



God Is Surely Here

Richard Ondicho's Newsletter 1/2021 – 26.1.2021

Beloved friends in the Lord,

We just crossed over from the year 2020. As we come to a new year, many do hope that things will be better than the challenging year that has been 2020. Undoubtedly 2021 will bring some positive changes to the world. At least that is the pastor's hope. But I am sure there will be disappointments too. Covid-19 vaccines have begun distribution. God is using the hand of the scientists to bring hope to the suffering of the world. As Christians, we can approach this new year with the same blend of realism and hope as before – not so much because of the news of Covid-19 vaccines but because of Jesus.

Kirsi, Amos, Eliel and Sinuhe have been healthy and busy with work and school. I can't thank God enough for the good health. During Christmas we opened the door of our home for some members to visit and seat around the table to drink and eat while sharing what the Lord has done to us. We felt strengthened in our work at Luther-Church. We pray that in the future we will be able to resume our Divine services as things are getting better in terms of medicine.

We thank you all for your prayers and financial support. I am convinced that without your support nothing special will happen here at Luther-Church. Kindly keep us in your prayers even this year 2021.

Now we are in the season of Epiphany which goes from the beginning of January to Ash Wednesday. God has revealed the incarnation of His Son by the light shining of a star and this season of Epiphany unfolds Jesus' identity and mission. We want that same star to shine the light of Divine justice, love, and service in our hearts in this year as well as it shone over all the lands.

One of my favorite bible verses is **Genesis 28:16** which has Jacob blurting out *“surely God is in this place and I did not know it.”* It is a favorite because I think it captures our living experience in our modern world. *It takes an Epiphany, a revelation of God, for*

us to see the larger reality of our world and our existence. For most that Epiphany is Baptism, but there are more dramatic ones.

Having an Epiphany is great, but the real task of an Epiphany is what follows it. The Magi rejoiced and they followed the star. The disciples left the mount of transfiguration, returned to the plain, and continued to follow Jesus. The Christian life is one of receiving the Epiphany and following. **God is surely here.** The Father's providence continues over the seasons and the years. As I have continued to work as a Missionary to the immigrant in Helsinki I truly believe that Christ is present with us in Word and Sacrament.

The Sunday before last the Lord added two members to His family through the sacrament of baptism. We have followed the recommendations on the group-meetings in our Services and yet the Lord has continued to use us to bring hope. God is surely in this place of Luther-Church and our lives. *The challenge of the Christian life is to see and receive and follow. The light continues to shine in the darkness and the darkness has not overcome it* (see John 1:5).



As Christians, and more specifically as Lutherans, here is the good news. We should not need to wait for the earth to orbit the sun. Dr. Martin Luther once spoke exhaustively about dying each night to sin and rising again each morning to new life. Luther saw each day as a new resurrection opportunity, a new day to receive God's grace and to try to live the love of Christ. And yes, there will be times throughout the day when we fall short, but God who is gracious and abounding in steadfast love is ready not just every beginning of the new year but every moment of our lives to greet us anew.

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. You can find further information about donating monthly from <https://www.taivaallinenlahja.fi/kuukausilahjoittaminen> or from Leea Gröhn, leea.grohn@sley.fi / 09 251 39 228. For a personal reference number please contact Sinikka Ahvenainen sinikka.ahvenainen@sley.fi / 050 348 4645.

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.

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