



2023 in review

Since our prayer letters highlight ministry events, this note has a tone of the slice-of-life. We want to convey how our hearts and minds have expanded to see God's provision for us day by day. I hope these brief highlights will encourage you as you imagine our journey in Singapore this past year.

January was a month of seeing the first few steps of our path unfold. We were blessed to stay in a small apartment while we searched for our new home for the next two years FOC (Free of Charge-Singapore acronym). We jumped into our homeschool community and Awana group within the first week. After looking at a dozen apartments that weren't quite right, I ventured on my own and found a place. Brad signed on the dotted line sight unseen! We were desperate and this place checked the boxes. Only later did we realize the accessibility of the train system, a park nearby and being generally central in the county was a huge plus. We were just desperate!

February brought our first overseas trip to Malaysia for a 200km bike race Brad entered in Kuala Lumpur. I'd always thought of KL as an exotic Asian city with those famous Petronas twin towers. We loved our trip and found the tourist sights to be very manageable. Later in the month, our family had our first trip to an international hospital of the year. During a night swim, Bridgit's chin brushed the side of the pool and split her chin open! We're grateful for local friends we could contact at a late hour for advice. At 10pm, Brad took her in a cab and they returned sometime after dawn, waiting all evening in the A&E (called Accident and Emergency). Seven stitches later and she was on the mend.

The cooling rain came less often and the humidity ramped. Truthfully the heat never stops, we are near the equator! March will be memorable because as we started settling in, I got more confident in exploring parks and playgrounds across the island. After a morning of school lessons and lunch I decided to check out a raved about sculpture playground. We found the place after a steamy 45-minute walk and were so surprised to find the site deserted. How could this place be popular? With the sweat trickling down our foreheads I realized, "I've made a true rookie mistake! No one comes to

a playground in the heat of the day: 1-3pm!" The kids and I found a nearby air-conditioned cafe, (which was also deserted save the lone worker on his phone). We treated ourselves to a Sprite and sat to regain our strength before we journeyed on.

In April we headed back over the border to check out Legoland for the first time. The park is best for ages 5-9, so we are in the sweet spot! We were gifted an annual pass. Later in the month, we were able to host some transiting missionary friends from Boulder for less than 24 hours, but seeing a family with young children in a similar mission calling was life-giving to all of us. On return to the airport, the dad treated all four children (and me as the supervisor) to three story climbing nets.

May brought our first trip to the globally ranked Singapore Zoo. We were gifted an annual membership from the Cru Singapore National Leader and it came at the perfect time as we were growing in our capacity to get out and enjoy this beautiful country. We saw from up close the flying fox which looks like an oversized bat. The viewing platform is within arm's reach and there is no barrier as they are taking their daytime rest! Brad had his first international trip to Cambodia, so I took it as a cue to return to Legoland. The kids and I had so much fun and since we'd already been, there was no pressure to get through the whole park, the kids set the pace!

With much anticipation, we completed a mission trip while ON a mission trip! We joined the rest of the Singapore Cru staff for a conference in Malaysia followed by a one-week trip to a nearby village of Malaysian 'original people ', the Oranj Asli. Each day we travelled to their primitive village and led a children's program in a cinder block building. The village consisted of lean-tos with corrugated metal roofs. They had adopted modern chairs and furniture, but it was often strewn about the front yard with exposed springs and holes. Wild dogs roamed the streets and rummaged through the trash heaps for their food. Even though the surroundings were depressing, the smiles from the children were anything but depressed. They grinned ear to ear during the songs and story time. Herschel and Bridgit took their place on stage acting or holding pictures while a teammate spoke the bible story in the regional language. Brad led the outside sport activities with the children. We experienced persecution as a village elder interrupted our soccer game, took our photos and kicked us out of the village. Fortunately, it was on the last day, so connections were made with the children, but we won't be allowed to return.

July was a month of exploring the island even more. We took a break from homeschool, but the local system was back at it, so our sport and art classes continued to help us keep a weekly rhythm. Since the weather is consistently tropical, it didn't feel much different than the rest of the year! A highlight is following the American holidays through joining the American Association's planned activities. There was a fun Fourth of July barbeque, watermelon eating contest and bouncy castles for the kids. Bridgit won tickets for four to a luge in Singapore, skidding down the hill on wheeled scooters! We think Herschel was robbed of the watermelon eating contest when the kids were served disproportionate slices. If they were uniform, he would've taken home 1st place.

By August, we had made so many Singaporean friends that we were invited to a blast of a National Day party! Because Singapore is such a small and affluent country, there was no holding back on the bold display of fireworks, military procession and concert in the center of the city! We gladly watched all this on tv in air conditioning away from the sweltering heat and the crowds. The whole country seemed to be decked in red and white for the month of August.

Brad and I celebrated ten years of marriage on September 1st and found a deal on a three-night cruise stopping in Malaysia. We took the city train to the port and surprised the kids as we walked towards the dock! My rationale was that this was the best way Brad and I could get extended time alone because the kids would attend the Adventure Ocean childcare on board. We were right! From opening until closing hour, our kids wanted to be in the activity center! It was a win for the quality down time for us and a chance to talk undisturbed over several meals. Our homeschool coop was also up and running by now, so we settled into a 'fall' school schedule.

In October we anticipated the American tradition of Halloween and were blown away by how involved a particular neighborhood becomes. The celebration had been building for several years in this enclave of expat homes. We'd invited our French/Algerian neighbor Yani and he thought the size of our kids' buckets were a bit unrealistic and had a palm sized pumpkin suited for an American Girl doll. He was shocked when he had to empty it each time into his backpack to refill. His French parents rolled over in laughter when he dumped it on the kitchen table later that night.

November was spent as local tour guides for the much-anticipated visit from my parents from Illinois! We had to remind ourselves of the humidity shock as our internal thermometer adjusted. They thought, "not too bad, just like August in the Midwest!" But in this case, we were walking all over the country, up and down stairs, museums, shopping malls and on buses! Air conditioning was king. Brad travelled for a few weeks this month, and we were able to bring the family and my parents along to Thailand and enjoy a new country, food and culture.

Wrapping up our year was filled with visiting local friends for the holidays, children's choir performances, church plays and celebrating the season with our beloved new Singaporean friends. We're so grateful for the rich experiences and blessing to serve in full-time ministry in Southeast Asia. Thank you so much for following us and being in our corner!

