



From Rural Roots to Surgical Innovation in Ethiopia

DR. EFESON THOMAS

In a rural village in Ethiopia, where electricity was a luxury and shoes a rarity, a young boy named Dr. Efeson Thomas dared to dream beyond the confines of his humble beginnings. Born into a Christian farming family, his journey is a powerful testament to faith and perseverance. His life transformed from a child, barefoot and studying by lamplight, to a visionary surgeon, innovator, and mentor.

Recognizing his academic talents early on, Dr. Efeson's father excused him from demanding farm work, allowing him to focus on his education. This dedicated focus on his studies began to affect his spiritual life. By sixth grade, he began to question the existence of God. However, God had a rescue plan for his life through a family he met. Their persistent prayers and sharing of the Gospel led to a vivid dream that ignited Dr. Efeson's personal relationship with Christ. A relationship that would profoundly influence the rest of his life.

After medical school, as a general practitioner, Dr. Efeson felt his passion for fellowship and the Word fading. This changed when he met a PAACS resident whose stories of spiritual growth within a surgical training program sparked his desire to integrate faith with medical practice. Dr. Efeson chose PAACS for his specialty training, a decision that not only refined his surgical skills but also rescued his spiritual life. He learned the importance of seizing every opportunity to discuss faith with patients, echoing the impactful witness he had received years earlier.

During the second year of his PAACS residency at Myung Sung Christian Medical Center, Dr. Efeson was introduced to laparoscopic surgery. This experience sparked a deep interest in Minimally Invasive Surgery (MIS), a field he would soon passionately advocate for in Ethiopia. Driven by a commitment to serve underserved communities and recognizing the lack of advanced surgical techniques in his home country, Dr. Efeson took it upon himself to learn laparoscopic surgery through online resources. In March 2020, he independently performed his first laparoscopic cholecystectomy. He was the first Ethiopian surgeon to complete a laparoscopy-assisted APR where the abdominal phase was entirely laparoscopic.

In 2018, fueled by his experiences and challenges, Dr. Efeson, along with several colleagues, established MIS Africa. This nonprofit organization is dedicated to advancing minimally invasive surgery throughout the continent. Under his leadership, MIS Africa has already hosted workshops that trained around 30 surgeons and introduced laparoscopic surgeries in four hospitals. His initiative showcases a blend of innovation and compassion, aimed at advancing surgical care in regions most in need.

Dr. Efeson's story exemplifies how PAACS nurtures and empowers its residents to achieve their fullest potential, both professionally and spiritually. As he continues to shape the future of surgery and serve through his faith, his life remains a compelling narrative of service, perseverance, and divine guidance.

I am Grateful to God and to PAACS



"I still believe I need to trust God more and worship Him faithfully for He has always been faithful to me. God has guided through my life, and now I am where I have never dreamed to be as a child, given my humble beginnings."

A boy born to a farmer family in a rural village who didn't have shoes until grade eleven. I didn't have access to electricity to read until grade nine. Now, I am married to my beautiful wife, father of two, assistant professor of surgery mentoring medical students and residents, head of the surgery department in a comprehensive specialized hospital, founder and CEO of an organization first of its kind. Most importantly, a born-again Christian who finds true joy in worshiping and serving God!"



Dear Reader,

**We hope you enjoy
this edition of the
Alumni Newsletter.
Thank you for your
prayers & support of
PAACS Graduates.**

Yours in Christ,

**Lemfuka Dieudonne,
MD, FCS (ECSA)
PAACS Graduate &
PAACS Alumni
Newsletter Editor**



Equipped by PAACS, Led by Christ

DR. ADMIRE MUNJERI

Born and raised in Bulawayo, Zimbabwe, my faith journey began at an early age. Growing up in a Christian home, I was taught the importance of prayer, community, and service to others. My mother instilled in me a deep reverence for God, and my involvement in the local church reinforced my commitment to living a Christ-centered life. At the age of 12, I received Jesus Christ as my Lord and Savior and surrendered my life to Him. It was through my local church that I met my amazing wife, Daphne, and today we are blessed with two beautiful daughters, Amaris and Azriela.

As a child, I had a strong passion for soccer and even dreamt of playing professionally. However, I later learned that my parents disapproved of this path. Everything changed after a prayer meeting where I was asked what I wanted to become in the future. When I mentioned my desire to be a doctor and we prayed about it, my passion for medicine grew each day. This desire became more than just intellectual curiosity—I felt a divine calling to serve others through healthcare.

My introduction to PAACS was truly a divine appointment. At the end of my medical school training, a colleague attended a conference in Egypt, where he learnt about Dr. David Thompson's missionary work and PAACS. Intrigued by the testimonies he shared, I researched more about the program and was particularly drawn to its holistic approach—one that emphasized both surgical excellence and spiritual mentorship, with a focus on serving the underserved. After much prayer and deliberation, I felt a deep sense of peace about applying to PAACS. I was accepted into the program at Malamulo Adventist Hospital in Malawi in 2019, a place that became both my training ground and home for several years.

My time at PAACS was one of the most transformative experiences of my life. The training was rigorous, demanding both intellectual and physical endurance, but what set PAACS apart was its unwavering emphasis on faith. The structured spiritual curriculum, that is, weekly Bible studies, prayer meetings, and mentorship, these deepened my relationship with God and reinforced the integration of faith into medicine. Faculty members not only trained us as surgeons but also modeled Christ-centered leadership, demonstrating that surgery is more than a technical skill, it is a ministry.

Through PAACS, I learnt that every patient encounter is an opportunity to demonstrate God's love, whether through compassionate communication, offering prayer, or providing comfort to grieving families. The bonds formed with fellow residents became a source of strength as we supported and encouraged one another through the challenges of training. The program also instilled resilience, teaching me to see difficulties as part of God's greater plan, as Romans 8:28 reminds us.

Since graduating, I have continued to serve as a general surgeon and faculty member at PAACS Malamulo, striving to provide compassionate, Christ-centered care. Beyond direct patient care, I am deeply involved in training and mentoring the next generation of surgeons in Africa, ensuring they not only develop technical expertise but also embrace the profound impact of faith in medicine. Discipleship remains at the core of my work as I guide young doctors to serve with both skill and compassion.

As I reflect on my journey, I am deeply grateful for PAACS, which equipped me not only with surgical skills but with the heart of a servant-leader. The impact of this training extends far beyond the operating room—it is a movement of transformation for Africa. I pray that future PAACS alumni will continue this legacy, bringing healing and hope to those in need, and advancing the Kingdom of God through medicine.

www.paacs.net



Dr. Munjeri, his wife, Daphne, and daughters, Amaris and Azriela.

The Greatest Reward



Among the countless patients I have treated, one story stands out as a testament to the power of faith in the midst of healing. A young man arrived at the hospital with a life-threatening abdominal injury following trauma. His condition was critical, and an emergency laparotomy was his only chance of survival.

Before the surgery, I took a moment to pray with him and his family. They were visibly anxious, but as we sought God's intervention together, I witnessed a transformation—fear gave way to peace. During the operation, we discovered a shattered spleen and proceeded with a splenectomy. By God's grace, the surgery was successful.

As he recovered, I continued to visit him—not just as his surgeon but as a brother in Christ. We had deep conversations about faith, suffering, and God's purpose. One day, he expressed a desire to know more about Jesus. With the support of the hospital chaplain, we guided him through his spiritual journey, and before his discharge, he made the life-changing decision to surrender his life to Christ.

That experience reaffirmed why I chose this path. Surgery is not just about saving lives—it is about transforming them. Witnessing a patient not only recover physically but also find spiritual healing is the greatest reward of my work.

