



The PAACS Bulletin

Monthly Newsletter • Issue 257 • December 2025



OUR MISSION

PAACS' mission is to glorify God by training and discipling African surgeons and related specialists to become Christ-like leaders and servants providing excellent and compassionate care to those most in need.

OUR VISION

PAACS envisions a growing number of African surgeons and related specialists living out the Gospel and ministering to the sick.



- From the Desk of the CEO
- COSECSA 2025
- Reflections on PAACS Training From Malamulo Graduation
- Anticipated X-ray Lead Aprons Arrive
- What is a PAACS Program?
- Spiritual Dean Report
 - Saline Process Witness Training
 - Malamulo Spiritual Retreat 2025
- Passing the Baton at Nkhoma
- PAACS News
 - Visit to Ishaka Adventist Hospital
 - COSECSA Research Winners
 - PAACS Conference 2026
- Prayer Requests/Praises
- Articles on Surgery



FROM THE DESK OF THE CEO

Susan Koshy, JD, MPH
Chief Executive Officer



I hope you had a wonderful Christmas! During the holiday season, I was reminded that God's greatest work often begins quietly yet changes lives forever. With 2026 just around the corner, I took a moment to step back and reflect on the PAACS ministry, from its humble beginnings to all that God has done in this past year. I am deeply grateful for the unmistakable ways He has led, sustained, and expanded this work.

We have seen a year of bold steps forward, including new programs, new conferences, and a new strategic plan, to name just a few. Each step reminds us again and again that God is raising up Christian surgeons and related specialists for His healing work across Africa. And now, as we prepare to celebrate 30 years of PAACS in 2026, I am especially thankful for all He has done.

This year brought growth in our training programs. In January, we welcomed two new programs—General Surgery at AIC Kapsowar and OB/GYN at AIC Kijabe. We also celebrated the approval of several new programs that will begin shaping future leaders in the years ahead. In 2026, a new General Surgery program will be added at Nkinga Referral Hospital in Tanzania as well as a Urology training program at AIC Kijabe. We also have plans to incorporate a new training program at HEAL Africa in the Democratic Republic of the Congo in 2027. Each of these programs represents answered prayer and reflects PAACS' continued commitment to expanding access to high-quality, Christ-centered surgical and specialty care.

We saw growth among our people, the heart of this ministry. Residents advanced through their training and spiritual formation. We saw graduates step into faculty and program director roles across Africa, multiplying the mission as they disciple the next generation. PAACS faculty received global recognition for their leadership and service. Dr. Bill Rhodes (Program Director at Kapsowar) received the ACS - Surgical Humanitarian Award and Dr. Greg Sund (Assistant Program Director, Anesthesiology Program at AIC Kijabe) received the Gerson L'Chaim Prize for Outstanding Christian Medical Service. We welcomed new PAACS administrative staff members and new board members. We remain deeply thankful for all the PAACS staff who served with us and those board members who faithfully completed their terms this year. Their service has shaped PAACS in meaningful and lasting ways.

Throughout 2025, excellence was on display. We gathered for five significant conferences, including our first-ever Continuing Professional Development Conference for graduates and a well-attended PAACS Conference in Chicago with over 120 registrants. At the COSECSA exams, our trainees achieved remarkable success, including some of the highest scores across their specialties. These moments reflect the dedication and faithfulness that define PAACS programs.

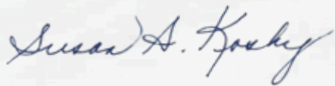
FROM THE DESK OF THE CEO (CONT'D)

We also carried one another in prayer. Several of our programs serve in regions facing conflict and complex challenges. Their courage, perseverance, and unwavering commitment to Christ's compassion have been a witness to us all. We continue to lift them before the Lord and ask for His protection, provision, and peace. Finally, 2025 marked the approval of a new five-year strategic plan. This plan will guide PAACS in deepening spiritual formation, strengthening education, increasing organizational effectiveness, and cultivating meaningful partnerships as we step into 2026 and the years ahead.

