

The Time Has Come

Description

Or nearly so!

We hope and pray that after another week of waiting, in mind-numbing frustration, our long-awaited Exit Permits will be granted. Presumably there is some official in Hyderabad who tomorrow morning need only do a final review of our applications and push the “approve” button, thus triggering an email with an attachment that will be our official permission to leave India!

It was a couple of small miracles that got us to that point.

Nothing happened on Monday or Tuesday. No progress still on Wednesday, except for a message that nothing would happen again on Thursday, they would be far too busy because the Chief Minister (like a state governor) was visiting Vizag! I guess it's a big deal when VIPs come to town, so we Very UNimportant People would just have to wait another day.

On Friday we went to the Foreigners Registration Office (we thought) for the last time. Babu, a member of the Church, came with us to help us communicate. The officer helping us (I'll call him Raj) had us both sign and date a statement, supposedly the last step on each of our parts.

Then Raj said that the Chief of Police who needed to sign off on our files wasn't there, sorry, there was nothing he could do about that. We left, disheartened, and then while waiting for an Uber, saw Raj walking down the street and around the corner, carrying a bunch of papers. A few minutes later he came back and beckoned to us to come back inside. This was after Babu had left and our Uber driver still hadn't arrived. Small miracle number 1, that he delayed so long that we were there when Raj came back, so we cancelled our Uber and went back to the office. Raj said he found out he could cancel Taunya's visa, which would make it so she could just get an Exit Permit and not need the Chief's signature! So he did, both on her physical visa, and in the system. A little scary, having an invalid visa (cancelled without prejudice, it said, so it was all good). He then said we could leave, he would wrap up our files within an hour and send them to Hyderabad. We asked if they would finish processing them today, but he said no, probably not — Monday at the earliest.

Disappointed, we went back home, and just two hours later, Raj called Babu who gave us the message that he needed Taunya to come back **one more time** for another signature. Small miracle number 2 then happened. I had a little prompting to take my passport/visa with me, which I wasn't thinking I should need to, since they said this was about Taunya. So I heeded the prompting — and it was good that I did, because despite what we were told, Raj really just needed me! He cancelled my visa too so we would both just need Exit Permits and the remaining process did not require the Chief's signature! A few more documents and fee payments later, all handled by our mission office assistant and district president, our files were sent to Hyderabad for final processing and approval. It was too late in the day by then, and the Hyderabad office was closed until Monday.

So we couldn't leave yesterday, which would have allowed us to attend the inauguration of the Help

Babies Breath project that started today and goes until next Friday.

But a compensatory blessing that brightened our week was being able to attend District Conference, the adult evening session last night, and the general session this morning. In both sessions we were able to sing with the missionary choir two songs: *Hope of Israel* (that Sister Baird arranged back in January and the missionaries in the New Delhi learned and recorded for a Mission Leaders' Conference) and *If You Could Hie to Kolob*.

The conference was presided over by Robert K. William, our mission president, who spoke in both sessions. The Spirit was strong, and very uplifting messages were given. The theme of the conference was creating a stake in Vizag. There was strong emphasis on the spiritual strength and commitment that every member would need to develop to reach this goal by the end of next year. Doing the small and simple things: daily personal and family prayer, scripture study, full tithe paying, generous fast offerings, loving and dedicated ministering, and whole-hearted love-share-invite member-missionary outreach. And then the icing on the cake was this afternoon, a family of four was baptized and joined the third branch. We stayed for that joyous occasion, and while waiting we were surprised to be invited to enjoy some more traditional Indian food, which nicely supplemented the peanut-butter sandwiches and cabbage salad we had brought for lunch!

Oh, one more minor but noteworthy happening: we got a new badminton record this week — 130 consecutive hits back and forth!

Hugely much more consequential in its implications, coming back to *If You Could Hie to Kolob*, we sang a different ending to the third verse — and this is a good place to end on:

The works of God continue, and worlds and lives abound.

Improvement and progression have one eternal round.

(Already a thrilling thought! But then...)

Because of our dear Savior's atoning sacrifice,

We can feel His grace and mercy and have eternal life.



The meal provided before the baptism



Want some fresh mangos?!



A family going home from Church

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