

The Mission Paper of Zion

Saved to serve | Articles in English 2019 January | **Siionin Lähetyislehti** 



Photo: Pekka Sipilä

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Saved to serve our neighbor

Biblical faith is still vital for all people. Without faith it is impossible to please God (Heb. 11:6).

Faith opens the way to everlasting life, and this faith is born through the hearing of the message of God's kingdom. This is why life's greatest treasure for a believer is God's holy gospel.

The redemption and atonement of sin-fallen man has required the greatest sacrifice of all: the Son of God has completely given up everything of himself, given us His all, leaving nothing for himself (Large Catechism).

Living faith brings forth the fruits of the Spirit (Gal. 5:22). It gives the will and strength to serve God and our neighbor. Faith will not leave a believer idle, because God's love opens our eyes to see our neighbor in need of help.

A believer lives for Christ and for his neighbor: for Christ in faith and for his neighbor in love (Martin Luther).

The Bible and history teach us what God's love can accomplish. Love does not calculate or evaluate what a person will themselves be getting in exchange for their deeds.

The basis for acts of love is not a good person's glory or reputation. They are not recorded.

Paul states the principle for Christian deacon work: "Each one must give as he has decided in his heart, not reluctantly

or under compulsion, for God loves a cheerful giver." (2 Cor. 9:7)

Sacrifices in behalf of our neighbor and for the work of the gospel can accomplish much when God gives His blessing.

The Christian Doctrine sums up the entire life of a believer as follows: When God through His grace forgives our sins, this brings forth love, thankfulness, and obedience of faith in our hearts. These prompt us to serve God and our neighbor (CD 1948: 85).

The Bible tells of situations in which the Christians stopped to discuss how they could help those who are in need. An example of this is the depiction in the Acts of the Apostles, in which the deacon work of the early church was planned and organized (Acts 6:1–4).

Serving our neighbor arises from Biblical human value and responsibility, which include dimensions of spiritual, mental and temporal support.

Jesus, who did not come to be served, but to serve, confirmed the dual commandment of love (Mat. 22:37–39). With His own example He taught how we should treat our neighbor. The most precious way of serving one another is to keep the gospel readily available. □

Text: Juhani Liukkonen

Published in Siionin Lähetyslehti, June 20, 2018

Translator: Angela Hänninen

Photo: Heikki Vuonokari

Little Niilo volunteers at the big services

Text and photos: Eeva and Niilo Summala and Summer Services photo service
The original text was published in SK 7-8/2018 Translator: Angela Hänninen



In the fall, many bridges were built here over the ditches in the fields. And the volunteers drove around.

One Saturday in the fall, we burned stumps nearby, which created a lot of smoke. And that excavator's bucket was really big. I would have even fit underneath it!



The nearest bridge was right behind our house. A road was built there, and it was named Summalan-polku (Summala's trail) according to our last name.

We have an old fort next to Summalan-polku, and I told everyone I would get angry if someone else comes there. But I didn't get mad, and no strangers ended up coming there anyway.



In April we were able to ski in the fields where the snow drifts had a hard crust. We skied to the service site. One of the fields had a big hill that we skied down superfast.
Photo: Eeva Summala



« *IN FINLAND, PLANNING OF THE BIG SERVICES MAY TAKE MANY YEARS. EIGHT-YEAR-OLD NIILLO SUMMALA GOT TO FOLLOW ALONG AND TAKE PART IN THE BUILDING OF THE SERVICE SITE NEAR HIS HOME.*

In Sunday School, we had QR-code orienteering. We went through almost the entire course with Elmer. At one of the control points we started to hear service singing. We guessed right away that the service tent would be raised at that spot.



In May, Sunday School was held at the service site. The teacher talked about a boy who lay dead on top of a sheet, but Jesus woke him up from the dead.

It was a pretty big job to put signs that read "Resident", letters, and service programs into envelopes. They were delivered to the neighbors of the service area. There were over 100 of them.

In the spring I got to go do volunteer work with Dad and Joose. Then I got to cover up cables with the Bible Class kids.



It was fun to have a store and candy shop so nearby. I bought chips and a chocolate bar with money I got from my godfather, Pasi.

We had lots of relatives in our home and yard during the services. There were over 30 cousins. We played soccer and in the sand box and fort.



An interpreter in mission work in Russia

In 1991 I was asked to interpret a sermon into Russian. When I entered the interpretation booth it felt like I had lost all my Russian words, and tears came to my eyes in that seemingly hopeless situation.