As we close this year, we are stepping into something extraordinary—our 30th year as a ministry. Three decades of God's faithfulness have shaped PAACS into what it is today and prepare us for what lies ahead. As we train and disciple more than 210 residents in 2026, we remain grateful for God's guidance and hopeful for the many stories of healing and transformation yet to come. We are praying God's blessings over you for a very healthy and prosperous new year.

Merry Christmas and Happy New Year!

Blessings,



Susan A. Koshy, JD, MPH
Chief Executive Officer





COSECSA 2025

Keir Thelander, MD, FACS, FWACS, FCS (ECSA)
Executive Vice President

Another wonderful event for COSECSA and PAACS occurred November 29-December 6. PAACS EVP (Keir Thelander) and General Surgery Program Director – Soddo (Tim Love) participated in committee meetings and COSECSA Council meetings on November 29 and 30. COSECSA's appreciation and engagement with PAACS continues to grow in leadership, research, examinations, and conferences. We are thankful for this robust, impactful collaboration in surgical training.

COSECSA exams took place December 1 and 2. Of 159 COSECSA examinees, 23 PAACS trainees sat exams with 20 who were successful. Congratulations are also due to Dr. Lijalem Garba who scored not only the highest for the Cardiothoracic exams, but also the highest overall!!! Dr. Muse French, Pediatric Surgery, scored the highest of all pediatric surgery trainees, another congratulations.

Tuesday night's PAACS dinner hosted over 90 people celebrating the 20 graduates, a joyous evening. Tuesday's research course hosted by Association of Burundian Surgeons (ABUC) with heavy PAACS participation, coordinated by PAACS research director Dr. Kathryn Chu, included multiple PAACS trainees looking to develop their personal research knowledge and skills. The scientific conference, themed "Meeting the Surgical Needs in Africa through Teaching and Training," provided engaging research and educational presentations. PAACS participation in the ceremony and event could not be denied with over 20 faculty members in attendance in addition to the 23 examinees and over 10 other trainees from Kibuye, Tenwek, Kijabe, HVMM, among others. A big congratulations to all for such a strong engagement and advocacy for surgical education in the region. I am personally thankful to see 2 Timothy 2:2 occurring with so many PAACS graduates participating in the exams and conference as they invest in the generation of upcoming African surgeons.



Dr. Muse French - Pediatric Surgery



Dr. Lijalem Garba - Cardiothoracic Surgery



Newest PAACS Grads showing off their scrub caps.



REFLECTIONS ON PAACS TRAINING FROM MALAMULO GRADUATION

Joseph Mkandawire, MD
2025 PAACS Graduate
Malamulo Adventist Hospital, Malawi



In 2018, while working as a research medical officer, God awakened in me a desire to share the Gospel more consistently, energetically, and regularly. The more I thought about how I was to do that, the more I kept arriving at becoming a pastor as a possible solution. I also found myself wondering what I was meant to do with my medical degree. I loved medicine, and becoming a pastor was going to be just as demanding as being a doctor, yet I felt called to both, to offer what I have come to call a “double cure”: the Gospel cure for sin and physical healing for sickness. PAACS became the place where this calling found its home.

I began training in 2021 at Malamulo Hospital, and from the start I felt right at home in surgery. I loved the often immediate results the field provides. A patient presenting with an obstruction or severe pain could receive their solution within hours and walk home a few days later. I was also struck by the compassion shown by my attendings, unexpected in a field often stereotyped as harsh. Their kindness, along with the patience of my colleagues as I struggled and learned, removed any sense of being an imposter and motivated me to strive for more.

The multinational nature of PAACS broadened my understanding of culture, how to respect differences, how to think differently, and how to learn from others. Training in Malawi during my first year, I knew PAACS was bigger than my hospital, but it was at the Junior and Senior Residents' Conferences at Brackenhurst that I truly understood the size of the family to which I belonged. Even more remarkable was that we were bound together not only by surgery, but by a shared trust in Jesus Christ as Lord and Savior. I never felt out of place at these gatherings; conversations began easily at the Junior Residents' Conference in February 2022 and continued just as naturally at the Senior Residents' Conference in October 2024.

