

## **Back to School!**

The new academic year has started in India and there has been a good uptake of places at IREF's schools and colleges. The Repalle campus was full of hustle and bustle as parents enrolled their offspring, both new and returning students.



In rural India, many children are exposed to negative influences in their homes, such as physical abuse, alcoholism, and child labour. Thank God that many are now in a safe environment on the campus and looking forward to receiving a good education.



Give thanks to God for the new staff members who have been recruited to serve in IREF's many schools and colleges. Pray that their teaching will be of a high standard, and that they will also exhibit the love and

grace of Jesus for the young lives in their care.



*The newly painted John's High School*



*Cheerful nursing students returning for their studies*

## **Baptisms galore!**

With the start of a new academic year, many of IREF's students are hearing the Gospel for the first time and responding positively to it. 26 students, all of them young women, were baptised in the River Krishna, at the start of this month. Pray that an equal number of young men will follow their example!



Please pray for all those who have been baptised, that they will grow in their knowledge of Jesus and develop an ever deeper commitment to him.

### **Meet Prasanth**

On meeting Prasanth, the first thing you notice apart from his height is his broad smile and happy laughter. Why is he so cheerful? What is his story?

Prasanth is an only child. When he was young, his father struggled with alcohol addiction. His mother often threatened to leave the family if his father didn't change; one day, she did just that - left the family home never to return. Five years ago, when Prasanth was 11 years old, his father died of leukaemia.



This is when Prasanth's life began to turn around for the better. He was no longer under the care of his alcoholic father. Instead, his uncle Cham Paul housed him in and treated him as his own son. Cham Paul is a pastor. In speaking about his uncle, Prasanth said, *"Being with my uncle was the first time I felt loved and cared for. He treats me like his own child."* Prasanth and his uncle live in Vijayawada, a city located two hours from IREF's Repalle campus. Cham Paul attended an IREF Pastors Conference and was impressed by the ministry of IREF. After learning more about the organisation, Cham Paul was pleased to enrol Prasanth for an IREF education.

Prasanth has studied at IREF for two years. He plans to leave IREF after graduating next year to attend a Bible school in Rajahmundry, 200 km to the northeast of Repalle. His desire is to be a pastor because, as he says, *"I see so many lost people in India. Like my uncle, I want to introduce people to the abundant life that Christ offers. IREF has helped me learn more about the Word of God and the love of Jesus."*

Although his time with IREF will be only a few years, we can thank God for privilege IREF has been given to play a significant part in his spiritual development.

### **Meet Sireesha and Akshya**

Sireesha and her sister Akshya recently finished their second year at IREF. They came to IREF in 2021 under challenging circumstances. Their father was an electrician, and their life was relatively good as he earned a respectable income for the family. Suddenly, in 2018, he was electrocuted on a job and died. Their mother found a job at a clothing factory

where the work is physically hard and the pay is minimal.

In 2020, during the COVID pandemic, the girls were sent to stay with their grandmother while their mother worked to care for the family. But the grandmother was violent and abusive. When Sireesha and Akshya's mother found out, she was devastated!

She couldn't find anyone to care for the girls and the family was struggling to afford food. In her moment of desperation, their mother met a local nurse who had studied at IREF. The former IREF nursing student encouraged the mother to send her daughters to IREF.

Since joining IREF in 2021, the girls have thrived. The love shown by the IREF staff and the structured discipline of IREF's campus life have been vital in their all-round growth.



As the sisters have shared their stories, it has been evident that they are beginning to dream about their futures. Sireesha hopes to attend IREF's Nursing College to become a nurse.

### **Some Prayer Points:**

- Give thanks for the good number of students, new ones and returnees, who have enrolled in IREF's educational establishments for this new academic year.
- Give thanks for those who have come to faith in Jesus Christ already during this new academic year.
- Pray for all who have been baptised, that they will grow in their love and commitment to Jesus.
- Give thanks for Prasanth, Sireesha and Akshya, and others like them, who have been positively impacted by IREF's ministry.
- Pray for President Modi, who has denied there is any persecution of Christians in India, even in the aftermath of 60 believers in Manipur being killed at the hands of Hindu fundamentalists.

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

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