

A Tribute to Mr. J. J. Ratnakumar, the Founder of MUT

(7/2/1949 – 18/1/2021)

'I have fought the good fight, I have finished the race, I have kept the faith.' 2 Timothy 4:7

John Jayaseelan Ratnakumar (popularly known as J.J.R Annan among missionaries, Mission leaders and in the MUT Circle) was born on 7th February 1949 to Mrs. Helen Bagayavathy and Mr. A G Vidasunderaraj. Although he belonged to a Christian family, he had a born-again experience in the year 1979, following which His pursuit to follow Christ began. He worked as a Senior Manager in Madura Coats. While serving the company in Tuticorin in the year 1984, he had a vision from God which led him to start Missionary Upholders Family popularly known as MUF. God impressed upon his heart a desire to support missionaries already serving God through different Mission organizations, by raising monetary support and also upholding them with prayer. Then, over the next few years several missionaries came to stay at Annan's home and he began to be aware of the needs and desires of missionaries serving in India. JJR Annan also had firsthand experience of their 'unmet' needs during his visit to many such mission fields.

It was while working in Bangalore in the year 1993, JJR felt God calling him to step out of his secular field and serve God full-time. He resigned his job at Madura Coats and decided to move to Vellore. God led JJR to start a Trust (Missionary Upholders Trust). The purpose of this of the Trust was to meet the unmet needs of the missionaries; which he observed was crucial for the missionary yet not being catered to by their organizations. Thus, MUT was born on 7th September 1993 to meet the emotional, financial, physical and spiritual needs of God's field workers. JJR always believed that MUT should function with minimum paid workers and maximum volunteers. JJR Annan set an example by doing voluntary service in MUT all his life. 'Missionary Care '(care for the missionaries) and 'Member Care'(care for the care-giving team) are the focal points of MUT ministries.

MUT was started with 4 primary objectives and in years later, 3 more were added. The main schemes under MUT are: IMPACT (which aims to cater to the bereaved missionaries); LYB (Love your Brother scheme that takes care of the missionaries' medical needs), Rest House (a home away from home- a place where the missionaries are able to spend quality time with their children during holidays and it also serves as a lodging cum resting place for missionaries who come for medical treatment); Shelter for Retired Missionaries ; Missionary Kids welfare (supplying loans for higher education for missionary kids without interest and also organizing & hosting periodical retreats), Crisis Relief and Personal Development programs (organizing programs such as LRS (Life Revision Seminar), Marriage Enrichment Seminar, Premarital Seminar, Inner Healing Seminar, Counseling Seminar, Sharpening Your Interpersonal Skills & Biography Writers workshop).

As part of the first project a house was bought by MUT (in faith) at Otteri, Vellore to cater to meet the physical needs of Missionaries visiting CMC Vellore for medical treatment. JJR Annan was a visionary and never doubted the faithfulness of God & God honored his faith.

JJR Annan's passion was to see that missionaries are well taken care of so that they would go back to their fields rejuvenated and energized to serve God with more fervor and enthusiasm. He believed in servant hood leadership and never flinched to do mundane and very basic menial chores if manpower or efficiency was lacking! He set an example by practicing what He believed in. Another God given strength in JJR Annan was, to rope in likeminded believing friends and share his vision with them. This helped to expand the ministries of MUT. As years rolled by MUT began organizing periodical Consultation Meetings with Member Organisations in order to serve the missionaries better. Annan's heartbeat was to serve the servants of God and he did that with love and steadfastness. As Vellore Rest house began to be a source of blessing to many missionaries, God began to open new doors to expand the ministry of MUT. The Lord provided MUT a land in Oddanchatram. It was initially proposed by the board to build a retreat cum training centre there.

JJR felt the nudge from God to move to Oddanchatram (ODC) and to start building up this place which would be helpful for missionaries who visit South India. It was a huge piece of barren land where the water was salty and the ground was unfit for any kind of produce. So JJR Annan and Shanti akka moved to ODC Campus in September 2008. Today, after more than a decade, the MUT ODC Campus can vouch for God's faithfulness and loving kindness towards His children. It is a well-developed campus full of lush greenery and pet animals & birds. Until Covid happened, the place has been bustling with activities catering to the overall health & development of Servants of God. So much of thought & care has gone into making this place a blessing for those who visit!

JJR Annan was an affectionate and a caring person. As the primary care givers in MUT ODC Campus, Annan and Akka were available for the missionaries who visited there. Not only did Annan have a great vision, but He also worked hard to pass on this vision to many people. JJR Annan loved God and **always** wanted to do his will. He believed in treating all care givers as his brothers and sisters and he mentored them tirelessly. JJR did not have a theological degree but then God gave him wisdom to serve in many mission boards. He also used the skills he learnt in his secular job to teach in mission training colleges. He has also helped in counselling many missionaries.

As a dynamic leader with a clear vision, he labored sacrificially and initiated efforts in bringing all the various missions under one umbrella. His hope was that all the Mission organizations will work hand in hand with other umbrella organizations, in the Global scenario. JJR Annan lived a simple life. He was humble and a man of integrity – he imbibed the very qualities that the Lord Jesus embodies! He was a unique leader, who paved the way in care giving ministry in India. He was committed and stood the test of faith till the end. He was kind-hearted and always ready to lend a helping hand to a missionary in need. He spent much time in listening to and understanding the needs of missionaries. He never liked to draw attention to himself and enjoyed serving God in an unassuming way. His servant hood leadership is an inspiration to many. Annan was focused and always sought the approval of God in all matters. Throughout his life time there were many challenges- personal, physical, emotional, spiritual', but the one thing that stands out is that Annan was always faithful to his Master- our Lord Jesus Christ. Annan always believed in 'Extra mile service' – He not only preached it to others but always practiced it. His faith in God was immense.

During the last 2 years, despite his failing health, his mind was always alert. Several missionaries and friends bear witness to how Annan showed the love of God and his concern for the welfare of fellow believers' right up to the end of his life. JJR Annan had his home call on the 18th of January 2021.

Thanks to Annan's implicit obedience to the voice of God and unwavering faith in the abilities of our great God- MUT has grown and is being a blessing to many of His servants in need. A small seed sown in obedience to God's call has grown into a huge Banyan tree, providing shelter to many missionaries, toiling in His vineyard, in India.

One of Annan's favorite quotes is that of Hudson Taylor- 'God's work done by God's people in God's way will never lack God's supplies'. This has been proven to be true in the journey of MUT thus far- for the past 28 years.

As MUT family we pray that the vision which the Lord gave Annan will continue and may our Lord's will be done through MUT in the coming years. May the Lord enable Shanti Acca & family and the leaders in MUT to continue to strive to fulfill the rich legacy of JJR Annan for the glory of God.