

Braving Through the Covid-19 Pandemic Together With My Autistic Son

Pearl Bong

An unusual and memorable year 2020

Over the last two years, I have been praying for God's will to be done through His churches worldwide. May the spirit of God grant to each and every child of God wisdom in knowing the heart of our loving God and Father Yahweh. Each morning when I am awake, I would give thanks to our Heavenly Father Yahweh for another new day. There is joy unspeakable when I behold the beauty of our awesome God Yahweh. No matter what happens, my heart desires to praise and honor Abba Yahweh in all that I do. As I pray earnestly and unceasingly, lo and behold, the spirit of God would lead me to share these thoughts which have been lingering in my mind for a long time.

When we look at the world around us, truly life is so fragile and unpredictable. No one is able to guess or predict what tomorrow holds! As for me, I will always remember to count my blessings and name them one by one so that I may testify to the world that I worship and serve the only true God Yahweh. At

this juncture, we are still in the midst of the worst ever world-wide outbreak of the Covid-19 pandemic. It is absolutely unthinkable that not a single country has been spared from a mysterious virus known as Covid-19 which has surfaced out of the blue!

We have all been through more than two years of the Covid-19 pandemic since the outbreak started on 31st December 2019. To date, there has been no way of eliminating Covid-19 from the face of the earth. In early January 2022, The World Health Organization (WHO) declared Covid-19 from being a pandemic to being endemic, which means that the virus is still around but at a level that is not causing significant disruption to our daily lives.

To those who have eyes to see and ears to hear, how blessed and honored it is to behold our God Yahweh who is a God of miracles. Absolutely nothing is impossible for Him. He performed great miracles in the past and will continue to do so today and forevermore!

Over the last two years, I have experienced many miracles happening in my family during the course of braving through the pandemic together with my beloved son Brendon. As I reminisce on some of the dramatic incidents, my heart and my soul sing for joy to the ever-living God Yahweh for He is great and greatly to be praised! I am eternally grateful to our merciful God and Father Yahweh for granting my husband and me the strength and power to brave through the Covid-19 pandemic together with our son. I stood amazed as I witnessed Yahweh God's mighty hand at work in my son's life over the last two years of living with Covid-19.

A note of thanksgiving

Before I proceed, I would like to express my heartfelt thanksgiving to those who have read my previous writings. A big thank you to everyone for your unfailing love, your constant prayers, and your most encouraging support, always. Certainly, I believe you have been richly blessed by our awesome God Yahweh when you read through all my writings particularly my most recent one, **“Embracing the world of autism with my autistic son”**.

As always, it is my wish and my prayer that the world may know that Yahweh is the only true God and Jesus Christ is His only begotten son whom He has sent to lead men to God.

John 17 verse 3 says,

And this is eternal life, that they know you the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom you have sent. (John 17:3 ESV)

The beginning of the Covid-19 pandemic

On 31st December 2019, World Health Organization (WHO) was informed of cases of pneumonia of unknown cause in Wuhan City, China. A novel coronavirus was identified as the cause of these cases by Chinese authorities on 7th January 2020, and it was temporarily named “2019-nCoV,” later renamed “Covid-19”. On 22nd January 2020, Singapore set up a Multi-Ministry Task Force (MTF) committee to manage the Covid-19 pandemic. The MTF formation was timely: the very next day, on 23rd January 2020, a Wuhan tourist was confirmed as Singapore’s first Covid-19 case.

Unexpectedly, an invisible yet powerful virus totally new to the human race had suddenly emerged. It had shaken up the

entire world population into fear and trembling! We were at the mercy of a fierce and highly transmissible virus known as Covid-19 which has since wiped out a huge number of the world population. Oh how daunting it was for everybody as we were trapped in a world of chaos. How helpless and wretched we were! I cried out to our Lord God, “Have mercy on us, Oh God Yahweh, according to Your unfailing love.”

Despite new medical advances, medical professionals and scientists had yet to discover an effective solution to deal with Covid-19. Every single soul waits eagerly for the invention of a vaccine that will protect us from the severity of illness and death caused by Covid-19.

