

Congratulations!

A cohort of IREF's students recently completed their degree studies, which included the disruptive years of Covid.

Some will pursue further education; others will seek employment; and some will return home to help their families before moving on to the next stage of their life.



As they look forward to their futures, please pray for them. IREF has been a safe haven for them over the past three or four years. As they enter the world outside IREF's care and influence, pray that they will continue to follow Jesus with all their heart, mind, and soul. Pray that God will guide them in this next stage of their lives and that fear will not hold them back.

Community Service Project

Community engagement is vital to the work of IREF. IREF students and staff serve their local communities in times of disaster and crisis, and also come alongside their neighbours whenever they see genuine needs. Recently, IREF's Junior College staff and students partnered with The National Service Scheme (NSS) to start a series of social welfare initiatives in their local community. NSS is a government-run public service programme which seeks to develop students and societies through community service.



Last month, IREF's students and staff planted plants as a way of showing their care for God's earth [*'The earth is the Lord's and everything in it.'* Psalm 24.1]. In the future, they will join NSS in cleaning camps,

forest projects, social awareness campaigns, health and safety programmes, and various other projects.

Nursing Progress

IREF's nursing students recently held a college-wide fast and prayer time for the 1st year students preparing to sit their public exams at a centre two hours away from Repalle.



Before they left, they were encouraged by messages from John Rebba, drawn from the life of Esther, and from the words of Moses to Joshua (Dt 31:8): *"It is the LORD who goes before you. He will be with you; He will not leave you or forsake you. Do not fear or be dismayed."*

Last month, a cohort of IREF's nursing students received a new set of books for their second semester, which offers training in biochemistry, nutrition, and foundations for good nursing. Each new set of textbooks means the students have successfully completed the previous semester of their studies and are one step closer to a future full of exciting opportunities.



Baptism Testimony: Bhagya Lakshmi

I come from a single-parent home; because of my father's severe alcoholism, he left our family. My mother works hard to support and provide for us.

Recently, I began to hear God speak to me about having a special purpose for my life. One day, I felt God telling me that I needed to change my life and come into His plan for my life. I realised that I needed to be saved and that I needed the salvation of Christ.

On the day I was baptised, my anxiety was

overwhelming. When I got into the water, I shivered with fear. For a minute, I was silent with tears. I closed my eyes and took in the setting around me. Confessing Jesus as Lord and Saviour of my life, I was dipped into the water. I felt overjoyed and complete in Jesus after I was baptised. My tears of fear turned into tears of joy after I was baptised! I had the feeling of my sin being washed away and of a new life with Christ beginning in me.



My name was also changed from Bhagya Lakshmi to Esther, which means “star.” I truly felt the light of Christ shine from within me.

Two brothers find hope at IREF

Pavan and Nikhil fidgeted as they sat down to share their story with Dee Rebba and IREF(USA) director, Tre Moore. As Dee asked about their family, Pavan looked away and scratched at his knee. Nikhil couldn't meet Dee's or Tre's eyes either. So Dee quickly moved to sit next to the two brothers. “You don't need to tell us your story,” she said, “We care about you. We love you both.”

Looking at Tre, she said, “Many times, students come from such difficult, heart-wrenching backgrounds. They leave what happened in the past, and focus on the oasis of hope they've found at IREF.”

She then turned to the brothers, changed the subject, and spoke only in Telugu. The boys giggled as they told stories about their time at IREF. They love the food, and they told Dee about their best friends and favourite subjects.

Then, almost out of nowhere, Pavan slowly shared their story. They had been raised by their mother since their parents divorced; but unfortunately, she was abusive. When the boys disobeyed her, she put chili powder in their eyes; to this day, Nikhil still has eyesight problems.



After three years of mistreatment from their mother,

the brothers begged their father to help. He took them from her and the brothers finally felt safe.

However, last year their father fell in love with a woman who didn't want Pavan and Nikhil. She told their father, “It's the two boys or me; you can't have both.” Tears fell down his cheek as Pavan confessed, “My father chose her over us.” Their father visits them at IREF every few months, but his decision cut deep into their soft hearts.

As the boys talked with Dee, they called her “Amma”, which is Telugu for ‘mum’. At the end of the conversation, their new Amma gave them 40 rupees (about 40p) to buy a special treat.

Pavan and Nikhil are grateful for IREF's hospitality and for blessings such as three meals each day, new friends, non-abusive discipline, and an ‘Amma’.

Thanks to the generosity of many of you, children like Pavan and Nikhil experience a new life full of love, and a sense of being valued through belonging to their IREF family. Many experience paternal love and care for the first time from Emmanuel and Dee Rebba.

Please keep these precious boys and others in your prayers as they continue their education at IREF.

Some Prayer Points:

- Give thanks for IREF's recent graduates and pray for them as they embark on a new phase of their lives; pray that they will continue to follow Jesus wholeheartedly.
- Give thanks for the good progress of IREF's nursing students.
- Give thanks for all those who are coming to faith through the ministry of IREF.
- Pray for those who lead the work of IREF in Repalle: Emmanuel and Dee Rebba, and their sons, Josh and John, who carry heavy responsibilities.
- Pray for Devasahayam, the long-serving pastor of the Chennupallivaripalem church which featured in our January newsletter earlier this year. He recently suffered a stroke; please pray for his full recovery. He is one of the IREF pastors being sponsored from the UK.
- Pray for the IREF(UK) trustees as we meet later this month.

Thank you for your ongoing prayers and support, which are much appreciated. We are keen to increase our UK support for IREF; so please share this newsletter with as many as possible!

David Hunt [Chairman of IREF(UK)]