When I started my journey into missions 12 years ago, my mentor at the time told me that I was embarking on the greatest adventure imaginable. When I look back now, I must agree that never in my wildest dreams would I have dreamt up the life that has followed since starting this journey. I have travelled to more than 30 countries, I have met spiritual heroes of faith that have since become my friends, I have been grown and stretched in my relationship with Christ, and I have come to see the glorious diversity in the Body of Christ – the Church.

When I started this journey, my exposure to diversity within the Body of Christ was limited to two denominations that were very similar in theology. But when I started volunteering with a mission organisation, I was tasked with sharing about the organisation’s work at many different churches. In my passion to share about the Kingdom of God, I contacted any church I could find and took any opportunity available. Often, I ended up speaking for five to ten minutes during the Sunday morning service but then stayed for the duration, which allowed me to experience the denominational diversity in the Body of Christ.

Then I had the opportunity of going on my first mission trip. The country we visited was closed to the Gospel for many years, and only had a first- and second-generation Church. The pastor who hosted us for the visit told us that the Church in his country was still very young, and he would appreciate it if we didn’t talk about denominational differences when we visited his congregation, because they didn’t know about denominations yet and he wanted to keep it that way for as long as possible. In this country, and others after, I was introduced to the diversity in the international Body of Christ and it greatly impacted the rest of my life. Each visit has broadened my understanding of the Body of Christ, and the need for believers to work together in unity as one body towards our common goal of bringing glory to God and expanding His Kingdom (John 17:20-23 and 1 Corinthians 12).

This wasn’t necessarily the case 20 years ago, but in my 12 years of working across denominations, I have seen tremendous growth in the interdenominational unity in the Body of Christ. I can also say the same for the unity within the international Body of Christ. With modern technology playing a big role in this, there has been massive progress in the international Body of Christ uniting and working together.

There is, however, one dimension in the Body of Christ in which I have, for a long time, been longing to see greater unity: the diversity of spiritual gifts. The entire chapter of 1 Corinthians 12 emphasises the need for unity in the Body of Christ when utilising the diversity of spiritual gifts, and I had the privilege of witnessing and enjoying the fruit of such unity last month when attending a conference in Germany that focused on the rebuilding of Syria.

At the conference, we were diverse in our denominational backgrounds – even the attendees from Syria were from five different denominations. We were also internationally diverse, with attendees from 20 different nations. This, however, is quite normal for most mission conferences. What made this conference different was that it wasn’t only mission organisations in attendance – there was a range of varying ministries, utilising different spiritual gifts, but all with a common goal of seeing God glorified in Syria.

There were prayer ministries, prophetic ministries and mission organisations all together under one roof, seeking God’s will for the nation of Syria... and it was glorious! No ministry or gifting was made to feel or look more important than another. Everybody in attendance knew we were together with a common goal, and that we each had something to offer to achieve this goal. How often do we see this happening? Where do we truly put 1 Corinthians 12 into practice, acknowledging that God has given us different spiritual gifts that needs to be utilised together in unity, as one Body in order to see His will done?

May we as Christians acknowledge the fact that we have been differently gifted through the Spirit, and while I might not share a passion for or even fully understand the gifting of my brother or sister in Christ, they might not necessarily understand or share a passion for my gifting. The differences in gifting shouldn’t make us cautious of each other, but should rather draw us closer to one another, as we acknowledge that others might understand something of God and His Kingdom that we don’t.

May we continue to strive for complete unity in the Body of Christ, across all forms of our diversities, to see His Name glorified and His will done.