Right from the start of the pandemic, we have all experienced a tumultuous period. Living with Covid-19 has been challenging enough for normal human beings over the last two years. How about autistic individuals like my son Brendon? Obviously, it is doubly hard for them. I have tried to describe in words how challenging it has been but I could not find specific words to describe that disheartened feeling. I could only say that the autistic were rendered a greater blow than we normal human beings.

While I was caught in a sense of total hopelessness, all of a sudden I felt my foot slipping, and I plunged deep into the valley of darkness. It was pitch dark and extremely cold in that deep valley! Out of desperation, I stepped into my prayer closet and knelt humbly before the God of all creation. I prayed, “Father, only You and You alone are able to get through to Brendon. Please hear my earnest plea! How on earth am I going to share with my son about Covid-19? It is an awesome task to explain to him about the sudden emergence of a new and dangerous virus which is lurking around, causing much issues in the entire world

today. Oh dear Abba Father, to begin with, how do I explain to Brendon what is a virus? It is such an abstract word! Oh no, I am at my wit's end! Oh dear God Yahweh, please teach me Your way and show me Your path. Amen.”

After committing my request to God, slowly but most assuredly I began to perceive a ray of bright light at the end of the tunnel. Indeed, it was the light that had illuminated my path ahead. I instantly experienced the peace of God enveloping me, and I knew what my mission was right away! My lips uttered, “Hallelujah! Praise Yahweh for He is sovereign over all!”

All these years I have never ceased thanking Yahweh God for granting Brendon a high visual capability. He was given much higher visual skills than the majority of normal human beings who I know. Therefore it dawned on me that the easiest way to explain Covid-19 to Brendon was through visual aids. Without further delay, I started my new mission right away by gathering pictures of people wearing masks, pictures of doctors and healthcare workers wearing protective clothes and using equipment, and scenes of hospital wards where Covid-19 patients with breathing difficulties were hooked up to oxygen tanks or ventilators. I also searched for some animated videos created by some talented artists which convey a clear message of what Covid-19 is all about.

I went through the collection of pictures and videos with Brendon and explained to him in simple words. I said, “My dear son, many people are very sick because of a virus attack. Some cannot breathe and need to breathe through oxygen tanks or they will die. From now on we must wear masks when we go out.” He stared at the pictures for a while. Then he shouted out loud with his thunderous voice, “No! No die!” I understood what

he meant. To my dear son, “death” or “die’ is a taboo word. In his simple mind, death implies the end of one’s life. He has always dreaded the sight of someone who breathes his/her last.

When I showed Brendon the collection of pictures and videos, I did not mention to him that the new virus was known as Covid-19. To my amazement, two days later he came to me and said, “Mummy, Covid-19!” My jaws dropped when I heard him loud and clear. I was wondering how on earth did he find out the new virus is called Covid-19? I asked my husband and Brendon’s class teachers if they had told him so. Surprisingly, none of them did. Oh how cool! How incredible! A miracle indeed! I believe with all my heart that our gracious God Yahweh had answered my prayer. It was Yahweh God who had revealed it to Brendon through His amazing way. Until this day it remains a mystery as to how Yahweh God had revealed the name of the virus to Brendon. How marvelous to see a miracle at the start of the Covid-19 pandemic!

New Challenges ahead of us

Those of you who have read my earlier writings would probably understand that most autistic individuals have great difficulties in accepting changes in their daily routines. Disruption in the daily routines would lead to outbursts of anger and meltdowns in Brendon, resulting in a series of undesirable destructive behaviors. However, thanks be to Yahweh God that by His mercy and grace, Brendon has improved by leaps and bounds over the last thirty years. At least for now he is able to accept some adjustments to his usual routines.

When Covid-19 struck Singapore, my husband and I sensed the beginning of a tough journey ahead. The only way to equip ourselves to cope with the upcoming battle was to commit our fears and inadequacies to God. I was once again reminded to be brave and courageous through the word of God in Joshua chapter 1 verse 9.

