

MY STORY

As a small child in Hong Kong I dreamt I was on the cross. I asked to be taken to church and was taken to a Catholic church. I was prepared to be baptised. However, due to constant moving from one place to another, by the time I entered the protestant Hong Kong True Light Middle School I was still not baptised. I was about twelve then, and soon, I had a big argument with the Bible teacher on the evil of the Protestant Church - only to be told of the sin of the Catholic Church. I found out the Catholic Church had a history of committing many horrible deeds. I started going to protestant churches, only to find the Protestant Church also had a fair share of dark history.

I had a difficult start in life and had come across the bad side of human nature from an early age. But there were two times when I felt hopeless. When I was twelve: I found out the church had committed evil in the name of God; and when I was fifteen: I saw a documentary on the concentration camps of World War II, showing the evil of humanity on a large scale. In WWII, both sides were Christians. My belief in God has not faltered. When I see beauty in Nature such as a beautiful rose, I felt the presence of God (at St. Andrew's I display two photos of roses). When I see kindness, I feel the presence of God. However, I have not been able to rekindle my pure faith in the church as a child. It was last November I was finally baptised by Revd Jonathan Evens at St. Andrew's.

It was a miracle for me to be a professional musician. I had many unexpected opportunities and met many people that helped me. To be a creative and performative artist, I should be in London, the world centre of art and culture. However, the aftermath of having cancer three times weakened my body. After falling down the stairs four times I wanted to live in a bungalow but could only afford to live in one in Wickford. I have become more and more housebound since moving to Wickford and lost my contacts in London. I no longer have commissions and deadlines to motivate me. I started making music videos for YouTube at home, and also took on a part-time creative PhD. As both require the use of the computer and software, I joined a local group called South Essex Apple Link and met Robert Williams who has helped me generously.

There is another board about the videos. Though my PhD is part-time, I still need to go to university sometimes. I could manage driving to Cambridge, but parking was near impossible. Then I had an accident on the M25 that involved 2 continental trucks and 3 cars. I lost confidence in driving after that. Travelling from Wickford to Cambridge was taxing for me. Then I had an offer to revisit Stanford University. The trip was too much and I became ill. Also, my command of English was affected by my health.

It took nearly seven years (part-time) to complete the PhD (well, my thesis was nearly 80,000 words plus music, illustrations...). The creative core of my PhD is a libretto-cum-script called "SONG & DANCE OF A 3-TIME CANCER SURVIVOR" (if life gives you lemon, make lemonade! And

yes, I do know 'song & dance' means a fuss). The thesis also reflects Hong Kong Cantonese culture and my childhood memory of Cantonese opera. The Hong Kong Authority appears to educate the young of what they should or should not know about the past, and Cantonese opera is a dying art. I am glad that I had completed the PhD despite hardship. The thesis is on my Website for free download:

<https://www.howaion.co.uk/phdthesis/index.html>

I attended International PhD conferences and gave presentations. That's how I met Dr. Juliet Chenery-Robson, one of those featured at St Andrew's. I also gave a presentation at St. Andrew's which is available on the church's website - just click on the image of my 7 Oct Talk.

<https://wickfordandrunwellparish.org.uk/the-arts-and-artists.html>