



Bubbles and Sports

Richard Ondicho's Newsletter 2/2021 – 26.3.2021

Beloved friends in the Lord,

The month of February passed very fast and now March is also almost over. Kirsi and I have been working as usual although at times it is hard to work from home while children are there. Our children as studying from home although Eliel is compelled to be in school because of his class. The Lord has kept us safe in His care and can't thank Him enough.

And now I am thinking...

After the year 2020 – the year of the beginning of the pandemic – has a new meaning for us who lived through it. I can safely say that no one in our Lutheran Church here at Luther-Church saw this pandemic coming. And, with it the disruptions, isolation, loss, etc. We have been through “it” now for one year. Friends and relatives have been quarantined; schools have been closed and students are compelled to study from home. Now the great wave is here still, and it feels like the hospitals will be overwhelmed, sports cancelled, small businesses such as restaurants closed and much more. Learning COVID guidelines became the priority for every member of our Church. Extreme health precautions have led to overall fewer illnesses in many families and in our Church as many Christians have been vigilant to keep away when they feel even slightly ill.

We've gotten used to bubbles ever since Covid started. By this I don't mean the type of bubbles that float, but bubbles which sports teams impose on their athletes to stay safe from infection so that they can practice and play their games. We have seen lately games played in huge stadiums with nobody in the stands



except cardboard images. It had to have been a big let-down for the athletes to compete in the silence of that stadium broken only by their own shouts. Usually, they relied on the energy and noise of a huge crowd to call out their best efforts. Now it is only them and their love of the game. Knowing that television viewers may find the quiet unnerving, the broadcast companies inserted taped crowd noise as a backdrop synchronized to the action on the field. This is the impact of Covid-19.

We Christians too have retreated into our bubbles of isolation in order to stay safe which is understood. While the quiet and lack of human stimulation can be unnerving, it can also be something we get used to and even find comforting. We can limit and choose what information reaches us in our bubble. If we want to binge on listening to weekly sermons from our Church that is our choice. Funnily, alone with ourselves, we can live in a world of our own making in some way. But the sad thing with this picture is that we gradually grow more out of touch with reality. This can lead into a delusion that we are in control of our lives, that is, until we aren't. Even though we can do many things online and have our foods delivered at our door side, a medical emergency can't always be dealt with by online consultation. Even though we can talk with our friends by phone or Zoom there is something basic which is lacking. We still long for personal contact, being able to look someone in the eye, and be truly present with them. In our international Congregation we have been able to have our weekly Bible studies with caution. Now it seems that we will stop for some time depending on government's restrictions.



The basic question we are facing at the church is when and whether people will return to worship in the Church after they have developed such a strong habit of not coming to church. Having discovered what our non-church neighbors have always known, that it's pretty nice to lounge around on Sunday morning sipping coffee and reading the newspapers; will that be a habit too hard to break. We can tell ourselves that our beliefs have not changed and that we still pray and know the basic Bible stories. But as we less often put those beliefs into practice, they can very subtly begin to erode and have less of an influence on the decisions we make.

People of faith hold to the basic principle that how we worship determines what we believe. Think of the sports analogy and how the team on the field needed the fans in the stands to call out their best effort. There is an energy that pulses between the action on the field and the fans. In a basic sense worship is similar. If involvement in

worship is only through being a spectator, then like a sports fan it makes no difference whether I am present or at home lounging in my easy chair with dull and half interest. But in a very real sense we are the team when it comes to worship. God, along with heavenly hosts and saints of old are in the stands. They call for our best efforts, our sincerest prayer and praise, our demonstration of being the Body of Christ together. The time is coming when we will need to step out of our safe bubbles and, without ignoring caution, nevertheless gather for worship. For that's what Christians believe and that is what they do.

Kindly pray for us that I could reach out to those who have been at home ever since last year. Pray that those young men who want to prepare for their confirmation class in English would have a possibility to accomplish it somehow.

In Christ I remain His servant and yours.

Richard Ondicho

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Thank you for your support! May God bless your gift.

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