

A memorable visit!

Here is a report of Ian Leitch's visit to India, last November:

"After two days of travel, I arrived in Repalle to fireworks and a warm welcome from the children, students, adults, and IREF's Director, Emmanuel Rebba, and his wife Dee. They were as happy as I was! Pavani, the child my wife and I support, put a garland around my neck, and I thanked everyone for their warm welcome. I was back in India with the people I love.

Five Americans and a Dutchman were also visiting for various reasons and I enjoyed being with them before they left later in the week.

Monday-Wednesday my first week, the pastors, evangelists and Bible Ladies were in Repalle for their monthly meetings. I taught each morning and evening on Colossians. Craig Darling (IREF's USA Director) and Emmanuel Rebba also spoke. I had an opportunity to speak at a meeting of post-graduate students and at an outdoor meeting in the fishing village of Rajukulva on the Krishna River.

After preaching in the Repalle church on Sunday morning, we went to the village of Konaphalem for the dedication and opening of the church that The Heralds Trust has funded. It was very emotional for me. We never thought, all those years back when The Heralds was first formed, that we would ever do anything like this - a new church building, doubling up as a storm shelter!



Most of villagers turned out to welcome us with garlands and flower petals. The unveiling of the dedication plaque and ribbon-cutting ceremony, before we entered the church building, were very moving. A short service was held inside. Craig and Tom brought greetings, then I did so too, finishing up with some words of encouragement concerning the life of Jesus: "He went about doing good."

Members of the village thanked us for the church

building and the help IREF is giving them in putting up new homes for the ones destroyed in the tsunami.

I raised another \$10,000 over the year for a church near the Bay of Bengal, which will also double up as a storm shelter. What a privilege to be able to help the hopeless and bring hope to the helpless!

IREF's children are a continual joy to me. To watch the children's faces and hear their shouts of excitement when they received their photos from last year's visit was wonderful!

During my second week, I taught the New Life Seminar to church leaders who came to Repalle for the week. I taught two sessions each morning and one session in the afternoon, Monday-Friday. Frances Rebba interpreted for me and each church leader received a manual in Telugu. On Friday, after the last session, diplomas were presented and a group photograph was taken. What a privilege to have an input into the lives and ministry of these church leaders!

In the evenings during the second week, I spoke in the villages of Kollapalem, Kiskindapalem, Ullipalem, Adavipalem and at a church ground-breaking ceremony in Seethava Palli (see below).

On my final Sunday, I spoke at the Repalle Church service in the morning and at the villages of Palapatla and Pedapali in the evening. Monday was a clean up and packing day, then Tuesday was a day of 5.30am farewells (!) before I arrived home around noon the next day.

Physically, mentally and spiritually I felt the best I had ever been in India. I slept well, ate well, exercised well, and just felt good! There were long days and short nights, long journeys on rough roads, continual difficulty with language, dust and dirt - but I love the people.

I have soared on eagles' wings. I have run and not grown weary of the task. I have walked and not grown faint in the ministry. I have dropped on my bed exhausted at night. But in my heart, I rejoiced at the privileges God has given me and the strength with which he has sustained me!"

News Round Up

➤ Ground-breaking ceremony for UK-sponsored church building

Ian Leitch was privileged to be present for an important groundbreaking ceremony for a new church building, being sponsored by two Scottish families, during his recent visit to India. "We left

Repalle by bus for the village of Seethava Palli, two hours away over the new Krishna Bridge. The Pastor and Bible Lady who serve the church there are a married couple, Yesu Padam and Vimalamma. They attended the first New Life Seminar I conducted ten years ago and I see them each year. The journey to their village was tiring but what a joy it was to share in the groundbreaking ceremony and the short service that followed. I spoke from Matthew 28:19-20. Afterwards we had a simple snack meal in the old church building, which is in such a bad state that it will have to be torn down. The new building is on a much a better site. There is opposition to the Gospel from some local Hindus, but Yesu Padam and Vimalamma continue the Lord's work faithfully and the village church is growing." The huge recently constructed bridge over the River Krishna (see below) will open up many new opportunities for the Gospel in the Krishna district of Andhra Pradesh.



➤ **New Child Development Centre**

IREF has broken ground in the village of Penumudi for its latest Child Development Centre, which will use the newly constructed church building there. **The trustees of IREF(UK) have offered to make a one off gift of £2,500 to cover the first six months of salary costs and running expenses for this new CDC.** The money is from surplus funds previously allocated to the Ullipalem CDC, as this is now almost fully supported through sponsorship money (only two more children require sponsors). Future CDC sponsors will be directed towards the Penumudi project.

➤ **Flood Relief Work**

Heavy rains saturated the coastal districts of Andhra Pradesh along the coast of Bay of Bengal on 27th October last year, lasting for more than seven days. The Repalle region bore the brunt of the impact, as the depression was only 30 miles away. All the low-lying areas and farm fields were inundated, and the poor farm workers, who depend on daily wages for their survival, couldn't find any work. Their thatched houses were submerged under water and their families were shifted to the nearest school buildings. IREF teams rushed to the villages and distributed food packets. In all, 50,000 food packets were distributed during and after the rains. 5,000



relief packages (rice, groceries and blankets) were handed out during those difficult days. Medicines for 3,000 families were also distributed. A medical camp was set up in the IREF campus and a wide variety of medicines was provided for those in need. The IREF(UK) Trustees met on the day news of the flood reached Britain. **We were able to authorise an immediate gift of £1,000 for the relief effort,** thanks to a number of undesigned donations received over recent months. Thank you for your generosity, which enabled us to respond so rapidly!



➤ **New Girls' Dormitory Block**

Construction began last September on a new dormitory block to house 200 girls at the orphanage in Repalle. This project is an answer to prayer for a solution to accommodate the growing number of children needing the care IREF offers.

➤ **Homes for Tsunami Victims**

Many people lost everything they owned when the 2004 Tsunami ravaged the entire village of Lankevani Dibba. IREF was on hand to provide relief in the form of food, cooking utensils, and clothing for the immediate needs of the village. A partnership with *Covenant World Relief* has now been established to provide more permanent relief for the affected families in the form of concrete homes. The project will ensure strong domestic dwellings, which will withstand the fierce cyclones and storms that often impact villages near the Bay of Bengal coastline. In the first phase of the project, 28 houses will be built, with plans to provide 100 more homes in subsequent phases. New IREF churches for the coastal areas of India are now being constructed in concrete. These structures will serve entire communities as havens during violent weather conditions.

It is a privilege for all of us to be involved in such a dynamic and holistic mission organisation. Our next newsletter will give a report on the annual Repalle evangelistic and Bible teaching meetings. Meanwhile, **thank you for your continuing support for IREF!**

David Hunt [Chairman, IREF(UK)]