A now deceased speaker happened to walk by and he comforted me: “Don’t cry, Paula, God will help.” These words are etched in my mind and I remember them

whenever I’m preparing to interpret. I can pray to God and ask that I would be able recall the correct words when interpreting so that they would convey the gospel message to the listeners.

When I read the Bible I notice the richness of the language and the multiple meanings of the words. I can understand some Finnish Bible texts more clearly when I read the Russian Bible. Believing



« *WHEN I READ THE BIBLE I NOTICE THE RICHNESS OF THE LANGUAGE AND THE MULTIPLE MEANINGS OF THE WORDS. I CAN UNDERSTAND SOME FINNISH BIBLE TEXTS MORE CLEARLY WHEN I READ THE RUSSIAN BIBLE.*



native Russians, many who also know Finnish, have been a great help as I have studied the language.

Interpretation situations are always different. Interpreters at Russia's autumn services help when people want to discuss with each other. The happy greetings, "Smirom Boga" (God's Peace), of believing friends who have arrived from afar and rarely see each other are touching.

At home services or in a nursing home there may be a few elders among the listeners who have ardently waited for the services. Many times at services we sing together in Russian and Finnish the songs that have become dear to the Russians: "Dearest Jesus, on Golgotha show Your wounds of love to us" and "With His blood the dear Lord Jesus, paid my debt and set me free".

When we are leaving we often hear: "Don't forget us; come again."

During the sermon I have to concentrate on listening and interpreting. What if I don't remember the whole sentence spoken by the speaker or I don't know how to interpret a spiritual expression?

Do I always understand the thought even in my own language? In such a situation I try to interpret the thought as understandably as possible without changing the meaning of the spoken words.

The listeners can help me if I grope for words. Once a native listener told me the correct Russian expression for the word "sheepfold". After that I felt there was no need to be nervous in such an atmosphere of love—I could be free to ask and the listeners were free to help.

Much time is spent traveling on service trips that last several days and it is necessary to try to be on schedule. If not before, then on the way home I realize how joyous and amazing it is how God calls people from very different situations into his kingdom and has given many the gift of faith. At mission services the gospel is preached to them to refresh and encourage them on their journey. □

Text and photo: Paula Konttinen
Published in its entirety in the online version of
Päivämies, 31.5.2018
Translation: KK

Serving others reinforces the bond between believers

When Paul writes about God's congregation to the congregation of Corinth in Greece, he refers to it as the body of Christ.

"Now you are the body of Christ and individually members of it." (1 Cor. 12:27)

Paul wrote that all who have received the grace of repentance are children of God regardless if they are slaves or free, Jews or Greeks.

This reminder was necessary because people from a wide range of different cultures and nationalities had settled in Corinth.

In the unity of the Spirit

God's congregation is a rejoicing congregation, yet also a battling one. The battle will end with the second coming of Christ.

Until then, the enemy of souls tries to introduce new ideas or broader thinking to Christianity, thereby seeking to break the brotherly, mutual love between the children of God that is effected by the Holy Spirit.

For this reason, in referring to the children of God in Corinth as members of

the body of Christ, Paul wanted the recipients of his letter to remember what it means to have become owners of spiritual unity with Christ and His congregation.

"For in one Spirit we were all baptized into one body—Jews or Greeks, slaves or free—and all were made to drink of one Spirit." (1 Cor. 12:13)

Faith gives a desire to serve

Every child of God has his or her own place and task as a member of the body of Christ; in the home congregation or in the work of God's kingdom more broadly.

It is said in the letter to the Corinthians: "Now there are varieties of gifts, but the same Spirit; and there are varieties of service, but the same Lord." (1 Cor. 12:4–5)

These gifts are both temporal and spiritual. "To each is given the manifestation of the Spirit for the common good." (1 Cor. 12:7)

Living faith gives a desire to serve. It spawns love toward all people and calls unbelievers to repentance. It exhorts those who have lost their faith to return to the Father's house.

« APOSTLE PETER'S INSTRUCTION IS CURRENT IN THIS TIME OF SELFISHNESS AND ENTERTAINMENT.

The mission command is meant for everyone

Jesus Himself teaches: "Go into all the world and proclaim the gospel to the whole creation." (Mark 16:15)

The work of the kingdom of God in the congregation of the new covenant is based on this mission command. Every member of the body of Christ has been given this task. It is not possible to perform this task according to God's will unless one takes care of his or own personal faith.