Have I not commanded you? Be strong and courageous. Do not be frightened, and do not be dismayed, for Yahweh your God is with you wherever you go." (Joshua 1:9 ESV)

The sudden emergence of Covid-19 has caused huge disruptions to our daily lives. Many succumbed to the virus when it swept across the globe speedily. My heart sank when I heard the daily announcements by the World Health Organization (WHO) concerning the surging number of Covid-19 cases and the death toll in every country. The number was astronomical! I came before Yahweh God as I grieved over what was happening. The only solution to prevent severe illness and death from the virus infection is vaccines.

During the period in which research and development of Covid-19 vaccines were underway, the World Health Organization made a new normal of mask-wearing and physical distancing of at least one meter apart. Covid-19 pandemic also spurred on global cooperation for vaccine research and distribution.

On 14th April 2020, Singapore's Ministry of Health declared mask-wearing as mandatory except for children below the age of two and individuals with special needs who might have difficulties adapting to wearing masks.

Although we were pleased that mask-wearing wasn't mandatory for Brendon, the truth of the matter is that we prefer that he

adapts to the new mask-wearing norm in order to protect himself from catching the virus. However, it remained a huge challenge to convince Brendon to wear a mask for he disliked the idea of covering his nose with something. Once again, I cried out to Abba Father Yahweh for His guidance. I prayed, “Oh Father, please help Brendon to accept the new changes. Enable Brendon to put on a mask. Help Brendon to understand that wearing a mask is necessary. Amen.”

My heart was at peace after pouring out my burdens to God. The next crucial step was to introduce a mask which Brendon would accept as he has to wear it on the school bus and at the Day Activity Centre for at least eight hours a day. I combed through a few online shops to purchase different types of masks which resulted in burning huge holes in my pocket. After many trials and errors, thankfully at last mission accomplished! I found a reasonably good quality fabric mask which offered high filtration. Brendon readily accepted it and he wore it daily without a word of complain. I was very grateful to Yahweh God for His provision. My heart was filled with thanksgiving when I saw Brendon putting on his mask without much hassle. Glory be to our most high God Yahweh for enabling Brendon to accept the new normal. Cheers!

Two months of “circuit breaker lockdown”

Within a short time, by the end of March 2020, Covid-19 cases skyrocketed in Singapore. Singapore’s Covid-19 Multi-Ministry Taskforce (MTF) committee held an emergency meeting to discuss a stringent set of preventive measures collectively called the “circuit breaker lockdown” to control the spread of Covid-

19. On 7th April 2020, Singapore's Ministry of Health announced the implementation of a circuit breaker lockdown for two months with the intention of slowing down the infection rate. Singapore had also contributed US\$500,000 to support the World Health Organization's efforts against Covid-19.

During the circuit breaker lockdown, all retail shops, religious activities, and schools were ordered to close temporarily. Dining in was not allowed in F & B businesses such as restaurants, food courts and hawker centers. But we were allowed to buy take-away food. I remembered seeing an extremely gloomy Singapore for the very first time in my life. How pathetic!

With the temporary closure of schools, all school children started online home-based learning. The new generation of kids are mostly internet-savvy. Thus it did not take them long to adapt to a new channel of learning via online platforms such as Zoom. However, it was a big problem for Brendon and the majority of kids with special needs because they required hands on learning. But practical in-person teaching was impossible to accomplish via Zoom. Brendon started to feel restless when his usual routine was disrupted.

In addition to that, one of Brendon's favorite weekend activities is to frequent food courts and hawker centers to feast on his favorite food such as Hainanese chicken rice, spaghetti, BBQ chicken wings, or satays. During the two months of the circuit breaker lockdown, he was aware that dining out was not permissible due to Covid-19. It was hard for Brendon to accept having every single meal at home for over sixty days. I felt so sorry for him.

To Brendon, attending classes and feasting out over the weekend are the two activities he enjoyed immensely. Again, it

was hard for him to break away from his normal routines. I believe that though he could not express his opinions in words, he might have thought, “Why on earth did my teachers stop me from going to school and worst of all, why did my parents stop taking me out for some good meals?”

