

## **Ian Leitch – a tribute**

It is no exaggeration to say that IREF(UK) wouldn't exist but for Ian Leitch, who was called home into the presence of his Lord and Saviour a few weeks after our last newsletter, on Sunday 19<sup>th</sup> June.



Let me take you back to the late summer of 1995. I was sitting at my desk in the vestry of Hamilton Baptist Church, where I was serving as its pastor, when the telephone rang. I answered it, and the voice at the other end said, *"Hi David. It's Ian here. How would you like to come to India with me?"*

I nearly fell off my chair at the prospect! But once I had recovered from the surprise, I replied, *"Sure, tell me more!"* I had never dreamt I would have the opportunity of doing something so special in my Christian ministry!

Ian was a well-known Scottish evangelist and a long-standing friend of my wife's family; they had belonged to the same church in Edinburgh as children.

And so it came about that my wife and I visited Ian and his wife, Morag, in their home in Balerno (just outside Edinburgh) to meet Dave Moorhead who was due to lead a team to India in January 1996. Dave, an American, was already a veteran of several visits to IREF(India) and was known to Ian through Ian's frequent visits to the USA.

IREF(India) was keen to expand its support base and felt opportunities in the UK were worth exploring.

And so it came about that Ian led the first team from the UK to visit IREF(India) in January 1996, for its annual Bible Conference and Gospel rallies. I was a

complete rookie at cross-cultural communication using a translator; but Ian was a wonderful help and encouragement to all of us on the team. We looked to him as the expert!

It was a very happy trip, with lots of memorable moments and plenty of laughs. Ian had a great sense of humour. When we visited a beach on one of our days off from ministry, he quipped, *"This is what I call suffering for the Lord – sitting on a beach in the sunshine, overlooking the beautiful Bay of Bengal!"*



What struck me about IREF on my 1996 visit was its vibrancy and holistic approach to mission: quality education was taking place alongside passionate evangelism; there was extensive church planting, as well as gospel rallies; and humanitarian aid was being offered through income generation projects to help the poorest in society become self-supporting.

And so when I returned to the UK, I established IREF(UK), as a registered charity to be a support arm for the work in India, through recruiting people to pray and raise finances for the work. Thanks to the generosity of our supporters over the past 26 years, over £¾m has been remitted to India to support the work there (almost \$1m).

Ian became one of our founding trustees for the charity, a position he held for 13 years. We greatly appreciated all his advice and wisdom.

For many years, he ran his week-long New Life Seminars in Repalle for IREF's pastors, Bible Ladies, and others; they were greatly appreciated. Minutes from our 1<sup>st</sup> May 2008 Trustees meeting read:

*Ian Leitch gave a brief report on his recent visit to India. He said that, as always, the highlight for him was the New Life Seminars as he feels that those who attend genuinely want to learn. He also said that he sometimes thinks he, personally, gets as much out of conducting the seminars as those*

attending get from participating. He said that the scriptural quotation, "Jesus looked on the crowds with compassion" is nowhere more meaningful to him than when he is in India.



The following year, Ian indicated that over 1,000 people had attended his New Life seminars in India since he first started them. He continued to run them on an annual basis until ill-health prevented him from taking long-haul flights to that part of the world.

We mourn Ian's passing and pray for God's continuing comfort to be poured out on his wife, Morag, and the rest of their family – in the sure knowledge that Ian is even now enjoying the bliss of his Saviour's presence whom he served so well during his days on earth.

*I heard a voice from heaven say, "Write this: Blessed are the dead who die in the Lord from now on." "Yes," says the Spirit, "they will rest from their labour, for their deeds will follow them."*  
[Revelation 14.13]

## A New School Year

After weeks of being at home for their summer holidays, students are back on the Repalle campus. Despite heavy rains, due to the monsoon season, students have come from far and near to register at IREF's schools and colleges.



To date, nearly 400 pupils have enrolled in the elementary and high schools – a great answer to prayer!

As the school year progresses, please pray for the health and safety, both physical and spiritual, for all the IREF students and staff.

## Annual Believers Retreat

IREF(India) recently held a Believers Retreat, an opportunity for those who became Christians through the Gospel meetings earlier in the year to receive sound biblical teaching to help them grow in their understanding of the faith.

The theme for this year's teaching was "Return to me, and I will return to you," says the LORD Almighty [Malachi 3.7].

21 individuals were baptised in the River Krishna on the last Saturday of August, 15 IREF students and six adults who were attending the Believers Retreat.



## Summer Gospel Village Meetings

This summer, IREF was able to hold Gospel meetings in some villages for the first time in three years, due to the ravages of the Covid pandemic.



## Global Prayer Meetings

It has been encouraging to meet up with Emmanuel and Dee Rebba, and John, in India on the first Saturday of each month for a Global Prayer Gathering, to hear their latest news and prayer needs. The next one will take place at **2.30pm BST on Saturday 1<sup>st</sup> October.**

### Some Prayer Points:

- Give thanks for the impact that Ian Leitch had on so many lives in India.
- Pray for the new academic year, that the Lord will continue to bring a good number of students to IREF's educational establishments and that he will provide additional teachers and staff to fill IREF's current vacancies.

Thank you for your ongoing prayers and support, which are much appreciated!

*David Hunt* [Chairman of IREF(UK)]