

Your Story My Story

Candidates **Ryan and Suzie** are preparing to serve in South Asia... something that teenage Ryan thought God understood wasn't an option! Here, Ryan looks back at the journey God has taken him on and the impact that walking with others has had on his own story.

"I'll go anywhere you call me Lord... except India!" So went my passionate (if not naive) response to the missionary call before me. As a 16-year-old country boy who had never travelled but had seen pictures on the TV, this was the one place in the world that scared the life out of me. Accustomed to my space, everything about the subcontinent kind of freaked me out. So at this mission meeting and this line-in-the-sand moment in my life, "Anywhere but India," was my compromise. But it's ok to have boundaries isn't it?

Fast forward almost 20 years, as the new pastor in a country church at my first deacon's meeting, an interesting proposal came before us. The missionary committee, with some extra finance in their budget, were seeking approval to support some cross-cultural workers heading to South Asia with Global Interaction. (Not quite my 'off the table' location, but in the same region.)

Off to pioneer a new fish farming project, Anthony and Jacqueline (former Global Interaction workers) seemed a good, down-to-earth young couple our church might connect with. "Our only hesitation," said Joy from the missionary committee, "is that no-one in our church actually knows them."

What our church was unaware of at this point, is the part that Anthony and Jacqueline had already played in the lives of my wife, Suzie and I. Only a few years earlier we'd met Anthony and Jacqueline at Bible College. Then both single (although not fixed on that status!), 'Ant' and 'Jac' had impressed us both from the outset. A big-hearted, 6ft 4 larrikin with a unique turn of phrase, Ant had come across to Melbourne from Tasmania. Having been challenged to use his aquaculture qualification to serve God, Ant was one of only a few who knew his pathway post Bible College - his focus was on South Asia! Jac, on the other hand, had come to college from Western Australia. Just a tad over 5ft and much gentler in personality than Ant, Jac's desire to serve God in a cross-cultural context was no less resolved. From the moment they met, their pathways converged. Ant and 'Sparkie', as Ant called her (because sparks flew!) would go to

South Asia together.

Over the next few years at college, we became close friends with Ant and Jac. Although sensing a different path for our lives at this time, we were inspired by their journey and prayed with them often, not realising how God would shape our hearts through their journey.

Just a few years after that deacon's meeting and with a partnership between Kyneton Baptist Church and the Global Interaction team in South Asia well established, Suzie and I visited Ant and Jac to see the work first-hand. We were amazed by what we saw God doing, and deeply moved by the need for Jesus in this least-reached region of the world.

Over the next few years, we returned to South Asia numerous times. What has unfolded in us is a deep love for the people of this place and, despite my earlier 'boundaries', a belief that God is now calling us to serve Him there! **I'll admit it, this part of the world still freaks me out a little at times. But it's incredible how God can change our hearts. Because mostly we're excited by the prospect of serving God amongst this people group. And actually, now there's probably no place we'd rather go!**