



## Tests of Faith and Hope

Richard Ondicho's Newsletter 6/2020 – 12.11.2020

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*“O give thanks to the LORD, for he is good; for his steadfast love endures forever. Say also: “Save us, O God of our salvation, and gather and rescue us from among the nations, that we may give thanks to your holy name, and glory in your praise.” (NRS 1 Chronicles 16:34-35)*

As I sat down to write this newsletter for October/November in my mind I wondered how time has gone very fast and now we are at the end of the year 2020. My wife had returned to work after taking a year off from work in order to finalize her master's thesis. Our children have grown very fast and the two older boys Amos and Eliel are taller than their father while the youngest son Sinuhe is the same height as I am. I have been pondering on “How will I express the countless hidden emotions within me over this year? How do I give thanks to God for so many tests of faith?” The best way to express the conquering of fear, anxiety, hurt, pain and betrayal is to see the opposite of all of them such as; God's promises, steadfastness, friendship, honor, love, hope, and joy. God is my strength and my shield!

The immigrant work at Luther Church Helsinki has been so blessed and challenging at the same time. In October we had two men baptized to be the children of God. It is rewarding to see how some are so interested to learn the teaching from the small Catechism by heart. Ever since this mission work started, there are many people who have been baptized into Christian faith and leaving Islam has been a challenge. At the same time there are those who have been returned to their home country and are in daily contact with me asking for my wisdom on where they can attend the Church and how they can be safe. Some have even blamed me for not asking the whole of Luther-Church both Finnish and international congregations to fight



for them. It is not easy to be a pastor of people who don't know what carrying the cross means in practice. Like now the blame on me over the past one month is breaking my heart. I have done my work as their pastor and teacher but still others wish that I did more in order for them to be given work permit. I have done my best to explain that the Church does not have any power on this issue. It is hard for people who have been living in refugee camps for five years now while their families are crying from far to understand this. It is only by God's grace that I can still try my best.

I am sure that without your prayers nothing will make meaning to me. There is tiredness, frustrations of those who have backslidden, anger and mistrusts. It is only God who can change people's hearts. It takes time for people who have been raised up in a different religious environment to change completely. Yet I am very hopeful in many ways because this is not my work but God's work. The Holy Spirit is working in their hearts and ours too. There is much to learn of other cultures. God is still working in us.

Please remember to uphold us in your prayers that the other people who have not been keen in finalizing their catechism studies might be serious.

In Christ I remain His servant and yours.

Richard Ondicho

**Would you like to participate in mission work?** If you want to support Richard Ondicho's work? You can send an amount of your choosing 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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