

One Year After Singapore
 - Retirement? Afterglow? Wilderness?
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Dear Friends,

This August 2025 marks two major milestones: our 45th year of life together and our first year back “home” after leaving Singapore. Today, I reflect on the second.

Exactly a year ago, we left Singapore - our beloved home for more than 25 years - and stepped into unfamiliar ground. One chapter closed. A new one began.

Some call this stage *retirement*: a season of freedom, of doing anything, anytime - an endless holiday. Others name it *afterglow*: less outward labor, more inward shining for the Lord. Still others see it as a *wilderness*: a strange land of loss and uncertainty, yet one that could be filled with manna and daily guidance.

For us, this year has been all three.

- We began on a blissful cruise, reconnecting with some of our closest friends and enjoying intimate fellowship.
- We then walked through wilderness, fleeing the Los Angeles inferno yet discovering His daily provision - including a new place where, at last, we feel truly at home.
- And through it all, we’ve been learning what it means to glow for the Lord in fresh ways, with new friends, in new places.

Like Israel following the cloud and fire, we walk into “only God knows where.” Every day brings new surprises.

Back in Singapore, the ministry was a focused anchor. Now, no single focus defines me. Instead, a mosaic of routines has taken its place: hours in the seminary library, daily exercise, reading global news through the lens of faith. None is central. All is good. Yet I sometimes wonder: *what now holds me together?*

I’ve watched others navigate this season. Some return to ministry (I did for 4 years), some pick up part-time work (driving Grab), others volunteer (interim speaker, local guide, chaplain), or pursue new skills (painting, planting, archery). All of these are meaningful - until health reminds us of our limits. Solomon speaks truth: there is a time for everything. In these later years, we may have more time, sometimes more wealth, but certainly less strength.

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Perhaps this is the very point. Retirement, afterglow, wilderness - all strip away the illusion that our worth lies in what we do. They press us to shift our reflection from “*Who am I?*” to “*Whose am I?*”

Paul shows the way:

- In Philippians, written during his forced retirement in prison, he declared, “For to me, to live is Christ, to die is gain.”
- In 2 Timothy, facing his final days, he testified, “I have finished the good race ... now there is laid up for me the crown ... the Lord will award to me.”

In both, during forced retirement and his final days, his focus was not on *what* he did, but *whose* he was. That is the invitation of this season. To give up on old measures of significance. To refuse the need for unfinished work to define us.

There is always more work, but Paul can say, “I have finished.” He emphasized the moment-by-moment ownership by Christ - “to live is Christ.” And the reward is seen in His view of death, not a loss but “a gain” as it is closeness to His master; a face-to-face encounter with the crowning compliment “good and faithful servant”.

I am still on the way. I have not yet arrived. Some days feel like retirement, some afterglow, some wilderness. Yet I look forward to the day when I, too, can say with full conviction:

“I am wholly His. I have finished. For me, to live is Christ. To die is to gain.”

With Love,

Peter and Michelle