

December 2020



Christmas in March Christmas is one of our favorite seasons here at IREF. For our ministry, this time of year provides an opportunity to share the true Christmas story with our community. Each year, many eyes are opened to the love of God as students and villagers listen to the story of the birth of Jesus. In addition to declaring the hope found in Jesus, Christmas is an opportunity to bless students and staff with a Christmas Gift!

Due to the COVID-19 Pandemic, many of the IREF students have not yet returned to the campus. Last month, the government allowed junior college, college and 9th and 10th grade classes to resume. We are hopeful that the remaining students will be allowed to return at the beginning of 2021. Because of this, IREF plans to host a small Christmas service with the students who have returned this month, but the Christmas gifts will be distributed in early March. This is a unique year and we want all of your sponsor children to have the opportunity to celebrate Christmas at IREF.

IREF is still receiving Christmas Gift this holiday season! Each Christmas gift costs \$25. It provides the student with a new outfit and a few small gifts. Most IREF students have never received a Christmas Gift – for only \$25, you can provide a memorable experience for an IREF student! 100% of your donations goes towards the Christmas Gifts for IREF students!



(photos from last year's IREF Christmas)

Although things may look different this year, let's make it a memorable Christmas for the IREF children!

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Thank you! As we draw to the end of 2020, an IREF supporter has offered to make your year-end impact go further by doubling every gift given this month up to \$25,000! That means every sponsorship is doubled, every Christmas gift is doubled, and every donation is **DOUBLED!**

Despite the economic challenges of 2020, the IREF community has stepped up to help thousands in Southern India. Although children have not all returned to campus, you distributed over 4,000 COVID-19 packages to families in need. You gave IREF the opportunity to increase our Subhavartha Television Broadcast during a time where people were at home, desperate for hope. This broadcast is available to 80 million people!

Enclosed is a catalog that shows a few of IREF's largest needs. By providing towards these projects you are empowering the lives of many to break to the cycle of poverty. Please consider how you can support IREF through purchasing a gift from our catalog.

Thank you for making a difference this year. We are grateful for your partnership with IREF. Your generosity through prayer and donations over the years have helped thousands of vulnerable children and communities in rural Southeast India.

Please consider giving a year-end donation to help India Rural Evangelical Fellowship continue making an impact across Southern India.



**December 2020
continued...**

**India Rural
Evangelical
Fellowship**

Spotlight on Students One day, as a shepherd travelled in Repalle with his herd, he came across a beautiful land of greenery and vibrant life – IREF. On the spot, he enrolled his sons, Jeevan and Charan Munna, at IREF to give them the opportunity to experience an education.

Jeevan and Charan Munna are brothers, both in fourth grade despite a two-year difference (Jeevan is older). They have been at IREF since 2018. The length of their attendance at IREF in and of itself should inspire praise: these brothers are members of the shepherd caste and thus live a difficult and transient lifestyle. Shepherds must move around from village to village, in order to keep and take care of their sheep. Therefore, Jeevan and Charan do not stay in one place for very long, making their prolonged IREF opportunity all the more wonderful and good.

As previously mentioned, the boys' father is a shepherd. He is also, sadly, an alcoholic. His sons do not like to talk about the domestic violence that they've encountered. Their family lives in Guntur district, in the village of Macharla, an incredibly hot, dry, rocky, and impoverished village with no pasture or greenery, where the only occupations are shepherd and rock-breaker. They live a difficult life.

When Jeevan and Charan first came to IREF, Charan was sick and malnourished. But within one year, he became healthier, busier, and communicative. He has freckles—the only boy at IREF that does—which cover his cheeks and the bridge of his nose, enhancing his already wide and bright smile. Jeevan as well, even though he is shy, has a smile to light up a room. The boys like IREF, particularly the education and many more doors to opportunity that have been opened for them. When asked why education was important, Charan replied that he wanted to receive an education so that he can help his Mom and Dad, so they don't have to work as hard as they do.



Jeevan and Charan Munna

These boys have been branded by poverty, literally and figuratively, and it seems impossible to fight the inevitable trajectory of their lives. But Christ is at work: He has equipped IREF to provide Jeevan and Charan with education, good conditions, and His perfect love which casts out all fear. Christ has complete sovereignty over every and all things, just as Paul relates to the Early Church in Colossians: *"For by Him all things were created, in heaven and on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or dominions or rulers or authorities—all things were created through Him and for Him. And He is before all things, and in him all things hold together."* (Colossians 1:16-17)

Please pray for students like Jeevan and Charan who are home during this pandemic. Pray for their safety, health and overall well-being. The government has not announced yet when elementary and middle school will resume. IREF staff has been attempting to contact families to provide prayer and encouragement. It has been difficult to stay in regular contact with families such as the Munnas, who are migrating to where work is available. We pray that these brothers will soon return to IREF!

Prayer & Praise

- Pray for IREF staff and leaders as they welcome students back to campus. Pray for protection and health, as well as wisdom as they navigate changing guidelines and work hard to instill all preventative measures.
- 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.
- Covid-19 continues to spread at a rapid rate in India, with over 9.7 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.
- We praise God for His grace upon IREF. Roughly 125 students have returned to school and everyone has remained healthy over the past few weeks.
- As many Christmas gatherings are being cancelled all over the world, we ask that you join us in praying for a movement that results in great unity among the global Christian community. Pray as IREF evangelists and Bible ladies concentrate their efforts on spreading the Good News during this holiday season.
- Thank you to everyone who helped us exceed our #GivingTuesday goal of \$4,000. With your support, the students who have returned for the school year, have safe housing, free education, and hope in Jesus Christ.