

Ian Leitch in India: 10th-28th Nov

I have been encouraged to receive daily e-mails from Ian Leitch, reporting on his 12th visit to India. By the time you receive this newsletter, he may be home! But here are some extracts from his early journals, to give you an 'as it happened' flavour of his visit.

Sunday 11th Nov: *Arrive at IREF with the streets lined with students, children, my poor friends, teachers, workers and pastors. ... I walked the whole length of the girls' compound greeting many of the children I have now known for some years. ...By now nearly 1400 children, students and adults were in the compound! Emmanuel introduces me. I share with them the love of God expressed in Jesus who cared for the ordinary people as he went about doing good. Then they prayed with no pretension, some flat on their face, some with their hands high in the air, others kneeling with their heads bowed, but all acknowledging that Jesus is Lord.*

Monday 12th Nov: *5.30am: The bell is rung for the children and I am able to slip out onto the balcony and sit quietly in the dark, listening to their worship, singing and prayers. It is a moving experience in a culture that has idols and idol temples everywhere. On the other side of the road from the Bible College, the new three-storey Lydia home [for retired evangelists] is almost finished. We start the NLS at 10.00am with 40 people; by the time the second session starts, we have over 60. It took 15 minutes to get the screen up for the overheads. It was like a scene from Monty Python!*

Tuesday 13th Nov: *6.00am. Pavani and a friend came with my early morning cup of coffee. They had come back from the study hall where they go every morning 4.30-6.30am as exams approach. This, no doubt, is why IREF students have a high rate of graduating students!*

9.00am As I make my way to the Bible School for the NLS, I pass children doing homework, sitting on the ground in classes, before going to school. As I walk along the street, it's the poverty and helplessness that tears my heart. Dawkins would blame the selfish gene - some are lucky and some are unlucky in a meaningless universe. I do not have all the answers to pain and suffering but my believe in God, who has revealed Himself in Jesus, continues to drive me, as it has thousands of Christians down through the centuries, to feed the hungry, educate the illiterate, heal the sick and love the unlovely. There aren't too many atheists around the world doing that.

9.30am The NLS group are singing to the beat of a drum and their rhythmic clapping. As I face them, the

women are on my right and the men on my left, sitting mostly crossed leg on the floor. I have discovered there are numerous sitting positions. The first couple of days are hard for them in many ways, not least because my style is so different from what they are used to in their village churches. There, the style is narrative, while mine is exegetical in the NLS. I use lots of stories, which they enjoy and even laugh at as I dramatise them. This morning went well but there was no tea at the break because the milk for the kitchens had not been delivered. I told the leaders to go and milk a buffalo! The afternoon session went well and they are into the swing of things now. The bugs this evening were the worst I have ever seen and they were everywhere. It was like the plague of flies in Egypt

Wednesday 14th Nov: *The ceiling fan has blown all the dead bugs to the sides of the room. I had to wash the bugs out the bath with jugs of water.*

The NLS went very well this morning. Each session runs about 90 minutes due to interpretation. Francis does a good job and I like the fact that he flows with my style.

During his stay in India, Ian anticipates running his *New Life Seminars* for about 60 participants, identified as those with leadership potential from IREF's village churches.

He is also expecting to have plenty of speaking opportunities around the IREF campus, ministering to schoolchildren, students and members of staff.

He is hoping to get out and about, visiting local villages for preaching and teaching opportunities. A couple of church dedications are also on his timetable. Our next newsletter will contain further news of Ian's visit.

2008 visit: 26th Jan – 8th Feb

A seven-strong medical team from the UK will be visiting India between 26th January and 8th February next year:

- **Jason Leitch** (dentist and medical team leader)
- **Stuart Bell** (nurse)
- **Aileen Bell** (dentist)
- **Elizabeth Callander** (nurse)
- **Janet McArthur** (dental nurse)
- **Suzanne Perry** (dentist)
- **Stuart Shaw** (optician).

Please remember them in your prayers as they put all their final preparations in place.

We are delighted that £15,800 has been raised so far towards their trip (more than £2,000 per person), so

they are rapidly closing in on their ambitious target of £20,000. Further contributions can be made via the website www.justgiving.com/irefmedical or directly through our Treasurer. All gifts can benefit from Gift Aid.



There will be no pastors travelling with the medical team from the UK this time, but pray about the possibility of some of us going out to India in 2009. Craig Darling (IREF's USA director) will be leading a team of American pastors and various other personnel (including three nurses) to help with the visit.

IREF Responds to Flooding Emergency

Continuous relentless rain besieged the state of Andhra Pradesh last month, submerging many villages under water. People in the Repalle region were impacted the most, as it is a coastal area prone to cyclonic depressions in the Bay of Bengal. Poor farm labourers are unable to find work at such times, as the fields are inundated. Villagers cannot return to their homes until the floodwater recedes. Families were evacuated and sheltered in nearby school and college buildings. In areas along the river Krishna, 70 water-flow control gates were lifted to a height of 16 feet, releasing seven million cubic feet of rainwater per second.

First on the scene

IREF was first on the scene around the Repalle area, identifying 20 villages that were severely affected and 2,500 families whose thatched houses were destroyed and belongings lost. As a first step, IREF provided food and necessary clothing to the flood victims. Relief items of rice and groceries were distributed and clothing provided to the 2,500 families. These activities were made even more difficult by the persistence of the floodwaters.

Assessing the needs

IREF Relief teams contact village elders and IREF pastors as soon as they arrive in a flooded area. Farm

workers live separately in their own colonies, so the IREF teams have to visit each remote location. Lists of those families suffering and in need of assistance are prepared by the IREF teams, who then assess the losses and damage incurred by each of these families. The village elders and IREF's local pastors, who know the area and its people well, are invaluable in the relief process.



The people's only help and hope

IREF was the region's first response to the flood emergency, offering help before the local government responded at all. When news reached us of the flooding, it wasn't known when the local government would respond to people's needs, and if so in what manner. There are no other NGOs or other charitable organizations present in the area, so the help IREF is able to offer is unique and much appreciated by all who receive it.

News Round Up

We held a very encouraging Trustees meeting earlier this month.

- Our treasurer was able to report a record amount of funding remitted to India this year: almost £30,000 with two months still to go. Our previous best year was 2005 (£26,496).
- 46 boarding school children, 17 evangelists, 9 teachers and 60 Child Development Centre children are currently being supported from the UK.

Thank you for your continuing prayers for the Lord's work in India and the support we are able to provide from the UK.

David Hunt [Chairman, IREF(UK)]