As I approached my final year, I could sense the end coming. I realized how much I had learned from my trainers, and I often paused in amazement, asking God how it was possible that I would soon graduate as a general surgeon. The thought of the potential impact I might have in my community filled me with both nervousness and excitement. I prayed more in my final year than in any other, asking God to preserve my life so that I might use the knowledge and skills He had entrusted to me over these five years.

The climax of this journey was my graduation from PAACS and COSECSA. It was a moment that left me feeling both significant and insignificant. I felt significant because church leaders, representatives of ministries of health, and government officials all gathered to witness our sending off. At the same time, I felt insignificant because I am a sinner saved by grace, undeserving of anything from a holy God. I felt rightly small as I sat in awe of the traditions of graduation, the attire, the speeches, the procession, and the long history they represent. I leave PAACS training holding tightly to the charge of 2 Timothy 2:2: “And the things you have heard me say in the presence of many witnesses, entrust to reliable people who will also be qualified to teach others.” My prayer is that I will continue to share the gospel, and the knowledge and skills of surgery, with those in need, and to do so with compassion.

MALAMULO PAACS GRADUATION 2025



Brent Sherwin, MD
Program Director
Malamulo Adventist Hospital, Malawi

Malamulo PAACS General Surgery Program had its fifth Graduation Ceremony on 21 November, 2025. It was a time of celebration and thanksgiving to God for being with our graduate, Dr. Joseph Mkandawire, and his family during his five years with us at the Malamulo Program. The graduation was at the Victoria Hotel and we were honored to have a wide variety of speakers including guests from COSECSA, the Malawi Medical Council, and the Malawi Adventist Union. We were also privileged to have one of our graduates from 2024, Dr. Rumbidzai Mlewah, speak at the graduation. Dr. Mkandawire is our third Malawian graduate from the program and will be serving God at a mission hospital in Central Malawi.

Brent Sherwin
Malamulo Program Director



ANTICIPATED X-RAY LEAD APRONS ARRIVE IN AFRICA



Michael Langford, MD
Member of the Board of Directors
Orthopaedic Surgery Council Chair

The PAACS orthopaedic residents at the three training sites, Soddo, Kijabe, and Tenwek, recently got to try on for the first time their much-anticipated X-ray lead aprons. Exposure to X-ray radiation is an occupational hazard for orthopaedic surgeons. X-rays and fluoroscopy are frequently utilized in the operating room theatre to guide the fixation of fractures and the placement of orthopaedic hardware. Because of the prevalence of trauma in Africa, orthopaedic residents are exposed to this radiation throughout their training. Without protection, this cumulative exposure over a career can significantly increase the risk for health issues. Hospitals typically provide lead aprons to be worn in the operating theatre, but these can be of varying quality or of less than stellar condition because of use. In addition, it can be difficult to find one that fits appropriately, especially if multiple orthopaedic trauma cases are going on at the same time.

In order to provide satisfactory protection from radiation exposure, the PAACS Orthopaedic Council raised funds to purchase lead aprons for the orthopaedic residents. Working with Burlington Medical, the manufacturer, the Ortho Council was able to custom fit and order lead aprons for each FCS ortho resident. Once obtained, the Ortho Council shipped the aprons on a CURE container to Africa. The process took over a year, but the residents received their lead aprons in October/November. Each resident now has a custom fitted lead apron with thyroid shield which will not only protect them from X-ray radiation exposure during their training, but will also be theirs to take with them wherever the Lord leads them to serve. The PAACS Ortho Council plans to continue to provide each new FCS resident a personalized lead apron which will be theirs to keep and use throughout their orthopaedic career. Praise God!





WHAT IS A PAACS PROGRAM?

Christopher Moir, MD
Academic Dean

What is a PAACS program? The answer would seem pretty obvious to readers of these pages. In fact, if your humble correspondent had to ask, he might want to entertain a new day job. Or at least reread the PAACS mission and vision statements.

Right. Reading done. But what about someone from Eswatini? What questions would they and PAACS have, other than...ah... where's Eswatini? It's the former Swaziland that was renamed in 2018 and is the potential home of a new surgical training program. So, what do you say to them? Our team would go there to find out.