Once again, I wept before Yahweh God as I was entangled in another intense struggle. Again and again, I begged God to remove the huge mountain which was standing in my way. The spirit of God prompted me to seek that God’s will be done in His time. Frankly speaking, I was caught in a dilemma as two months of circuit breaker lockdown seemed like an eternity to me. I confessed to our merciful God Yahweh that it was a tall order to brave through the two months with my beloved son. My heart was filled with anxieties and I was so fearful that I might suffer a severe mental breakdown in no time.

Early one morning while I was fixing my gaze upon our everlasting God Yahweh, a small still voice whispered across my ear. A comforting yet gentle reminder came in timely fashion! I was told to take Brendon out for a thorough tour around the F & B outlets at shopping malls, restaurants, food courts and hawker centers. At that instant some very familiar words surfaced on my mind: “Brendon has high visual capability. Seeing is believing!” Yes, how true it is that Brendon would understand and realize what was happening once we bring him out for a quick tour at his usual haunts. It was as simple as that. I was stunned by how much God cares for Brendon. I praise and thank Abba Yahweh for His faithfulness! Morning by morning new mercies I see!

At the breaking of dawn, I shared with my husband regarding the plan to take Brendon out to witness the state Singapore

was in during the circuit breaker lockdown. It was an unusual but pleasant tour as we visited a few of Brendon's favorite eating places and shopping complexes. Indeed, seeing is believing! At all the eateries we saw a scene which we had not seen over the last three decades: large piles of chairs stacked up high, and tables bound together with masking tape. Obviously, no dining-in was allowed.

I caught a glimpse of the surprised look in Brendon's eyes. Finally, when we reached home, Brendon took out his communication booklet, and wrote, "No, cannot eat out!" I said, "Yes, that's right, my dear son, but someday we will eat out again." He replied, "Hopefully!" I was grinning from ear to ear when Brendon uttered his favorite word, "hopefully." That is the sweetest word ever! It brings me tremendous joy and it always encourages me to have a positive outlook. Oh how marvelous it is to see miracles unfold before my eyes. Yahweh God is good all the time!

Be creative! Let's have fun!

During the two months of not attending physical classes, it was a big challenge for Brendon's teachers to wrack their brains on what to prepare for their students to do at home. Nevertheless, they put in their best efforts in getting ready some worksheets and also a few sets of Arts & Craft materials to be delivered to the students' homes on a weekly basis. I was very touched by their dedication and deep concern for each and every student under their care. Through it all I experienced God's great love for us all!

It was a rough journey during that period of time. I felt my whole being ravaged in the stormy sea with Brendon. All of a sudden—overnight!—I become Brendon’s relief teacher. It was hard enough for Brendon to adapt to some minor changes in his daily routines. What’s more, a few major changes! He was under tremendous stress! My prayer to God become more intense and persistent as the days went by. Our God Yahweh once again directed my attention to the “Parable of the friend at midnight” recorded in the Gospel of Luke chapter 11, reading from verses 5 to 13. Deep within my heart I knew I have to pray fervently and be persistent always in asking God for His help for He is able!

I prayed with all my heart and all my might! At last Brendon was willing to accept me as his relief teacher. He began to sit calmly for at least twenty minutes each day to complete his worksheets. Hurray! Abba Yahweh has paved the way for Brendon. I rejoiced over the blessings He has bestowed upon us!

Yahweh God granted me new ideas for enjoying our days of home confinement beyond performing table tasks. You might wonder what our loving God had in store for us? Haha, can you imagine how cool it was to enjoy the most creative and fun way of playing badminton in our mini 700 cm by 170 cm badminton court created overnight at our balcony? This may sound ridiculous or hilarious to some of you but Brendon and I had so much fun together. When I shared about this new-found adventure that Brendon and I had, his teachers were amazed! They thought it was an awesome idea. Oh how wonderful it is to be led by the spirit of the only true God Yahweh.

