

Journey Mercies from India to Singapore

I was born into a Christian family and raised in Nagaland, India. I accepted the Lord and was baptized when I was 15. I grew up listening to songs, singing in the church, going for mission trips in the bus while singing all the way to the mission field and back. When it was time to go to college, I enrolled in a college that was offering music as a vocational course. I thoroughly enjoyed the course, so much so that I couldn't wait to practise it with my siblings. Whenever my siblings and I were home during school breaks, we would sing in church at Sunday services. I would also gather the young people to practise and sing almost every Sunday.

Being in the college choir, we presented songs at many events and in one such event, there was a call to respond to missions. I wanted to raise my hand, but I was shy and reluctant. I looked around to make sure all eyes were closed, and then God moved me to raise my hand. I continued with my studies and completed my Bachelors in English (Honours). Upon graduation, I went to teach English and Music for 3 years in two schools.

Ever since the day I raised my hand, God was slowly working in my life, pointing and leading me to be involved in various worship ministries. He even gave me an opportunity to conduct a 500-strong choir for the Centennial Celebration of Christianity in the state of Manipur where my parents originally came from. After the service, one of the leaders called me aside and asked if I wanted to further my studies in church music. I said I was praying about it but fearful of sharing my dream with my parents as they were preparing to send my brother to study church music in America. Soon, the Lord opened the way for me to come and study Bachelors of Church Music (Composition) at Singapore Bible College in 1999. After graduation in 2003, I went back to serve in my home church overseeing the youth ministry. We picked up where we left off and continued to sing many songs. God opened the door for more youths to come and join the choir. Many of the current church leaders are former members of that choir! After 6 months of serving in the church, Patkai Christian College-my alma mater, approached me and asked me to teach music for 6 months. I obliged happily. Having served for a year in both my church and college, God led me back to Singapore Bible College to do my Masters in Pastoral Counselling in 2004.

Upon graduation, the church where I did my Field Education in requested me to remain and serve with them and also oversee a crisis shelter for women. My job was to support the women ministry and oversee the crisis shelter but the management changed, and I found myself going back to worship ministry. I joined Glory Presbyterian Church and served there for 6.5 years. In 2013, Pastor Cheng Huat met me and asked if I would be interested to join TWPC-

EC to oversee the music ministry. I told him that I need to pray and think about it as my children were very young then. The next year, it was clear that the Lord was leading me somewhere. Word got around and Ps Cheng Huat quickly arranged to meet me. Of the few churches that approached me, TWPC-EC was the last and I was about to sign a contract with another church. Ps Kien Seng invited me to visit the church. We came one Sunday, and the children liked the church very much. I joined the church in June 2014. My first day at work was to play the keyboard at a funeral service!

Immediately, the choir committee met me and asked what my vision was for the church. I said I had none! I explained that I was coming to discover God's vision for TrueWay together with them. In December, the church leaders asked if I would consider getting ordained. I said I would pray about it and left it there. At that time, I couldn't see myself becoming a minister and the thought of having to go up to the pulpit to preach was intimidating. I was okay to make announcements and make some funny remarks but to preach God's word came across as a bit too overwhelming. The following year, the leaders asked me again. I came home and asked my husband as well as called up my mom too. They both told me the same thing- pray and respect the collective wisdom of leaders and to heed God's calling. They also asked what was stopping me from taking the leap of faith. I told the Lord I was willing to obey, and I said "yes" to the leaders.

I went to Trinity Theological College and finished my language studies (2016-2018). It was difficult as I had to juggle ministry work, studies and home duties. The Lord saw me through, and I completed it on time. I thank God for understanding lecturers like Dr. Tan & Michelle who were very patient and encouraged me all the way. During the licensing process, I was blessed to have Dr. Maggie who mentored me. I am also thankful for a very understanding Senior Pastor, my supportive colleagues, church leaders and the choir. I thank God for giving me a very supportive husband who left everything in India to come and support God's calling in my life. He has been my anchor and supports me with lots of prayers and a listening ear- actually 2 ears. My children's prayer every night includes this line, "Let mom preach your word to your people." Yes, as God enables me, I will continue to do so.

When I think about what God has done for me- saving me and using me to serve Him, I cannot help but respond in gratitude. That is my motivation to serve. I know that as a foreigner, many things are not promised long-term in Singapore but that has propelled me to work even harder. A part of me feels like this is home and yet a part of me feels like I might leave anytime. And so, I have made it a point to give my best so that should I leave tonight, I can say that I have given my utmost.

As I embarked on the licensing process, I was worried about the choir and worship ministry. I prayed that God would send people along the way. During the pandemic, God sent two young men – Jakin and Gaius. We were able to work together as a team and I thank God they are on their way to becoming leaders of tomorrow.

As a woman, I realized that there are challenges faced by women in the church. Many of them find it difficult to share their struggles with male leaders and I can totally empathize with them. So, I began journeying with ladies (young and old) in the church and it has enriched me tremendously. I hope and pray that more women will rise and take up leadership roles. I thank God for sending young women like Koh En Lin and Gracia Lee who are willing to step up as worship leaders.

When I raised my hand many years ago to indicate my willingness to become a missionary, little did I know that I would land in Singapore. I know I do not fit the traditional definition of a missionary, but I am in more ways than one. I am involved in making disciples in the backyard- in TWPC- EC. It takes years to train a disciple and I am thankful for the time and privilege to journey with many people including couples and children too.

True Way welcomed me to serve together even though I was a foreigner. Only God would have made it possible. And so, my prayer is to make TWPC-EC a community of faith where all are welcomed, and no one is rejected due to age, colour, race, background or orientation. With God's help and through the different ministries, I hope to encourage everyone to connect with one another on a personal level so as to foster meaningful relationships that glorify God.

As a foreigner in Singapore for over 23 years, I have no idea what tomorrow holds. Meanwhile, I am most happy to serve Him because outside of His will, I desire to do nothing. The words of this song sum up my journey:

*“The night is dark but I am not forsaken
For by my side, the Saviour He will stay
I labour on in weakness and rejoicing
For in my need, His power is displayed.
To this I hold, my Shepherd will defend me
Through the deepest valley He will lead
Oh the night has been won, and I shall overcome
Yet not I, but though Christ in me.”*

(by Michael Ray Farren/Jonny Robinson/ Richard C Thompson, CityAlight Music)

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