

# Passage to India

## Week 2 Newsletter Newsletter



Thursday 13<sup>th</sup> February 2025

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### Extracts from travel diary

#### Friday 7<sup>th</sup> February

I am back at the departure lounge in Heathrow. Unlike all my other encounters with security where I have been stopped, searched and generally regarded with suspicion I am waived through without question. Maybe this is a good sign, and I am hopeful that this time I can resume my Sabbatical without drama and be completely focussed on all that such a trip will offer.

#### Saturday 8<sup>th</sup>

Despite offering to try and make my way from the airport to Bethesda Ministries the team are at the airport at 5am to meet and greet me. We go for breakfast (or is it supper) at a restaurant near the children's home. My two suitcases and rucksack are left in the car across the street on view and with the windows open. Their confidence that no one will steal is a reminder that the more we have in the West sometimes the more anxious we become about having it all stolen. I need to relax.

#### Sunday 9<sup>th</sup>

Sunday morning and I am taken to two of the five Bethesda churches. After leaving the bitter chill of home it is strange to be in bright sunshine and fans full on to keep everyone cool. I am invited to speak at both services and then to offer prayers of healing to a queue of worshippers who wait patiently for a ministry that is really part of the life blood of the church.



#### Monday 10<sup>th</sup>

I have five days now to spend in Bangalore and the mornings will involve teaching at the Bethesda Biblical Seminary. I go along to visit the students and am invited to speak words of introduction. Fortunately, I had the presence of mind to ask how long they wanted me to speak for but was still a little daunted when they said, 'No longer than an hour!'

#### Tuesday 11<sup>th</sup>

An early start at 8am feels like 2.30am as I am still on UK time. We drive the 30-minute journey to the seminary where I am to teach 12 students for a 1 ½ hour lesson. The irony is that these trips to India involve invitations to teach when really, I have come to learn. I am speaking to people who have made huge sacrifices to enter the ministry and will soon be leading and planting churches in a time of great expansion and growth for the Church here in India.

#### Wednesday 12<sup>th</sup>

On the way back from a visit to the city centre I pass a man sitting cross legged on the kerbside. Every part of his body is covered in boils some the size of large grapes. People are giving him alms. The needs of the poor remain acute and the cost of health care often prohibitively expensive.



Could it be that the Church is growing here because people take every opportunity to share their faith. Homes have Christian symbols on the front, texts on the walls and on this occasion, someone has taken this opportunity to inscribe into the dust on a parked car that "Jesus is King!"

One of the things I enjoy most about India is the constant variety of sights, sounds and smells. It often feels like I have become a child again as I look at animals, plants and situations that are eye catching or unusual. I never cease to enjoy the presence of cows in all the traffic. The cow in the picture on the right was on a good little number patrolling a more up-market side of town and charming the locals. The owner of the shop seemed positively delighted to be able to feed her a big juicy banana.



The streets are crowded and people manage to carry all sorts of things either on their heads or bicycles or in the case on the left, their scooters. It is now illegal not to wear a crash helmet while on a scooter or motorbike, but it is a rule that doesn't seem to apply to passengers and this lady's four children are balanced precariously on the front and rear. Health and safety is beginning to become a feature of life out here but there is still a long way to go. Crash helmets are worn but almost never strapped on so would be pretty useless in an accident!



In Bangalore there is an ever-present reminder of its associations with when the British were here. A statue of King Edward VII stands proudly in the main city park and his mother Victoria occupies an equally regal spot at the other side of the park. The churches and some of the old colonial buildings remain but are increasingly being dwarfed by the city skyscrapers of this amazing city.



## For Prayer



Thank you once again to all who are praying for this trip and those holding the fort and home.

Please can you pray for the following:

- One of the five churches here at Bethesda ministries has had to be demolished. It had become unsafe. It ministered to a very small poor community, and they are waiting on God for funds to rebuild it – it is the size of a medium sized front room
- I am travelling to Chennai on Saturday 15<sup>th</sup> for a week to see ministry there.
- Please pray for the tens of thousands in Bangalore who still have to collect water every morning and who lack proper sanitation.
- Please pray for those who have no access to health care and who are entirely reliant on begging in the streets.