Life after the circuit breaker lockdown was lifted

During the two months of the circuit breaker lockdown, the number of daily Covid-19 infections in Singapore began to drop significantly. On 2nd June 2020, the Day Activity Center at St Andrew's Adult Home (SAAH) reopened. Brendon was delighted to return to class once again. In order to prevent the spread of Covid-19, a new set of rules was implemented. All the usual outdoor activities such as travelling, swimming, shopping and dining out were suspended until further notice. Despite the drastic change, I was amazed to see that Brendon adapted pretty well. Ever since he learned about Covid-19 and how it had affected our lives, he was ready to accept the changes and to break away from his normal routines. Without Abba Yahweh's intervention, it would be impossible for Brendon to accept the changes so quickly and readily. Indeed Yahweh God's mighty power was at work in Brendon. I thank Him from the bottom of my heart.

Time flew by quickly. Our weekly Sunday services were being conducted through Zoom since April 2020. Without fail each Sunday morning Brendon would ask me if we will be returning to in-person service. I could see the disappointment on his face when we could not gather in the house of God to worship our Lord God Yahweh. That was so sweet!

The other thing which Brendon missed was the annual short vacations in the historic city of Malacca in southwest Malaysia. It was beyond my imagination that many countries had closed their borders for almost two years. We felt sad to tell our son that we would be unable to travel abroad until the situation improves. Each time when his term break started, he would

approach me and ask, “When can we go for hotel stay?” I shook my head and said, “My dear son, I am so sorry, we still cannot travel abroad. I hope we can go to Malacca soon.”

It broke my heart to see how persistent Brendon was in requesting the fulfilment of his desire to travel abroad. That went on from June 2020 to December 2021. Almost one and a half years of asking persistently, yet his wish to travel was not fulfilled.

I felt sorrowful that I could not meet his needs. All that I could do for Brendon was to commit his request to God and ask God to grant him the joy of enjoying what is available locally. Yes, our God Yahweh is a compassionate God. He has granted my family the joy of admiring the beauty of His creation. Most of the weekends, we accompanied Brendon for walks at the National Parks; we visited the famous Gardens by the Bay and went for outings at the Botanical Gardens. As a result, my whole family become healthier both physically and mentally. Hurray! Praise and thank God for leading us through the stormy period!

At the beginning of 2022, an unexpected miracle happened again! I noticed Brendon had stopped asking me when will we be able to travel abroad. His persistent request for travelling abroad had vanished into thin air. I was stunned! Today is the 26th of May 2022. Five months have passed and he has stopped asking completely. It seems he has accepted the truth that Covid-19 will continue to remain for as long as it wishes. How wonderful! How marvelous! Praise Yahweh God from whom all blessings flow!

The nations' hope: Vaccinations

By 11th December 2020, the Pfizer vaccine became the first to receive emergency use authorization from the Food and Drug Administration (FDA). Creating a vaccine in under one year was no small feat. Under normal circumstances, making a vaccine could take from 10 to 15 years. This is because of the complexity of vaccine development.

Finally, the long awaited moment had arrived! Vaccines for Covid-19 were available! My husband and I received our first and second Pfizer BioNTech vaccines on March and April 2021. We are thankful to God that the vaccine is able to prevent severe illness and death if we should ever catch the Covid-19 Delta variant which was spreading quickly all over the world during that period of time.

Singapore's Ministry of Health made an announcement that students from Special Education schools will receive their vaccinations ahead of the students from normal schools. What a privilege for Brendon and all the other special needs kids. On the one hand my heart jumped for joy upon hearing the good news, but on the other hand, I was anxious as I knew it would be hard to administer the jabs on Brendon. Our Lord God Yahweh knew my fear and He has made the way for Brendon.

Two weeks before the vaccination date, his teachers had prepared visual aids to explain the whole process to all the students at the Center. They also created a vaccination booth to simulate an actual vaccination venue. In addition to that, they showed Brendon how the jab would be administered by using a needle-less syringe. How lovely! My heart melted when I saw what God had done through so many beautiful souls.

Lo and behold! Brendon received his two Pfizer BioNTech vaccinations on April and May 2021. How blessed we were, I was thinking. My heart sang a joyful song to Yahweh, “Bless Yahweh, Oh my soul, blessed be His name! From everlasting to everlasting Yahweh is God! Amen.”