The Catechism states: "Christ's work in this world continues in His Church as the work of the Holy Spirit. In Christ's Church we have a living bond to Christ and other Christians. For this reason the Bible calls the Church the body of Christ." (Catechism 1948, art. 44)

Serving builds up faith and the congregation

Every believer is equipped "for the work of ministry, for building up the body of Christ." (Eph. 4:12)

Every task of service is valuable and necessary. I recall an elder I met some time ago. This elder said he prayed to the Heavenly Father that He would bless His kingdom and give servants of the Word strength to stand in grace and truth in this time that is eroding the word of God.

Even though this elder's hands were no longer capable of doing physical work in the kingdom of God, they could still be folded in prayer.

Doing the work of Christianity protects us

The work of the kingdom of God always provides protection that reinforces the bond of love.

This is important, as the most treacherous method used by the enemy of souls is to privatize people's life of faith and lessen interaction between the children of God.

Apostle Peter's instruction is current in this time of selfishness and entertainment: "For this very reason, make every effort to supplement your faith with virtue, and virtue with knowledge, and knowledge with self-control, and self-control with steadfastness, and steadfastness with godliness, and godliness with brotherly affection, and brotherly affection with love." (2 Pet. 1:5-7)

Decades ago a Finnish speaker said in his sermon: "Throughout all time the children of God, enlightened by the Spirit, have understood that those who will be saved are gathered, already on this earth in the time of grace, into the kingdom of grace established by Christ. Those who have been washed and cleansed with His precious atonement blood live here in the Father's house." □

Text: Tapani Kirsilä

This text was originally published in Siionin Lähetyislehti, 9/2018.

Translation: K.K.

A builder of houses helps to build the congregation

What is it like to be serving in a Laestadian congregation in Africa? Nicolas Deh from Togo tells us about his duties as a speaker of a local congregation and the process of establishing Laestadian Christianity in West Africa.

Togolese **Nicolas Deh** is on a mission trip to Senegal, Gambia, and Guinea in West Africa.

Deh has been a speaker for several years in Togo, where there were nine local servants of the word last spring. There are

plans under way to call four more brothers to serve this year.

– Local mission work in Togo means that all speakers keep services in different congregations of Togo on three weekends each month, Deh describes the local service schedule.

Nicolas (left) and Cecile Deh and their children Sinikka 8, Kevin 17, Kenneth 5, Tricia 11, Jessica 13, and Gracia 15.



After services kept in the village of Kartong in Gambia, Nicolas told his listeners that they can care for their faith by asking for forgiveness and forgiving each other's sins.



THE BUILDER FOUND FAITH IN SWEDEN

Nicolas Deh works in construction. He employs a team of builders. The client usually acquires the materials, while Deh provides the workers and supervises the progress of the construction project.

Nicolas Deh escaped from the unstable conditions of his home country to Sweden in the early 1990s. He sought for peace for his soul from many religious groups and finally found the Conservative Laestadians. Having received the grace of repentance, Deh soon returned to Togo to tell people about the peace he had found. He simultaneously maintained contacts with the Swedish believers.

When LLC, the central organization of North American believers, began mission work, and the work of believers in Kenya became established, the believers in Togo registered *l'Eglise Luthérienne Laestadienne du Togo*, the Laestadian-Lutheran Church of Togo. Deh is the chairman of the church.

OFTEN TRAVELING, SOMETIMES AT HOME

In addition to keeping local services, Nicolas Deh accompanies mission speakers as a guide and an interpreter on one-week mission trips twice a year.

He has also made a few ten-day trips to some other African countries where services are arranged.

– At first my wife found this pace of work hard, but our children are older now and the home chores easier to manage.

Nicholas says he has learnt to appreciate time spent at home. He wants to spend time with his family during the working week and during one weekend each month.

He and his wife, Cecile Deh, have six children, the youngest of them five years old.

SPEAKING DIRECTLY, RUBBING OFF THE EDGES

Nicholas Deh hopes that believers will remember in their prayers those in respon-

sible positions and will also view them with a forgiving mind.

He encourages people to discuss matters and to express their views freely.

– It may happen that someone keeps quiet in a meeting but later complains about things that have not been managed well.

Deh ponders on his own activities and duties and the way he has developed over time.

– I have found that feedback is important. How else could I see that some of my practices have been harmful? When someone presents criticism, it is possible to try and act better.

– Previously, I sometimes responded

In Joanna's (right) home Nicolas Deh spoke about faith coming through hearing and being based on grace, not on people's own actions.



quite abruptly if I felt that a practice or action was disruptive of God's kingdom.

