

*Blessed are those whose strength is in you,
whose hearts are set on pilgrimage.
As they pass through the Valley of Baka,
they make it a place of springs ...
They go from strength to strength.*
[Psalm 84.6-8]

Those words from Psalm 84 sum up for me the joy of partnering with IREF in India! It has been remarkable to see how the Lord's work has flourished during these recent very challenging days. In a recent prayer event, Emmanuel Rebba was able to share that, thankfully, Repalle now appears to have very few cases of Covid-19, for which we thank the Lord. Meanwhile, plenty of good things have been happening!

Schools and Colleges reopen

The past few months have seen a gradual reopening of IREF's Schools and Colleges, in line with Indian government regulations. On 9th November last year, the first batch of pupils returned to the Repalle campus (9th & 10th Grade pupils, 2nd year Junior College students, 2nd & 3rd year Degree College students, and Nursing students). 1st to 8th Grade pupils, along with 1st year Junior College students and 1st year Degree College students, have also now returned. It is hoped the CDCs will be able to reopen within the next few weeks.



IREF Staff, Evangelists and Bible Ladies held a two-day Prayer Meeting prior to the campus re-opening back in November last year, to seek God's blessing and wisdom for the coming academic year.

Strict health and safety procedures have been put in place around the Repalle campus, and we thank God that there have been no cases of the virus recorded on campus since the students and pupils returned.



We are hoping to issue updated profiles of those being sponsored from the UK later this month.

Youth conference

IREF's annual Youth Conference took place from 14th – 17th January; it was restricted this year to the 400 students already resident on campus. But what a blessing it was to those able to attend!



Emmanuel Rebba preached from the book of Esther about God's protection and the power of prayer.

On the penultimate day of the Conference, ten young people were baptised in the Krishna River, the first baptisms that have been able to take place since February last year, due to the outbreak of Covid-19 in the area.



Grow your own food!

For many years, IREF had considered establishing its own vegetable garden. During the many months of lockdown, IREF began to plant vegetables for the small number of IREF staff still on campus. Slowly, the vegetable garden expanded as more students were



welcomed back to campus. The garden now includes peppers, spinach, tomatoes and eggplants, with the hope of adding more vegetables in the future.



One of the teachers being sponsored from the UK, Chinnaswamy, the 10th-grade physical science teacher at the English Medium School, has taken charge of caring for the garden. Chinnaswamy says the garden is a reflection of his time at IREF. Looking back, he felt as though his life didn't

have a purpose. But after teaching at IREF for many years, he discovered a relationship with Christ. In taking responsibility for the vegetable garden, he has found great joy and purpose!

Between the students on campus and the surrounding community, IREF distributes over one million meals each year! With so many mouths to feed, IREF wants to be good stewards of what the Lord has given it. The hope is that the IREF garden will teach students new responsibilities, as it feeds their campus personnel and also their local community.



More baptisms!

On three consecutive weekends last month, there were baptisms in the Krishna River. In total, nearly 50 individuals have demonstrated their commitment to Jesus Christ in this way. College students across the IREF campus are experiencing a revival; but many adults are also responding to the Gospel message!

One woman, Sunitha, travelled 12 hours to be baptised! She comes from a strongly Hindu background. After her marriage in 2011, she began to experience spiritual attacks. For various reasons, her husband's family did not like her, which caused a lot of friction within the family. They began to plot ways to put Sunitha out of the family, by sending evil spirits

into Sunitha using witchcraft. Slowly, Sunitha's life began to deteriorate. She stopped eating, lost her strength, became mentally frail, and had to give up her employment.

Sunitha's parents were concerned for their daughter. They asked Emmanuel Rebba to pray for Sunitha over the phone. Through prayer, Sunitha felt the spiritual oppression lessen; she began to feel a peace she hadn't experienced in years. One day, when visiting her family in Repalle, she sought out Emmanuel Rebba for additional prayer as she still felt under spiritual attack. After calling for the evil spirits that were oppressing her to release her from spiritual bondage, Sunitha experienced the unique peace and freedom that only Jesus can impart. She immediately fell to her knees and committed her life fully to Christ.

It was India's lockdown that allowed Sunitha to seek the Lord with more dedication. She read the Bible more, joined a woman's Bible Study group, and strengthened her faith in Christ. But she was met with further opposition from her extended family as they pressured her to retain her Hindu roots. They didn't support her commitment to Christ, and this led to her to feeling fear and discouragement. She again sought prayer from Emmanuel Rebba via a phone call, and again felt the freedom that comes from Christ.

On February 13, 2021 Sunitha travelled twelve hours to attend IREF's church service the following day; she shared her testimony in front of the congregation. With boldness and courage, she spoke of her resolve to live for Christ no matter the cost. Her voice and words were a demonstration of God's power and His compassion to save those who truly seek Him.

After the church service, IREF held a baptism service at the Krishna River. As Sunitha stepped toward the river to be baptised, she felt a pull of darkness and fear. She closed her eyes as the sun hit her face and this time, rather than asking Emmanuel to pray for her, Sunitha prayed herself, knowing that Jesus is stronger than every form of darkness.



A new day had dawned for Sunitha as she embarked on her new life with Christ. With real determination, she boldly made her way from the riverbank into the water and was baptised.

For further details on many of these stories, check out IREF's Facebook page, which contains some inspiring testimonies!

www.facebook.com/groups/36670984281

Thank you!

David Hunt