

CMC Annual Alumni Reunion 2024

The Medical Undergraduate Alumni Reunion 2024 was held from August 8 to 10, 2024. About 210 alumni from various parts of the world gathered in Vellore with their families to take part in the celebrations. The special batches were the batches of 1944, 1949, 1954, 1959-60, 1964, 1969, 1974, 1979-80, 1984, 1989, 1994 and 1999. There was no representation from the batch of 1944. Dr Daniel Solomon, son of Dr. Padma Solomon attended the Reunion on behalf of his mother from the batch of 1954. There were a few members from the non special batches who attended the reunion – as part of family of the members of the special batches or just visiting to meet old friends.

On August 9, 2024, the celebrations commenced with the representatives of the special reunion batches sharing their experiences and wisdom with the medical students in the Meet the Students session. The alumni who spoke included Drs. Lalitha Oommen (Life in Dubai after college) and Chandrapal (Life experiences after college) (1959-60), Dr. R. Srinivasa Murthy (Experiences through life with cancer and the concept of emotional health) (1964), Drs. Grace Korula and Peter Vittal (1969), Drs. Viswajit L. Nimgaonkar and Sarojini George (1974), Dr. Annapurna Nori (1979-80), Dr. Ashish Chowfin (1984), Dr. Sudhir Kumar (1989), Drs. Jennifer Christina Benjamin and Prabhat Ranjan Philip Nittala (1994) and Drs. Sharon Cynthia and Samuel Frank Stephen (1999). These talks were well received and appreciated.

This was followed by a CME session. The speakers and the topics were:

Dr. Justy Antony Chiramal (1999): Application of artificial intelligence for health systems strengthening in major global health challenges.

Dr. Grace Rebecca Paul (1994): Connecting the World for Cystic Fibrosis.

Dr. Priya Vasanthakumari (1989): Update on obstetric emergencies and their management in the secondary level health care system in Tamil Nadu.

Dr. Banani Poddar (1984): Promoting Paediatric Critical Care in UP.

The topics proved the excellence of our alumni in varied fields, and their service. The CME session was chaired by Dr. Shyamkumar N.K, DMRD, DNB, Professor of Interventional Radiology and Vice President (Intramural) of the CMC Alumni Association and Dr. Rajendra Benny K, MD, Assistant Professor of Radiation Oncology and Editor of the CMC Alumni Association.

The General Reunion on August 10, 2024 began with traditional tree planting. Mrs. Jenny Kuriakose had arranged tree saplings – Cassia Fistula - for all the batches. These will be planted around the new Footsal field donated by the batch of 1999 (adjacent to The Atrium donated by batch of 1973).

This year the song Grow, Grow, Grow - was played along with the Alumni singing while the batches planted their respective trees. We are grateful to Dr. Sujith Chandy, Dr. Gina Chandy and family for the song version and Dr. Vinod Abraham for instrumental version.

This was followed by the General Meeting of the Alumni Association in Scudder Auditorium, where the Director, Dr. Vikram Mathews, the Principal, Dr. Solomon Sathish Kumar and Dr. K.P.P. Abhilash from the Medical Superintendent office presented updates about the work at CMC to the alumni and offered

their felicitations. The President of the Student's Association Ms. Abhilasha Jane Thomas welcomed the alumni on behalf of the student body and gave a brief overview about students and their activities. The Alumni Association presented the Alumni Award of Distinction to Mr. E. Albert, in recognition of his immense contribution to CMC.

This was followed by the General Body Meeting of the Alumni Association. Introductions of the special batches and photographs followed this – from 1 member from the batch of 1949 celebrating his 75th reunion down to the 1999 batch celebrating their 25th reunion. The alumni proceeded to the Men's and Women's Hostels, where the current students, along with the alumni, entertained the crowd and had lunch together.

The Thanksgiving Service in the Scudder Auditorium was led by the new Chapel Secretary of the Alumni Association, Dr. Adeline Sittler (1988). There was enthusiastic participation from all the batches. Dr. Bishakha Rajagopalan (1984) gave the message. The newest batch of alumni (the present interns, batch of 2019) were given the charge not to be ministered unto but to minister. Dr. P. Zachariah (1949), Dr. Rami Rasalam (1959-60) & Dr. Joel Selwyn (1964) passed on the torch of light to Dr. Udith Mohan (2019) and Dr. Saira Susan (2019). During the service, candles were lit in memory of those who passed on in the last year from the undergraduate, post-graduate, former staff and individuals closely associated with CMC.

After the Thanksgiving Service, the visiting alumni and the intramural alumni shared the traditional meal of biriyani and other vegetarian delicacies prepared lovingly by the Alumni House Kitchen.