DIFFICULTIES HELP IN THE WORK

The young, growing home zion in West Africa is suffering from growing pains.

– Especially here in Africa I have sometimes heard hard words in discussions. We need a lot of forgiveness. I think that the difficulties we have experienced in our home zion in Togo help us in our discussion with the congregations of other countries.

According to Deh, there has been positive development.

– It seems that God has been working in Gambia, too, and that mutual understanding is improving there. The atmosphere of forgiveness and mercy bears fruit.

”I SEE GOD’S WORK”

Deh has realized that he needs to learn about the basic principles of faith.

– When we have western mission speakers visiting here, local people may think there might be some financial benefit if they joined that group. We just need to tell them gently that God's kingdom



Nicolas Deh encouraged Pauline Gomez (left) to keep Sunday School in her home area. The devotion in her home was also attended by Rosa Mendy, Loli Gomez, and Abie Mendy.

is neither food, nor drink, but that faith comes before all other things, and that people are invited to accept personal forgiveness and faith.

The mission trip across several countries in August made Deh ponder on what he knows and is capable of.

– Now that I have done that trip, I realize that God had prepared hearts and opened His word. Although I am happy that God has been able to use me in His work, the most important thing is that my own name is written in the Book of Life. □

« *WE JUST NEED TO TELL
THEM GENTLY THAT
GOD'S KINGDOM IS
NEITHER FOOD, NOR
DRINK.*

Text: Mikko Juvonen, Juhani Ojalehto
Background of Nicolas Deh: Mia Kautto, Hanna
Ratilainen: Löysin Jumalan valtakunnan, SRK 2012
Translation: S-L.L.
Photos: Mikko Juvonen

The little old lady with doughnuts in her backpack

Martta Koistinaho (1918–2008) lived in a small village in northern Finland. For years and years she helped her friends and neighbors in many different ways.

Martta and her family lived in the village schoolhouse, where she also worked. She served the village people for 30 years as the school's cook and caretaker. Those who went to primary school in the early 1950s still remember the delicious berry porridge she cooked.

At that time Sunday was clearly different from the busy weekdays. Sunday service in the local church was especially important for Martta. If she did not have a ride, she walked the 5 kilometers from her village to the church.

Laestadian services have been ar-



ranged in Martta's home village since the late 19th century. When the number of believers increased, village communities began to appoint service committees to facilitate arrangements. Martta was appointed a member of this committee in the 1930s. She was also a member of the local Laestadian congregation's board for nearly 30 years.

A friend reminisces about the local midsummer services: "They were always so busy. Their cheeks glowed in the heat of the wood-burning stove which they used to make coffee. And how they talked! Martta was a very cheerful person, always smiling."

Service guests were usually treated to coffee, and Martta would bring some



baking with her. For tens of years she always came to services with freshly baked doughnuts in her backpack.

Children at services would keep an eye on Martta's black handbag, where she had candy for them.

Martta also served as a Sunday School teacher for 50 years. She explained the Bible stories in a lively way that gripped children's attention. She later also worked with Day Circle and Bible Class.

She participated in a building crew when the new *rauhanyhdistys* building was being constructed and also did woodwork as a hobby. She made the furniture for her small house and various utensils for her kitchen. She even built a playhouse and a slide for children on her yard.

As Martta aged, she retired from work but continued to be active in many ways. She still baked delicious bread for the congregation's bake sales. She also had

more time for her grandchildren. She went to help her daughter Katri's growing family almost daily.

Over the years Martta visited many homes in the village. She liked to discuss faith and also temporal matters. She was never bitter about her own life but liked to point out the humorous aspects of her experiences. Her positive attitude and sense of humor shed a special light on those near to her.

Her friends and neighbors remember that she never counted the hours when helping others. She did things voluntarily and willingly, without asking anything in return. Actively and cheerfully she served both village people of all ages and service guests. □

Text: Raija Lohilahti

The text is an abridged version of an article titled "Koko kylän Martta" (Martta of the whole village) in the book *Naiset viestinviejinä* (Women as messengers, SRK, 2017). Translation: S-L.L.





Photo: Pekka Sipilä

LLC Services in English (on different times)

<https://www.llchurch.org/listen>

Listen to services translated into English:

Oulu, Finland

On most Sundays at 17 and ca 18:30

http://www.oulunrauhanyhdistys.fi/player_en/

Helsinki, Finland

On most Sundays at 16 and 18

<https://www.helsinginrauhanyhdistys.fi/welcome-to-our-services/>