A close brush with Covid-19

Covid-19 is an extremely tricky virus which has mutated several times over the last two years. As the days went by, the newly mutated variant would become more and more contagious than the older strains. Moreover, it is capable of spreading at a much faster rate. In January 2022, we heard on the news that the new variant called “Omicron” is capable of spreading much quicker than the Delta variant. Thankfully more than 87 per cent of the population here have been fully vaccinated, while 39 per cent have received their booster shots. Because most patients infected by the Omicron variant displayed very mild symptoms, they do not require hospitalization. Instead they could be isolated at home until they recover from the infection.

I recalled February 2022 as a month which I would describe as the “roller-coaster ride” period for my family. Brendon had a few close brushes with Covid-19 when his class teacher, two of his classmates, and his school bus driver contracted Covid-19 one by one. It was beyond my imagination when relief teachers and a temporary bus driver were roped in to hold the fort. His school principal ordered parents to conduct the Covid-19 Antigen Rapid Test (ART) on their kids every morning. Only those whose test results were negative were allow to attend classes.

The next big hurdle was to do a nasal swap on Brendon. I have to cry out to God for help. In the end, we managed to brave through it, and with each passing day, it was getting easier to cope with Brendon. After five days, Brendon had gotten used to the process of ART tests that he would come to us automatically and ask us to perform the test on him. I was very surprised to see him becoming so obedient and cooperative. We continued to perform the tests on Brendon successfully for almost ten days. My husband and I were very thankful to God that Brendon's test results were negative although he was in close contact with quite a few Covid-19 cases.

The Omicron wave continued to sweep across Singapore like wildfire. Within the same month a few of our church brethren also contracted the Omicron virus but they have all recovered well. Praise and thank Abba Yahweh for His mercy and love! After the whole nation went through more than two years of battling with Covid-19, obviously the entire world economy had suffered many setbacks! Singapore was not spared. Singapore's Multi-Ministry Taskforce (MTF) committee evaluated the situation carefully and declared Covid-19 as an endemic on 6th March 2022. Our church leaders also held a meeting and the team decided that it was the right time for our church to return to in-person service.

My personal encounter with Covid-19

On 6th March 2022, CDC Singapore resumed its in-person church service while continuing with the regular online Zoom service for those who are unable to attend the in-person service. With a grateful heart we returned to church. Although mask-

wearing remained mandatory and we could not see each other's bright smiles hidden behind the masks, it was no doubt a beautiful moment to worship our great and almighty God Yahweh together in His church.

Three days after the re-opening of our in-person service, on 9th March 2022, my husband and I started to feel unwell. We did the ART tests immediately. The test results showed mine as "positive" while my husband tested "negative." Without further delay, I wore a mask at all times and isolated myself in my master bedroom for seven days to prevent the spread of the virus to my husband and Brendon.

Many thoughts ran through my mind when I was in isolation. Most importantly, I was very thankful to God for allowing me to be the first in my family to get infected by Covid-19. I needed that first-hand experience so that I may understand how it is like when one gets infected in order to have a better understanding of how to help Brendon if he should catch the virus some day. God knew the desire of my heart and it happened in His time. In my quiet time I asked God for the inspiration to share my Covid-19 journey if He so wills. I prayed and waited upon God's guidance to pen another testimony in accordance with His will.

During the seven days in isolation, I thanked Abba Yahweh for the love He had showered on me through my family members and our church brethren. Above all, I thank God for granting me a doting husband who was serving me faithfully. It was not easy for him to prepare meals for almost a week and at the same time to attend to Brendon's needs singlehandedly.

As I was unable to have my meals at the dining table during the seven days in isolation, Brendon started to sense that something had gone terribly wrong with his dear mummy. By day three he knocked on my door and said to me, “Mummy, you are very sick. Go and see a doctor!” I replied, “My dear, I will be alright soon. Please be a good boy.”

As the days went by, Brendon waited patiently for me to step out of my room. By day six Brendon could not bear to see me eating meals alone behind that closed door anymore. He broke down and shouted, “Mummy, come out from that room please!” Tears streamed down my cheeks when I heard my dear son’s lovely voice. I was very touched by his love for me expressed in words so simple yet full of deep concern. I replied, “Mummy will be okay by tomorrow. We will visit the Science Center together, I promise.”