Following the dinner, at 8 pm the program started with presenting the College Motto award to Dr. Ajay Chaitanya Raju (1995). He was honoured for his response to the calling to work in the mission hospital, improve it to provide accessible and affordable state of the art health care for those around and start education programs which were relevant to the hospital and in all his endeavours keeping a healthy and symbiotic relationship with the Church and the Diocese. His life of faith and commitment, translating into one of service in the spirit of our Alma Mater conferred on him the College Motto Award for the year 2024.

This was followed by the informal entertainment by the special batches. Each batch tried to out claim who was the best and put on a show that was enjoyable and memorable.

The entertainment program featured a variety of items showcasing talent, wit and creativity. The stage came alive with performances from senior batches, marking their 45th reunion, all the way down to newer generations. There were self-composed songs crafted with heart and soul, vibrant dances bursting with energy and enthusiasm and musical performances executed with precision and finesse.

The audience which included a lot of current students were enthralled and amazed at seeing their teachers and other distinguished and eminent personalities enjoying their time on stage together as a batch. The new audio system donated this time by the batch of 1994 was put into good use and kept the sounds of the music and song ringing in people's ears long after it was over.

The alumni slowly left over the next couple of days after enjoying their time in the College and meeting each other and going back with fond memories and promising to come back again for their next reunion.

The Alumni Reunion 2024 photographs are available on the link below. Please click on the link directly (Ctrl + Click) to view and download the photographs. Alternatively, if your browser does not open the webpage, you could copy the link from this email and paste it directly into the browser.

Alumni Reunion 2024 photographs
<https://photos.app.goo.gl/6pvU5hqfiEXaicPt8>

College Motto award citation for the year 2024:

Dr. Ajay C Raju started his journey in medicine joining CMC Vellore in 1995. Following his under-graduation in 2001, he worked in the CSI Basel Mission Hospital in Gadag and his experiences there inspired him to become a surgeon, to fulfill the lack of one. He came back to train in MS in General Surgery between 2003-06. The chance discovery of a letter by Ida Scudder (dated in 1930's) written to the hospital, only fired his passion and cemented his resolve of going back to this poor district in Karnataka, instead of Bangalore city, his hometown.

Ajay married Savita in 2005 and they returned to Gadag in 2006 upon completion of his PG, where Ameya was born in 2007. The couple jumped into the thick of work and soon realized the need to improve and change things. From the open surgeries and limited resources, Ajay rallied to introduce laparoscopic surgeries in 2007 and soon by 2009, in collaboration with his OBG colleagues expanded the services to laparoscopic Gynaecology. In 2011, the surgical load had increased, and the OT complex was expanded and 3 new OT's were built. Backed by an ICU with ventilators, complex cases could now be taken up.

Ajay went on to train in all that was required for the community and the Hospital – Endoscopy, Urology, Intensive Care, and many other specialties in the years to come. Understanding the need for a physician, Savita took on the calling and trained to be a physician at the Baptist Hospital, Bangalore in General Medicine. The 3 years that ensued while she was training in Bangalore were the most trying – Ameya in Belgaum, Ajay in Gadag and Savita in Bangalore. But they bore this trial keeping the greater interests of the Institution and the needs of the people they were called to serve. Savita returned as a consultant in 2011 and since 2019, has been the sole physician, running the medicine department, managing the OPD, wards, ICU/ HDU & emergency services – 24*7, 365 days.

Ajay also understood he had to lead from the front and trained to be an effective leader by completing his PG Diploma in Hospital Administration in 2010. He played a major role in expansion of the Hospital, with new infrastructure being added between 2009 and 2013. This included a private wing, general ward and ICUs. The hospital expanded from 50 to 130 beds. The hospital was soon self-sustaining and extended their services and income to infrastructure developments for orphanages and church buildings of the Diocese. Ajay took over as the Medical Superintendent in 2019 and focused on offering quality healthcare at affordable costs.

In 2020, the hospital achieved the NABH entry level accreditation, which enabled them to enrol in Government schemes and offer private health insurance. The hospital team took on the challenge posed by the COVID pandemic by serving all the patients who came to them for care, as the single largest private healthcare facility in the district. The pandemic times also highlighted their need to upgrade their services and offer super speciality care. The hospital was modernized by upgrading the OTs, ICUs, and a new CT scan was purchased. A Cath Lab unit was established in 2022. All this was achieved without any external funding. Ajay roped in surgical specialists as visiting consultants, to provide Neurosurgical, orthopedic joint replacements, paediatric surgical and urological service apart from general surgery, OBG and general orthopaedics; while Savita supported the medical super-specialist care for Cardiology, Nephrology and Gastroenterology.

