

Passage to India

Week 1 Newsletter

Thursday 16th January 2025



Extracts from travel diary

Thursday 9th

My British Airways flight arrives in Bengaluru (Bangalore) 5am local time. Pastor Thomas (on my right) and other 7 other members of Bethesda ministries are there to meet me with beaming smiles and a garland of fragrant flowers for their guest.



Friday 10th

Bethesda Ministries as well as running two children's homes, several churches and projects for the poor also runs a seminary training pastors for similar ministry amongst the poor. I am invited to a faculty meeting and to address the staff.

Saturday 11th

I take an auto rickshaw into the centre of Bangalore and tentatively put my Monzo Card into an ATM. Suddenly I have 5,000 rupees (£50) – this is 10 weeks wages for an unskilled labourer in India. I feel very wealthy and go in search of a coffee shop to celebrate little victories as I get my bearings.



Sunday 12th

I am taken to one of the slum churches where I am invited to speak. I marvel at a service in which there is singing for over an hour and where every word is sung from memory. I speak of the journey of the Magi and how their encounter with Jesus leads them in a new direction. My hope for this journey is that I encounter Christ in new and refreshing ways and am taken on in new directions too. This has already begun. Afterwards there is a big queue of people who come forward requesting prayer.

Monday 13th

The roads are unimaginably crowded and just when I am marvelling at how everyone copes with apparent calmness and good grace, I witness two scooter riders almost come to blows right in front of me. Need to be careful and keep my wits about me.

Tuesday 14th

I discover a new shopping mall only a twenty-minute walk away that has a Marks & Spencer in it. Can't resist a quick visit and see other westerners in there too. We come all the way to India and then all congregate in M&S. I'll be ordering omelette and chips next!

Wednesday 15th

A little bit of sight-seeing today. I take the recently constructed Metro to the famous Botanical Gardens and once again realise why Bangalore used to be known as the 'Garden City'



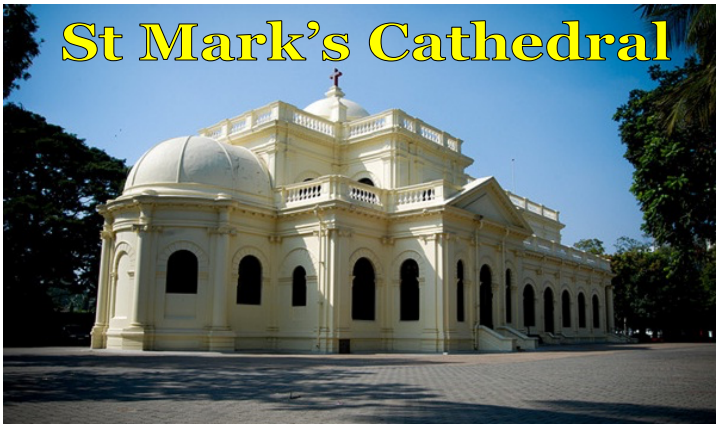
Just near to where I am staying is a large street nativity. Funny how cold cultures picture camels, palm trees and dusty cattle sheds while here in the heat of India we have Jesus being born in an igloo with reindeer strolling by!
Cross cultural encounters are fascinating and I am looking forward to learning more about how we all engage with the same story in different ways.



Leamington Spa is 5,050 miles from Bangalore. Leamington has a population of 51,000 while Bangalore has a population of 14million. When I first came here back in 1992 Bangalore was roughly twice the size of Birmingham. Since then, it has grown out if all



proportion and everywhere you go it looks as if there are HS2 projects underway at every turn. Bangalore is a center of technological innovation and known by many as the silicon valley of India. It is actually quite high up which is why the British chose it to be a military base where families could come and escape the harsher realities of heat in the Indian summer. Many of the churches in the center date from the time of the British and the architecture has a very familiar feel to it.



St Mark's Cathedral

It is said that Christians amount to just 2% of the population of India but here in Bangalore they are in evidence everywhere. On a recent walk to a coffee shop I passed the following: The Refuge Prayer Centre, Infant Jesus High School, Rehobath Ministry Church, Church of South India Divya Shanthi Church, Good Samaritan Prayer House, Jesus Meets Ministry Prayer Centre, Sisters of St Charles Convent, St Charles High School, St Norbet's College, St Pius X Church (Catholic), Jesus Love World Church, Believers Fellowship Church, Jesus Ministries, Berachah House of Worship and Hermon Church.

For Prayer

Thank you to everyone who has been praying for my trip, I really do appreciate them all.

Please can you pray for the following:

- Pastor Thomas' daughter Kerry-Beth is very ill and in ICU. This is a big concern to everyone here.
- The plans for my 7-day trip to Chennai (Mon 20th) where I will be visiting churches and projects.
- The work of Bethesda Ministries amongst the poor in Bangalore
- The children I am meeting who would be on the street without Paster Thomas' ministry.
- All those whose lives are lived on the knife edge of poverty.
- My mother Anne who is very frail and not eating very well.



The boys in the Children's home