

September 2020



## India Rural Evangelical Fellowship

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**“Thankful to Worship Together Again”** After the death of IREF’s elementary and high school principal, it was found that Covid-19 had spread amongst staff members on the IREF campus. This past Sunday, after several weeks of quarantine and confirmed negative test results, each affected staff member returned to IREF to attend church and share of God’s faithfulness during such a trying time.



Lawrence, lead pastor, and his entire family tested positive. They went to his parent’s home to quarantine. Neighbors quickly moved out of their homes to avoid “catching the virus”; many neighbors shunned them for bringing coronavirus from IREF to their village; other neighbors kept a watchful eye to make sure Lawrence and his wife, Parvathi did not leave their home. Through tears, Lawrence shared that many a nights he wondered how he would survive the severe symptoms that he experienced. He gave his final wishes to Parvathi and said his goodbyes to his children. By God’s grace, through tears, he testified to God’s healing. “The power of prayer is very real!”

John Paul, a driver at IREF for over 15 years, as well as 2 of his 3 daughters tested positive. When the health inspectors in his village received notice that John Paul had tested positive for Covid-19, they picked John Paul up with no notice and transported him to a quarantine facility. His 2 daughters were taken to a different location, while his wife and youngest daughter were left home with zero knowledge of their whereabouts. He shared that Emmanuel and Dee called John Paul, and his wife every day to pray with them and encourage them during their two weeks in quarantine. By God’s grace - John Paul and his daughters recovered and were reunited; and they were able to testify to God’s protection upon them.



Each staff member who recovered, shared their testimony of thankfulness for IREF’s prayers during such trying times. And each made sure to educate others on the stigma of Covid-19. We praise God that IREF was able to open its church doors, that the Word of God could be preached and heard, and that the community of Believers could finally have the opportunity to gather openly as family.

**Thank you** to everyone who joined us for our first IREF Together Virtual Event. We had viewers tune in from across the globe! God was certainly moving through IREF Together, and we praise God for the donations that were received. Through the generosity of our viewers, we were able to raise over \$100,000 of our \$150,000 goal!

If you missed the event and are interested in watching or sharing the event with your friends and family, IREF Together is still available to watch online at [www.irefusa.org/together](http://www.irefusa.org/together).







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continued...**

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## Student Testimonial

Prasanthi and Pragati Botu came to IREF in 2018 from a village about 5 hours away from campus. Prasanthi is in 8th grade at IREF's English Medium School and her younger sister, Pragati, is in 6th grade. The Botu sisters were first introduced to IREF by a family friend who graduated from IREF and told the girls' mother about the "good people, good education and constant prayer" at IREF. Shortly after hearing about the school, Prasanthi and Pragati were brought to IREF in need of a safe refuge to live and receive a proper education. Like many men in rural India, the sisters have a father who suffers from alcoholism. They remember countless nights that he would come home and start beating their mother in front of them. Today, their mother works the night shift in a rural fishing village in order to provide for her family. She would come to visit her daughters on weekends for "Parents Day" whenever possible. Dee Rebba describes a drastic change that has taken place in these girls since they first arrived on campus. She describes them as, "happy and obedient." Dee further described the shift in the girls as something she notices in many students with difficult family history. She said, "When children are brought to a place where they feel safe and secure... they just perk up. Because they feel safe, they learn how to be joyful again."



The girls agree that their favorite part about IREF is the prayer life on campus. "We pray for our parents", they said. Speaking of prayer requests, the youngest sister, Pragati, suffers from a painful condition involving her right hand. She had a vascular surgery in an Indian hospital a few years ago in an attempt to repair her condition, which unfortunately resulted in severe complications that have left her crippled and debilitated. For the past two years, Pragati has suffered from chronic pain and inflammation in her hand that inhibits her from using it entirely. Please join us in praying for Pragati's healing and for God's continual protection over these students.

## Maintenance Updates

While IREF has been on an ongoing lockdown, God has provided IREF staff with the opportunity to oversee various maintenance projects throughout the campus. A handful of administrative staff (who live just down the road from campus) come each day to volunteer their time and strength to help.

Despite canceled evangelism events (pastoral conferences, village Gospel meetings, etc.), schools being shut down and the regular daily routine adjusted; God has blessed us with time, too... These are projects that we would not have had the opportunity to do during IREF's regular schedule. These months of lockdown have truly been a special time of prayer and in-house evangelism, repairs, and team building within this small IREF group.

Some of the projects have included:

- Landscaping
- Painting
- Building Repairs
- Cleaning Projects



God has faithfully directed us to care for the ministry of IREF through these maintenance projects. Please continue to pray as IREF awaits direction for the central government on when schools can reopen. And leadership as they put safety guidelines and protocols in place for when students do return.

## Prayer & Praise

- We praise God for the IREF Together event - many came together as a body of believers internationally and were inspired by the work IREF is doing.
- Covid-19 continues to spread at a rapid rate in India, with over 4 million confirmed cases. Proper treatment has remained a consistent concern for many due to minimal access to healthcare. Please continue to pray as IREF moves to address urgent needs in surrounding villages.
- Please continue to pray for IREF students. Many come to IREF from impoverished backgrounds and broken families. Please pray for their safety and the Lord's protection while they are in their home villages.
- Please continue to pray for IREF evangelists and Bible ladies as they minister in rural villages. Sharing the Good News of Jesus Christ is so vital during such uncertain times.