



## A Transformation Years in the Making



Most often, we see students publicly declare Jesus Christ as their Lord and Savior through baptism, but recently, the IREF family celebrated the baptism of a couple, Praveen and Joyce. Years ago, Joyce—a nominal Christian—attended junior college at the school directly beside IREF. Each day, she heard the evening devotions and listened as the songs and message lingered in the evening air. Her curiosity grew about Jesus, and she thought, “Just once, I want to attend the IREF church.” She wouldn’t attend as a student, but years later, God would use this church in a powerful way.

After graduating and getting married to her husband, Praveen, Joyce attended a few churches, but she did not receive the warm welcome a church should give. Instead, each displayed the disparity between castes, which left her feeling unsafe or unable to worship a God who loves all people. So, searching online, she came across IREF’s Sunday program, and her family began watching IREF’s services from their home.



One day, Joyce was confronted with a thought—*if I die today, where would I go? Would I go to Hell? Heaven?* She sought the Lord, praying and pleading with Him, finally answering the call to faith. Her husband, though, hadn’t decided to follow Christ, so Joyce prayed for him. For one year, she prayed, and God answered. In 2024, they began to make the 1-hour journey to attend the IREF Church on campus, and they were ready for the next step—baptism.



So, a few weeks ago, Praveen and Joyce boarded the bus with IREF students, listening to the beat of the drum, the clapping hands, and the voices raised in song. As the bus hit pothole after pothole, their hearts stirred with both anxiety and excitement. Even as they approached the water, Joyce and Praveen still felt a lingering sadness over their lives. Were they making the right choice?

Yet, as Emmanuel Rebba gently guided them in baptism, one by one, they felt the wave of water rush over them. They laid down their old life, and

their new life was born in Christ. Now they don’t feel sad. Instead, they feel the confidence to follow the Lord and enter heaven with certainty.

Only God can bring this type of transformation. Praveen and Joyce’s baptism was years in the making—years of fasting, praying, and seeking God. And God, in His timing, made all things work for His good, welcoming two more into His Family.

### 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](http://www.irefusa.org)

Send us an email:  
[info@irefusa.org](mailto:info@irefusa.org)



Isn’t it amazing to see what God is doing in the hearts of those all over the world? If you want to hear more stories like this, we invite you to join us for Shine—our annual banquet. You can join us:

- Wednesday, September 11 at 6:30 PM in Gurnee, IL
- Sunday, September 15 at 5 PM in Kalamazoo, MI

No matter which banquet you choose to attend, you will leave encouraged, inspired, and challenged by what God is doing in rural India. **Learn more and reserve your seats at [irefusa.org/shine](http://irefusa.org/shine).**

August 2024



**With the clear, sunny skies** and hot, humid temperatures, it almost felt like we were in India. Instead, we were on the Bonnie Brook Golf Course in Waukegan, Illinois, with 76 of IREF's golf buddies. This year was special, as Dee Rebba and Tre Moore shared updates from IREF that reminded everyone of the transformational work God is doing in and through this ministry. And together, we raised funds to provide a full year of education and housing for 21 IREF students.

This golf outing is more than a fun event filled with surprises like an air cannon, an inflatable monster on the fairway, and raffle prizes. It's a chance to link arms and transform lives together, and we couldn't have done it without our golfers and sponsors. Thank you to everyone who joined us, and a special thanks to our business sponsors Bonnie Brook Golf Course and Best Hole in One for making this event memorable.



**Pastor Doug Swing** didn't really want to go to India, but God used his reluctant yes to serve the IREF pastors in a profound way—washing their feet. Doug is the first to say that he's just an ordinary guy from Michigan. There was nothing special about him in this foot-washing moment. It was all God, and as the pastors lined up almost giddy with anticipation, Doug and the team prayed they would see Jesus, not them. When the final IREF pastor's feet had been washed, the tables turned. They insisted on washing the team's feet. Doug still remembers how the pastors crowded around the

water, each hoping to serve those who had just served them. It was the picture of Jesus, of humility, of love, of the global church serving one another, and it's a moment Doug will never forget.



This country that was once on Doug's "anti-bucket list" is now a place he loves more than most, and it's all because of God. At IREF, he sees beautiful and profound examples of God's love; he sees people who are the true hands and feet of Jesus. For that reason, he's so thankful for the privilege and opportunity to help IREF in any way he can. We're so grateful for Pastor Doug, for his obedience to the Lord, and for the way God has used him to serve pastors in rural India.



## Welcome Brandon Smith

We are delighted to announce the addition of Brandon Smith to the IREF-USA team! Brandon's journey with IREF began in 2012 during his first mission trip, and he has since been a steadfast supporter, actively volunteering, sponsoring, and sharing our mission with his home church, Village Church of Gurnee. In his new role as director of strategic engagement, Brandon will play a pivotal role

in connecting churches with the transformative work God is doing in India. His mission is to guide IREF supporters in discovering impactful ways to engage and contribute.

While continuing his pastoral responsibilities at Village Church, Brandon will serve IREF part-time. Please join us in praying for Brandon and his family as they embark on this exciting new chapter.



## Prayer Requests

- Emmanuel's Travels: Emmanuel plans to travel back to the U.S. mid-August. Pray for smooth travels and for a wonderful time with his family in the U.S.
- Shine Banquets: These annual events bring in many new and old friends. Please pray that people will be moved by what God is doing and that many partners will come from these banquets.

August 2024  
Continued

India Rural  
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