

A Thank you from India

Let me begin this News Letter by saying a very big 'Thank you' to all of you who gave so generously in support of IREF's Tsunami Appeal Fund. Over **£2,000** has been received from our UK supporters so far, and more than a third of this total has contributed by people from DRBC – a magnificent effort! Well done!! I know how much our brother and sister believers in India appreciate the support we can give them at times of such terrible devastation.

The money raised has enabled IREF (*The India Rural Evangelical Fellowship*) to provide rice, clothing, blankets, cooking pots, and fishing nets for over 60 needy families who have lost their homes, possessions and livelihoods along the coastal strip of Andhra Pradesh. The distribution of aid began within a few days of the disaster striking. Ten university students from the USA helped with its administration.



Please join me in praying for IREF's Annual Bible Conference and Evangelistic Meetings taking place currently. I had the privilege of speaking at them this time last year, and God willing, will do so again in January/February 2006. Pray that the combination of practical love (shown through the distribution of relief aid) and the powerful preaching of the Gospel (calling people to repentance and faith in Jesus) will result in a great spiritual harvest, to the glory of our Lord Jesus Christ.

Still wearing my hat as the Chairman of IREF(UK), could I also ask you to pray for the imminent launch of our *Ullipalem Child Development Centre Sponsorship Brochure*. The Centre opened last August to provide much-needed supplementary education for 60 village children. So far, we have sponsors for 14 of the children, but are aiming to have all 60 sponsored by the start of their next academic year, in June. Please let me know if you would like a brochure to pass on to your friends. Sponsorship levels begin at only £1 a week.

Praise God for his Provisions

Whilst on the subject of giving, we would want to give God all the praise and glory for meeting our needs so abundantly in 2004.

- Our accounts for the year show that although we had budgeted for a deficit of almost £8,000 (which we had anticipated drawing from our reserves), **our income exceeded our expenditure by almost £1,000!** And this included transferring £3,000 from our General Fund to our Building Refurbishment Fund. God is good!
- **Our giving to Home Mission and BMS World Mission** also exceeded the targets we had set. 10% of our annual Thank Offering, which at £2876 exceeded our target by over £600, was split between these two causes.
- **Our weekly offerings** averaged £289 over the course of the year, well exceeding our target of £250 per week.
- We were grateful for several **generous grants** received during the year, almost £2,000 in support of our Under-14's five-a-side football team and for our Tuesday evening 'Fun and Food for all the Family' programme of monthly outreach social events.
- Most encouragingly of all, over £30,000 was received in grants, pledges and donations for our **Building Refurbishment Fund** during 2004, with a further £2,350 being received last month. Together with the £19,000 we have transferred from our General Fund, this means the Lord has supplied us with sufficient funds for the work to go ahead, for which **we give him all the praise and glory!**

Targets for 2005

Our budget for 2005 was agreed at our Church Members' Meeting last November.

- At that time, we set a target of **£270 for our average weekly offerings**. In view of the figure achieved in 2004, we hope this will be well exceeded during 2005.
- It seems likely that we will lose **rental income** of almost £1,000 over the course of the year, due to demise of our International Drop In. This was suspended last month, because the attendance at it had fallen to a very low level. Pray that new groups will become interested in using our premises once the new access ramps and toilet facilities have been completed.
- Ideally, we would like our income (from all sources) to increase to a point where we are **self-financing** within the next three to four years.

- We will be in receipt of a *Home Mission grant* of £6,500 this year, for which we are very grateful, and have applied for a grant of £6,000 for next year.
- Once again, we will be applying for *grants* to support our Under-14's football team and our Tuesday evening programme of social activities. Please pray that these grant applications will be successful.

Door of Opportunity

In our last News Letter, I outlined some of the exciting doors of opportunity that God may open up to us in 2005. We spent some time praying about these in a recent Church Prayer Meeting, and the deacons will be considering them further at their Away Day later this month (together with a look at a redrafting of our Church Rules). Here are some of the ideas being considered.

➤ *Welcome cards* for the street of new homes recently built close to the Church.

➤ *A Geordie Night* – something that went down very successfully in a nearby church as a means of outreach to their local community.

➤ *A Men's Group*. At a recent deacons meeting, we counted up 22 men who might be available for such a group during the day, either on a regular basis or occasionally. So, men, let me know your thoughts! *Do you think such a group is a good idea – and more importantly, of the Lord? What would be the best time for you – morning, afternoon, or over lunch? What would be the best day of the week for it? How often would you like to hold it – weekly, fortnightly, or monthly? And what would you like to do at it?*

➤ *A Mother and Toddlers Group* – especially now that we have some mums with babies, associated with the Church.

➤ *Jesus Video distribution* – Wanda Stockdale has kindly agreed to co-ordinate this in the run up to Easter.

➤ *Official Opening of our Refurbishment Work*. We are looking at the possibility of celebrating the completion of our new access ramps and toilet facilities on the Saturday evening of our *Church Anniversary weekend, 23rd-24th April*. Our Guest Speaker, Rev Craig Dyer from the Harper Memorial Church in Glasgow, is very happy with the idea. We are anticipating the refurbishment work will start later this month and be completed by Easter. For the 'Official Opening', it has been suggested that we could invite each of the grant-making bodies, who have supported the project so generously, to send along a representative. We would also invite our architect and builders, representatives from local community groups, and friends and neighbours, to join

with us. The evening would be a celebration of God's goodness to his people, and a time for testimony to the wider community, as in the days of Nehemiah 12.27-43.

➤ *Tall Ships Race and River Festival*. As many of you will have heard, the International Tall Ships race is visiting the Tyne from Monday 25th to Thursday 28th July this year. The event will be preceded by a two-week River Festival. We are looking at various ways we could get involved with these events. 2,000 young crew members under the age of 25 from all over the world will be descending on the city, plus a further 2,000 older crew members and supervisors. What a wonderful opportunity for international outreach! The organisers are looking for people with language skills to act as befrienders, and we are exploring the possibility of hosting a meal for some of the sailors at the church (not all 4,000 of them!).

➤ *An evening with Syd Little*, as our main autumn outreach event. This half of the famous 'Little and Large' combination became a Christian in 1996, whilst performing in Blackpool, through attending a Bible Study run by the *Christians in Entertainment* group. He has a good testimony to share, as well as stories about life in the world of show business. It could be an ideal way of sharing the Gospel with many in Gateshead.

➤ *Prom Praise*. Some groundwork has already begun to bring Prom Praise to The Sage music centre in the autumn of 2006. This again, could be a great evangelistic opportunity for the whole of the Northeast!

When we prayed about all these possibilities at our January *Powerhouse* prayer meeting, we realised it would be wrong to limit God by the scarce resources we currently have available at DRBC, both human and material. In Matthew 9.37, Jesus said to his disciples, *"The harvest is plentiful but the workers are few."* The disciples might have been tempted to react to this situation by saying, *"If that's the case (inadequate resources for so many opportunities) is it worth attempting anything at all?"* But Jesus didn't give them a chance to react in this way! He told them to trust God for the required resources. *"Ask the Lord of the harvest, therefore, to send out workers into his harvest field."* God is never limited by our meagre resources, only by our lack of faith in him (Mat 13.58). When God sets so many promising doors of opportunity before us, let's look to him to provide all the resources we need to make the most of them!

David Hunt