

January 2023



Happy New Year! The Bible tells us from 2 Corinthians that the old has passed away and the New has come. IREF celebrated the transition into the New Year with a candle light service. This year like every year, staff and students gathered in the IREF church with singing, praise and testimony of God's faithfulness throughout the last year and a message.

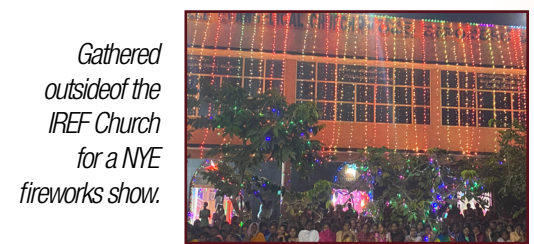
One student, Pravallika shared her testimony how God brought her to IREF; through being at IREF and learning about Christ, she was set free from strong spiritual bondages. The power and the reality of Jesus Christ is beginning to overflow in her life. Her desire is to be baptized at this year's Youth Conference. John Rebba encouraged the IREF community with a Word - God seeking after us based on Revelation 3:20 with God's knocking on the door of our hearts as we enter 2023. The New Years celebration included fireworks outside of the church; Bible Scripture holding a promise for the New Year; and a cake to make the entrance into 2023 a sweet one. Emmanuel shared at the Sunday service on God's 7 blessings entering a new year.

New Year's Day was busy as Pastor Lawrence and John traveled about 2 hours to an IREF village church to celebrate with them the New Year as well as the baptism of a new believer.

As we enter a new year please pray that the Lord will show IREF His continued kindness and steadfastness.



IREF students receive their 2023 Promise Cards and enter the year in prayer.



Gathered outside of the IREF Church for a NYE fireworks show.

India Rural Evangelical Fellowship

PO Box 1332
Park Ridge, IL
60068-7332

IREF Info Line:
p 847.220.IREF (4733)
f 847.680.4270

Visit us on the web:
www.irefusa.org

Send us an email:
info@irefusa.org

As the school year comes into full swing IREF provides new students (as well as old) with school bags. This is part of IREF mission in caring and educating children from poor backgrounds. We want new students to feel encouraged by IREF's desire for their academic success and overall well-being. Old students are given school bags as well as IREF continues to care for its returning students. Acts like these encourage IREF to know that students feel welcomed at school but that they are being given a chance of a better life. You are taking a part in adding to each students' human value as you walk alongside IREF in fostering these children from poor backgrounds so that they have a chance to succeed in life and change their own future outcomes. You are helping each of these students break the chains of generational and cyclical poverty.



Prayer & Praise

- The 2023 UK and US missions team will be arriving in Repalle on January 9th. Please pray for the health and well-being of each team member as they teach, preach, pray and serve during the 2023 Youth Conference in Repalle.
- Please pray for all who attend the 2023 Youth Conference. Pray that many will come to know Christ as their personal Lord and Savior. Pray for the pastors and speakers who share the Gospel, may the Lord use each one to further His kingdom.
- The medical team members will be working with the IREF nursing students and staff to facilitate checkups on all students, evangelists, Bible ladies and staff members at IREF and local villagers. Please pray that the clinics will run smoothly and the team will be able to help all in need, effectively and efficiently.
- Please continue 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 in the new year.



It's been almost 8 years since I last traveled to IREF. I have a young family and my time and position at work hasn't accommodated for a lengthy trip to India until 2022. Before our children were born, I had traveled to IREF eleven times and each time I left feeling God's presence in an elevated way.

I really didn't know what to expect on this trip, but I definitely felt God calling our family to go. Christie and I had been praying for a couple years and more persistently in 2022 that we could return to IREF and support the ministry in any way God was directing us. We also had hopes that our children could see the ministry firsthand and experience what serving God truly looks like.

Part of what we as a family experienced on this trip is what many experience when they travel with a mission's team or part of a work group that travels to IREF to serve - we were simply taken out of our comfort zone. One of the first events we were asked to participate in was at the IREF John's Elementary School distributing free



textbooks to children. IREF provides a quality education to a very impoverished community, and it includes textbooks free of charge, which many children couldn't afford otherwise. During the event, my soul ached for these children who come from humble upbringings yet study so intensely and see education as a lifeline. I know my kids saw this, but more so they saw the ways God uses IREF to bless these children.

There are also many Christmas events at IREF that allowed for our family to reconnect with the IREF staff, Pastors and Bible Ladies. For three evenings, buses carried staff and students from house to house singing Christmas carols and praying blessing over the homes of IREF staff and congregation members. Caroling lasted until almost midnight each night and the first thing my kids would ask the next morning is if they could do it again. They were given the opportunity to clearly see that the focus of Christmas truly is Christ, prayer and worship.



We also had the opportunity to attend the IREF Christmas event at the Repalle IREF Church where each IREF student, Pastor and Bible Lady received a gift from IREF. Christie and I had the opportunity to reconnect with many whose families have served IREF since it was founded. I don't speak the Telugu language fluently, but I have and feel a genuine love from each of these individuals even though I can't express myself to them. I know they have prayed for our family over the years, and we value these relationships beyond measure.



Some personal takeaways I have from the trip are that I got to see my kids getting to love their Ammama (grandma) and Thatha (grandpa) and cousins while they were in their element. Dee and Emmanuel, John, Josh and Natalie and their four girls live in Repalle year-round supporting the IREF ministry and we normally only see them briefly when they return to the USA in the summer. Asha, Emmett and Priya (our kids) will forever remember Emmanuel spoiling them with treats each morning as they visited him in the IREF office. They will also never forget Uncle John's gentleness each day when they came



to his office to retrieve the badminton rackets to play with their cousins and IREF students. Christie and I will treasure getting to eat lunch with our entire extended family each day and discuss all the festivities. God had a unique way of allowing us to serve on this trip and in my opinion it only elevated our joy!

Thank you to each of you that held our family close in your prayers throughout our trip. We are grateful beyond measure!

Jeremy Thompson

January 2023
continued...

India Rural
Evangelical
Fellowship