



## India Rural Evangelical Fellowship

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## Reflections of the 2012 Missions Trip

We've been home for two weeks and I'm still trying to wrap my mind around the scope and scale of India Rural Evangelical Fellowship. You feed, educate, and care for how many students year round? Did you say 4,500? And you provide encouragement, training, and networking to how many village churches? Did you say over 1,000? When Emmanuel told me last year that visiting IREF would be like walking into the book of Acts, he wasn't joking. This is the most comprehensive ministry I've ever seen up close.

Our team was one of the largest IREF has ever hosted. We represented the UK and US. We came from 6 different churches. We came to preach, teach, pray, educate, serve, listen, write, learn, and love.

From the moment I met the medical team from Scotland, I knew this was a unique... and wonderful crew. It was my distinct privilege to spend a day in scrubs working with them during a mobile clinic. I cleaned dental tools while Dr. Aileen Bell pulled 49 decayed teeth in about 3 hours. She and the rest of the medical team are among my new heroes.

If I lived in their community, I would gladly attend the churches of the men who shared teaching duties with me. We stood in front of the largest crowds we'll probably ever speak to. Yet it was not the size of the crowds that was impressive... it was their hunger for God. We lost count of how many asked us to lay hands on their heads and pray for them.

Another part of our team wowed the younger students by conducting a Vacation Bible School. They loved the dramatized Bible stories, learning new songs, playing new games, and making friendship bracelets. Duck, duck, goose was a hit since they had never played it before.

One of my favorite moments came at the Krishna River. We gathered where it runs wide before entering the sea not far away. Men were harvesting sand from the river by hand. Water buffalo were swimming across the river just behind us. I'll never forget the young man who entered the water wearing a bright red shirt. It was my turn to assist. He needed a new name to represent leaving his Hindu heritage and embracing his identity in Christ. I gave him the name James like the brother of Jesus and author of Scripture. The honor of naming someone... that's what fathers do... it overwhelmed me.

Then there was the church re-dedication in Nalluripalem. My mentor and former pastor of South Park Church, Art Gay, had stood on that same spot to dedicate this church 22 years prior. Originally constructed with a dirt floor, it needed repairs. Our church contributed to upgrades that included pouring a new slab floor. New paint, streamers, and a floor covered with children made the place sparkle. I wanted this trip to communicate to both IREF and the members of South Park Church that we will stand together to advance the gospel. When I saw our church's name on the cornerstone of this village church, I felt that mission was accomplished. I couldn't have asked for a better gift... you see this event happened on my birthday.

I don't think I'm going to be able to put this experience behind me very quickly. India and IREF have a way of getting inside of you. And that's a good thing. God is at work in those gospel fields. And I consider myself blessed to be a small part of it.

*Rev. Eric Flood - South Park Church Senior Pastor*