It's understood and video-reviewed before traveling that a PAACS program should be centered in a hospital that meets WHO and Lancet Commission guidelines. Add to that operating rooms, surgical beds, equipment, and a supply chain. Good, but what about bellwether procedures and SAO surgeons and staff? Essential, but not yet PAACS. Instead, the cases should prepare surgeons for the extraordinary challenges of rural surgery and the consultants must be skilled in teaching these critical lessons. Are we there yet? No. Resolve that everything be faith-based and ready for a spiritual curriculum that's as intensely pursued as the surgical training

Is this then PAACS? Sounds right but a fact check of the current 28 examples poses a problem. Not one of our surgical programs is like any other. Yes they check the boxes, but each is different, often in unique ways. That makes the math complex; however tolled, our list of essentials doesn't ever add up to a PAACS program.

Problem? Perhaps, but maybe it's the question that's wrong. There's a story of surgeons faced with a horrific accident who'd tell you a great surgical hospital that met criteria wasn't what they needed for a patient with overwhelming injuries. Instead, they called for "the PAACS surgeon". Not by name or by hospital but by category. For a standard bearer of capability and compassion that can face the unbearable. For the true PAACS.



Part of the hospital grounds.



WHAT IS A PAACS PROGRAM? (CONT'D)

So, what's a PAACS program? Better to ask what is PAACS? Then, you'll find superbly knowledgeable men and women tempered with judgment and compassion to use their skills wisely. They're surgeons of strength and courage who humbly bend to share burdens. PAACS creates masters in the darkest hour who point to the Master. And PAACS is a surgeon who stepped in to save an injured woman when others could not.

This is what our team to Eswatini would say. Yes, a great hospital and surgical program are necessary. Yes, every site must corroborate the checklist and often more such as the tremendous gifts of God at the Luke Commission's Eswatini campus. But no, that's not yet PAACS. Because ultimately, it's a question of who, not what, we are.

We are healers who work with God's gifts to surgically serve. Our hospitals and training programs are complex, alternately humble and majestic tools to be taken up in stewardship for learning and growth. We who hold the instruments are students, teachers, pastors, planners, schedulers, communicators, writers, evaluators, fundraisers, leaders, intercessors, joyful donors, and administrators. To the good people of the Luke Commission, we are a surgical body of Christ come to your door to help you train and grow extraordinary surgeons.



Pastor Robert contemplating.



Drone delivery system.



Morning team meeting.

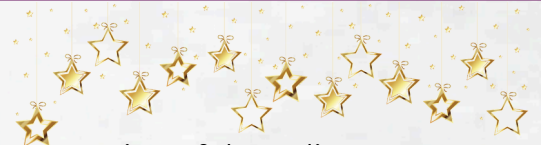


PT care ward.



SPIRITUAL DEAN REPORT: SALINE UPDATE AND SPIRITUAL RETREAT

Ed Searce, DMin, ThM
Spiritual Dean



We are very thankful to God for the progress made in the implementation of the Saline Process Witness Training among the many PAACS sites. Four locations had on-site training, CEML, Kijabe, Tenwek and Bongolo all in 2025. Others were done in early years and several more are scheduled for 2026. It is proving to be a valuable tool for all of our residents and faculty.

This training is one of the key factors that enables PAACS to fulfill the “mission to glorify God by training and discipling African surgeons and related specialists to become Christ-like leaders and servants providing excellent and compassionate care to those most in need.”

We are thankful for those like Dr. Rachel Nunn and Dr. Mark Topazian who have helped us in the training process. On the following page is a report from Dr. Topazian about the training that took place at Bongolo Hospital in November. It not only shows the value of the training but the healthy environment in which the training took place.



SPIRITUAL DEAN REPORT: SALINE UPDATE AND SPIRITUAL RETREAT (CONT'D)

Pastor Ed,

Two SPWT workshops were held at Bongolo back-to-back over 3 days, with half of the PAACS faculty and residents attending each workshop, in order to avoid interruption of the hospital's surgical services. Staff physicians from other services also participated. Trainers included Drs Laurie Elit and Chukwuemeka Nwegbu from Mbingo Baptist Hospital, Cameroon.

