used as an instrument in the Lord's vineyard. Any fruit that has come from this ministry is His work alone. I remain deeply grateful for your prayers, encouragement, and faithful support, which sustain this ministry and strengthen me to continue.

All in all, I want to say this clearly and sincerely: it is because you prayed that I have been able to serve here. It is because you prayed that difficult issues were resolved when they seemed impossible. It is because you prayed that I received the strength and energy to move forward without breaking down, even during seasons of discouragement and emotional strain.

There were moments when the burden felt heavy, when challenges came from many directions at once, and when human strength alone would not have been enough. Yet time and again, God renewed my strength. I truly believe this was the fruit of your prayers. Your intercession upheld me, steadied my heart, and enabled me to continue serving faithfully when I might otherwise have given up. I was also reminded by the word of God that: **"No, in all these things we are more than conquerors through him who loved us"**. Romans 8:37.

I sincerely thank you for standing with me and being part of my supporting ring. Knowing that I am not alone, that others are praying and caring, is one of the reasons we are able to gather, serve, and hold our meetings with enthusiasm and hope. Your prayers have created an atmosphere where ministry can continue even in the midst of uncertainty.

It is also because of your prayers that lives have been touched in very practical ways. Some received asylum approval, others found employment, some experienced healing, and others were simply able to come to church and hear the Gospel. These are not small things. They are signs of God's grace at work through the faithfulness of His people who pray.

From the depth of my heart, I thank you. Please continue to remember this ministry in your prayers, trusting that God, who has carried us this far, will continue to lead us forward according to His will.

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## **Now at year AD 2026**

As we step into 2026, my heart is filled with hope and anticipation. We do not know exactly what this year will bring, but we do know the One who holds the future in His hands. I pray that God will continue to guide us, protect our congregation, and open new doors for ministry and fellowship.

I look forward to continuing Bible studies, baptisms, and opportunities to share the love of Christ with those who are seeking, especially those coming from other faiths or facing uncertainty in their lives. I also

hope that we can deepen our relationships as a community, support one another more faithfully, and grow together in understanding and grace.

Please continue to uphold this ministry in your prayers. Pray for strength, wisdom, and patience for me and for all members of our congregation. Pray for protection, provision, and encouragement for those who are facing difficult circumstances. Pray that hearts will be open to the Gospel and that lives will continue to be transformed by Christ.

With your prayers and God's guidance, I am confident that 2026 can be another year of growth, service, and blessing. May the Lord continue to lead us forward, and may we always walk in His grace and truth together.

In Christ I remain His servant and yours,

Warm regards

*Riku*

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