On 15th March 2022, which was the seventh day after infection, I did the ART test at twelve noon. It remained positive but according to Singapore’s Ministry of Health’s protocol, by day seven the virus is no longer contagious and I can be discharged. For safety precaution, both my husband and Brendon also did the ART tests. They tested negative throughout the period when I was infected. Thank Yahweh God for protecting them. Finally, I could step out of my room, and I gave my dear son and my wonderful husband a big hug for their love and never-ending support.

As I have promised Brendon to take him for a visit to the Science Center after my recovery, we went to the Science Center that afternoon. It was so breathtaking to see the world out there once again! Everything seemed too marvelous under the sun! Oh how I missed the sunshine, the birds singing, and the gorgeous

flowers blooming! I give thanks to Yahweh God for creating this wonderful world. Abba Yahweh is good; His steadfast love is everlasting!

Pressing on towards an unknown future: Living with Covid-19

It has been a very challenging period for everyone to learn how to cope and live with Covid-19. Singapore's Prime Minister Mr. Lee Hsien Loong addressed the nation through his heartwarming speech on 24th March 2022. He thanked Singapore's health-care and frontline workers for making tremendous sacrifices at a heavy personal cost since the start of the pandemic. He praised Singaporeans for their cooperation in adhering to the restrictive measures during the most trying period over the last two years. Without the whole nation's collective efforts, it would have been impossible to control the spread of the virus effectively. Our economy had suffered much and it was time to reopen our borders.

On the same day (24th March), Singapore and Malaysia jointly said that there would no longer be any need for pre-departure or on-arrival Covid-19 tests. From 1st April 2022, those who were fully vaccinated would be able to travel freely between Singapore and Malaysia by land, including by driving, without testing or quarantine, in a highly anticipated move that was set to kick-start short trips between the neighboring countries.

With that announcement came the good news for my dear son Brendon. My husband and I agreed that the timing was right to fulfill Brendon's wish to go for a short vacation in Malacca. When we told Brendon that we were heading for a two-night hotel stay during his upcoming term break in June 2022, he

jumped for joy! That will be the greatest reward to him for braving through the Covid-19 pandemic together with us. We look forward to a refreshing time together! I thank Yahweh God that at last I could fulfill Brendon's wish to travel abroad.

On 24th April 2022, Singapore's Ministry of Health (MOH) declared the removal of all Covid-19 restrictive measures with the exception of mask-wearing, which remains mandatory for indoors only. It was so wonderful to see the usual crowds gradually return, and many were reunited with their loved ones whom they had not met face to face for more than two years!

What a memorable year 2022 is! It is a year in which we are pressing on towards the age of living with the Covid-19 endemic. As for me, I will behold our God Yahweh. I will say of Yahweh God that He is my refuge, my fortress, my God in whom I trust today and forevermore! Quoting His precious word from Psalm 91 verses 1 & 2,

He who dwells in the shelter of the Most High will abide in the shadow of the Almighty. ² I will say to Yahweh, "My refuge and my fortress, my God, in whom I trust."
(Psalm 91:1-2, ESV)

To end my sharing, I would like to share these beautiful words from a poster which I received from a dear friend recently.

The deepest level of worship is:

- *Praising Yahweh God through the pain,*
- *Thanking Yahweh God through the trials,*
- *Trusting Yahweh God when we're tempted to lose hope,*
- *And loving Him, even when He seems distant.*
- *At my lowest, Yahweh God is my hope.*
- *At my darkest, Yahweh God is my light.*
- *At my weakest, Yahweh God is my strength.*
- *At my saddest, Yahweh God is my comforter.*

Those words are timely reminders from our gracious God and Father Yahweh who stood by me when I was walking through the valley of darkness. Words aren't enough to express my heartfelt thanksgiving to Yahweh God for the love He has bestowed on me and my family through His word and His church.

Last but not least, may all glory, honor and praise be to our Lord God Yahweh who is the one and only true God. Amen.

All Bible verses quoted from
English Standard Version (ESV, 2007 edition)