The workshops were notable for excellent engagement, discussion, and contextualization of the SPWT material. The PAACS team has already met for a one-month follow-up meeting after the training, to share experiences implementing Saline Process tools in clinical practice, and to review a couple of topics from the Saline Process curriculum.

The Saline Process trainers were impressed by the high level of camaraderie that was evident among the Bongolo PAACS residents and their faculty. There was easy and open communication and a lot of laughing. It was apparent that these people enjoy being together and encourage and support each other. There is an excellent spirit in the residency program.

Mark Topazian

MALAMULO SPIRITUAL RETREAT 2025

Brent Sherwin, MD
Program Director
Malamulo Adventist Hospital, Malawi

The Malamulo PAACS team had our spiritual retreat 23-24 November at the Kara O'Mula Lodge located at the base of beautiful Mulanje Mountain. We had 35 people from our theatre team come for each day of the retreat. Our speaker, Pastor Mpeni from Lilongwe, led us through an enriching time focusing on Colossians Chapter 3. The first few sessions focused on how we can obtain a transformed heart and finished with how we can use this transformation to better reach out to our patients. In addition to Pastor Mpeni, we were blessed to have Pastor Robert Yanduya, the PAACS Associate Spiritual Dean, join us for the retreat. We thank God for His presence at the retreat and for helping to strengthen our spiritual bonds as a team!





PASSING THE BATON AT NKHOMA

Wanda Lam, MD
Program Director
Nkhoma Mission Hospital, Malawi

Six years ago, the arrival of Dr. Jens Vaylann and his family to Nkhoma Mission Hospital in Malawi catalyzed the establishment of a surgical department where there was never a full-time surgeon, with a long-term vision of training Christian surgeons in a country that has one of the lowest surgeon-to-population ratios. Within the span of 2 years, he formed a dynamic team by bringing in 4 additional general surgeons, all of whom uprooted our lives to come to Nkhoma because of his strong vision and servant leadership, and started a PAACS surgical training program. What do I mean by servant leadership? I think of his accomplishment of building a surgical department from scratch, but also the same person who serves refreshments during bible study at his home and replaces lightbulbs in the hospital.

Today, Nkhoma is training six Malawian surgical residents, one of whom will graduate next year, and two more starting in January. It is no exaggeration to say that there has been blood, sweat, and tears behind Dr. Vaylann's accomplishment. Psalm 127:1 encapsulates the basis of my dear colleague's work: "Unless the Lord builds the house, the builders labor in vain." His time at Nkhoma has come to an end as he passes on the baton and moves his family back to Germany for his children's education. Last month, we had an official handover (pictured left) during a hospital meeting when it was announced that I would take over as the PAACS program director, while Dr. Yamikani Limbe serves as the chief of surgery. While these are big shoes to fill, I am grateful for Dr. Vaylann's mentorship in the past years and solid foundation he has left us with. Please keep the Vaylanns in your prayers as they transit back to their passport country after living in Africa for 10+ years, and for the transition within the surgical department as Dr. Limbe and I step into our new leadership roles.



Left - Official handover during the hospital meeting.



Right - Dr. Yamikani Limbe, Dr. Wanda Lam,
Dr. Jens Vaylann

PAACS NEWS

PAACS Visit to Ishaka Adventist Hospital **Drew Huang, MD** **Associate Director of Education**

On November 24, 2025, at the invitation of Moses Kasumba (PAACS Mbingo General Surgery graduate, former Malamulo Program Director), Drew Huang (PAACS Associate Director of Education) and Fadipe Akinniyi (Tenwek Hospital General Surgery Program Director) made a site visit to Ishaka Adventist Hospital in western Uganda to assess the hospital for a possible future PAACS General Surgery residency. The team was warmly welcomed by Executive Director Ian Ivule and Medical Director Isaiah Kule. The hospital, founded by Adventist missionaries in 1948, hosts a well-reputed College of Nursing and College of Allied Health Professions. A recent building project added two operating theatres. PAACS looks forward to further discussions with Ishaka Adventist Hospital as they continue to grow their campus and surgical capacity.