The hospital was awarded the best performing hospital in Gadag district in implementing the Ayushman Bharath scheme by the Government of Karnataka for 2 years – 2022 & 2024. This empowered the hospital to offer their super speciality services to more people who could not afford the treatment earlier.

Ajay also saw the need for starting educational programs in the hospital. They started the General Duty Assistant Skill Program in 2021, which is recognised by Health Sector Skill Council of India. In 2022, they started DNB diploma programs in Family Medicine & Paediatrics recognised by the NBE, New Delhi. In 2024, they established a BSc Nursing College, recognised by Rajiv Gandhi University of Health Sciences, Bangalore.

Ajay has also been actively involved with the Christian community in Gadag. He is a church elder and also a member of the various committees of CSI Karnataka Northern Diocese. These responsibilities and relationships developed over the years have kept relations between the hospital and the church harmonious. Along with being medical superintendent, he also manages two orphanages in Gadag, coming under the diocese.

He is a loved faculty and travels to present at national conferences. In 2021, his surgical work was recognised by our Alma mater, who bestowed the Dr. Emmanuel Sunder Raj Memorial Award for exemplary service in the missions by a surgeon.

Ajay and his family, have committed their lives to be a beacon of Christ's love to all in the Gadag district and continue to embody the motto of his Alma Mater - Not to be served, but to serve!!

Alumni Award citation for the year 2024:

In the small village of Kallukootam, Nagercoil, Kaniyakumari district, in the year 1952, was born this quiet, diligent and hardworking gentleman, Mr Albert. His father was a compounder and mother a home maker.

After his schooling, Mr. Albert went on to get trained in typewriting and shorthand and stood first in the district competitive examinations for English typewriting. This prepared him to support his family financially. At the young age of 21, he travelled to Madras looking for a government job. He got a job as a typist cum clerk at a block making company called Cherians Process. After 3 years there, he underwent

training as a Clerical Cadre Apprentice under the National Apprenticeship Programme in the Handicrafts and Handlooms Exports Corporation of India for a year. He worked for a year more there and gained experience in all the sections of this company.

A strong believer in God and in the power of prayer, he prayed earnestly and specifically for a job 100 miles away from Madras and a salary of Rs.300 a month. The prayer was answered when he noticed an advertisement in the Hindu Newspaper – vacancy for stenographers at CMC Vellore. With no second thoughts, he applied immediately and he was selected for the job for a salary of Rs 314 per month confirming that this was the will of God in his life. He was welcomed into the institution by the then Additional General Superintendent Mr. H.D. Moses, father of Dr Prabhakar Moses.

Thus, in March 1978, he began his career as a junior stenographer. His job offer was for 3 months which stretched from March 1978 to October 2012, 36 long years, before he retired as Senior Secretary. His work as the Secretary of the Alumni Office, working along with countless alumni and staff in the institution was exemplary. He worked tirelessly with help from Drs. Sara and Suranjan Bhattacharji to type in the first alumni directory. This was hard work - many long nights going on to early mornings, spent typing out these lists.

His term in the Alumni office taught him many lessons including discipline, punctuality, event management and much more. His time in the office made him grow into the man he became, gave purpose to life and became the strong foundation on which his family grew and was blessed. He also enjoyed all the interactions with numerous alumni with a warm and welcoming smile, a few words of enquiry and then moving on to do whatever the alumnus requested him to do. He was awarded the best Secretary award of the year 2011 by the Rotary Club of Vellore South.

He was supported by his strong and faithful wife, Mrs. Beulah who joined the kitchens of the Big Bungalow and Alumni House and made countless meals for Alumni and others. She continues to do so even after the official retirement age. He is blessed with 2 children, Mr. Daniel Beno, his elder son, working as a Senior Demonstrator in the Department of Pathology, CMC and his younger son, Mr. Abhishek, working as Scientist at Novo Nordisk in Bangalore.

At the end of his term in 2012, he was requested to continue for 2 more years till we could train someone to take on this humongous task onto their shoulders. Following his retirement from the Alumni Office in 2014, he continued to work for 8 more years in the campus. He continues to support his children and grandchildren and his wife, in every way he can.

In recognition of his dedicated service to the institution especially to the Alumni Office, the Alumni Association of the Christian Medical College, Vellore is proud to honour Mr. E. Albert with the Alumni Award for the year 2024.



MBBS batch of 1949



MBBS batch of 1959-60



MBBS batch of 1964



MBBS batch of 1969



MBBS batch of 1974



MBBS batch of 1979-80



MBBS batch of 1984



MBBS batch of 1989



MBBS batch of 1994



MBBS batch of 1999



Mr. E. Albert (Alumni Award recipient 2024)



Dr. Ajay Chaitanya Raju (College Motto award recipient 2024)