

Christmas in Repalle

Each year, IREF aims to use the Christmas season as an opportunity to share the good news of Jesus Christ with as many children and community members as possible. Events are held to draw attention to the story of Jesus' birth. Carol singing, star-lighting ceremonies, and gift-giving are among the activities designed to enable children and members of the community to hear about God's love for them.



IREF's nativity play

Gift-giving is a special time; it truly reaches into the hearts of children, as many come from poor backgrounds - some don't even own a pair of shoes. When they hear that they are going to receive a gift, they are astonished at the love being shown to them. It causes them to ask questions like, "who?" and "why?" - "Who would want to bless me with a gift?" and "Why would anyone care enough for me to have a new clothes, something I can't afford on my own?"

This is the point at which God is able to touch many people's hearts as they start to listen all the more intently to the Christmas message to discover more about the "Who?" and "Why?", and so begin to understand that there is a loving Father who wants to bless them.

IREF couldn't facilitate this Christmas gift-giving without the help of loyal child-sponsors and donors' one-off gifts. Your faithfulness in helping IREF's children learn about Jesus Christ is one of the reasons that IREF's Christmas gift-giving is so successful each year, and why so many children take the step of accepting Christ before going on to be baptized - to God be the Glory!

Spotlight on an IREF Student

Meet Phanendra (Phani). His mother and father were arranged to be married when they were very young, only 12 years old.

In the 1990s, American pastors Art Gay and John Armstrong led a mission team to IREF. As they moved around, preaching in various rural villages, the team stopped in Phani's village. His grandfather brought the then 7-day-old baby boy, Phani, to the pastors for prayer. His family knew that God would use him for His kingdom.

When Phani was three-years-old, his father committed suicide, leaving a helpless 15-year-old wife to care for their family. Phani's grandfather stepped in and raised Phani for two years. Then, when Phani was five years old, the grandfather brought Phani to IREF for a full-time education.



IREF has become Phani's home and family. Thanks to the faithful support of Bob Nelson, Phani finished his education and graduated from IREF's Industrial Training Institute.



Phani now works for IREF and has dedicated his life to serving the Lord in any way he can, including his talents in music.



Phani is a part of the worship team which leads IREF's church services, village meetings, and also the annual Youth Conference/Gospel Meetings.

Dee Rebba writes: *Emmanuel calls Phani the 'Samuel of IREF'. He serves wholeheartedly and has been faithful to the Lord from a very young age. Recently, I had the privilege of visiting his family. As I walked through his village, I saw the youth of his age wandering around in a drunken state with no goals and no knowledge of Christ. God has reminded me how blessed Phani is by being here at IREF and how blessed we are to have seen him grow into a wonderful Christ-centred man!*



2019 Youth Conference

Praise God for the good number of young people who attended IREF's annual Youth Conference this year (11-15th January). Each day, faithful relevant Bible teaching was delivered and moving testimonies were shared.

A Medical Team from the USA was on hand to provide basic check-ups (general health, eyesight and dental screening) for the IREF students and staff. The team also visited two remote villages where they brought hope to those who often feel neglected and/or rejected.

Spotlight on another IREF Student

Meet Haritha. She is a first year Junior College student (Year 11). Many years ago, her grandparents worked at IREF as gatekeepers; and her father also worked for IREF as part of the maintenance staff.

Haritha's grandparents passed away and her family settled in a village about an hour away from IREF's Repalle campus. Her father obtained a job cleaning city streets during the day and driving rickshaws at night. But he felt it was important for his daughter to come to IREF for her College studies because of the good values of discipline and prayer.

Haritha arrived at IREF in July 2018 and started her studies. She arrived with no personal faith in Jesus Christ, but after a few months all that changed! She committed her life to Jesus and began to pray for her family's salvation.



But last October, she received the devastating news that her father had been murdered and his body thrown into a canal. In her desperation to find him, Haritha's mother asked psychics how much it would cost her for them to discover him. Five days later, his body was found and he was positively identified.

Haritha was heartbroken. She returned to IREF where she was surrounded by supportive classmates and friends. They prayed together for her mother's salvation – and last month (January) they received news that her mother had thrown away all her idols and accepted Christ as her saviour! They now look forward to being baptised together - Praise the Lord!!

For your prayers

- Give thanks for young men like Phani.
- Give thanks for the success of this year's Youth Conference; pray that many more will come to know Christ as their personal Lord and Saviour, if they haven't done so already.
- Give thanks for Haritha and her mother; pray for their forthcoming baptism together.

Once again, thank you for your continuing support for IREF, for which we and our partners in India are so grateful! Thanks to your generosity, we were able to send £67,904.13 to India last year, with a further £5,027.64 being sent in January this year.

David Hunt [Chairman, IREF(UK)]