COSECSA Research Course Winners **Kat Chu, MD** **Director of Research**

COSECSA research course winners Sharon Bonya (Malamulo), Radoniaina Dinamalala Olivier (HVMM), and Tiba Dongmo Jandelle Lavina (Mbingo) in Bujumbura, Burundi.



SAVE THE DATE

OCTOBER 8-10, 2026 | DES PLAINES, ILLINOIS

**PAACS FALL 2026
CONFERENCE**

**GREAT IS HIS FAITHFULNESS:
CELEBRATING 30 YEARS OF PAACS
REMEMBERING HIS GOODNESS. STEPPING INTO HIS FUTURE.**

Join us in Des Plaines, Illinois for the PAACS Fall 2026 Conference on October 8–10, as we celebrate God’s faithfulness over 30 years of PAACS.

During this special gathering, you will hear about surgical and specialty education, research in Africa, and impactful partnerships that strengthen PAACS. You will also hear stories from the field shared by our faculty and graduates—each reflecting God’s faithfulness, provision, goodness, and the growth of PAACS from one resident to the multi-program ministry it is today.

Please mark your calendars and plan to be part of this meaningful milestone celebration. More details will follow, and we look forward to commemorating this anniversary with you.



PAACS

PAN-AFRICAN ACADEMY
OF CHRISTIAN SURGEONS

PRAYER & PRAISE

- Pray for God's favor over all PAACS training programs, that they will glorify God and be used to impact Africa for His Kingdom.
- Pray for the newest residents beginning their journey with PAACS in January 2026. May God guide their steps, strengthen them academically and spiritually, and form them into compassionate servants of Christ.
- Pray for the newest graduates of PAACS, that God will bless their transitions, confirm their calling, and that they will find their place to serve Him by caring for the underserved people of Africa.

Each month, we pray for residents by name. Please join us this month by covering these newest graduates in prayer:

- Dickla Jackson Mollel
- Baptist Augustino Matonya
- Louisa Nwachukwu Nneka
- Georges Shokry
- Anita Kawira
- Jeremiah Nangale
- Leah Caren Oundo
- Vallery Logedi
- Eunice Kageha
- Muse Freneh Anito
- Rebecca Wangari Dufe
- Nebiyu Ermias Gebremariam
- Chelsea Shikuku
- Peter Ouma Opondo
- Joseph Mkandawire
- Foletia Guillaume
- John Tanyi
- Paul Shu Chinonso
- Tchinde Marius Jordan
- Ebsa Bekako Duguma
- Natnael Temesgen Sumoro
- Yohannes Wayessa
- Ian Simel
- Fred Omondi
- Isaie Twahirwa
- Lijalem Taye Garba
- Oscar Rotich



ARTICLES ON SURGERY, OB/GYN, AND ANESTHESIA

Compiled by Margaret Tarpley

[Strengthening Africa's Surgical Workforce Through Integrated Strategic Leadership and Management Programs.](#)

[Exploring how surgeons employ empathy in clinical practice: a qualitative study.](#)

[Ultrasound-Guided Regional Anesthesia for Hip Fractures and Delirium](#)

[Improving Management and Treatment of Thyroid Cancer--UCSF's Julie Ann Sosa, MD, co-led international task force establishing new clinical guidelines for the management of differentiated thyroid cancer.](#)

[Obstetrician and gynaecologist engagement in global surgery: adding necessary value to the field](#)

[How should morality play a role in global health?](#)

[Obstetric spinal anaesthesia-induced hypotension: just sit back, relax, and write the notes?](#)

[Litigation meets evidence: a novel approach to understanding preventable complications in breast reconstruction](#)

[Anesthetic Management of Peri-Partum Hemorrhagic Shock in Sub-Saharan Africa](#)

[Learner and Teacher Entrustability Concordance in Endocrine Surgery Entrustable Professional Activities](#)

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