



# The PAACS Bulletin

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# PAACS

PAN-AFRICAN ACADEMY  
OF CHRISTIAN SURGEONS

## PAACS 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.*

## PAACS 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



*Susan Koshy, JD, MPH  
Chief Executive Officer*

Dear PAACS Family,

We're excited to share that our PAACS Conference this October was a great success! On October 11-12, in Des Plaines, IL, we welcomed 70 attendees in person and 60 virtually. We had four PAACS graduates in attendance and multiple PAACS faculty presenting. It is always a wonderful time to meet together and share how God is working throughout this ministry.

## **Conference Highlights:**

- On Friday, we were privileged to hear from key partners like Ken Amstutz of St. Luke's Foundation, Scott Reichenbach of Hope Walks, and Greg Seager of Christian Health Service Corps. Their insights set a powerful tone for the event.
- We held engaging discussions about research structured within PAACS programs including presentations from Drs. Adrian Park, Robert Parker, and Kathryn Chu.
- Global medical education was discussed through presentations by Drs. John Tarpley, Arianna Shirk, James Smith, and Drew Huang.
- Current and future program updates were given from Dr. Zeke Rhodes (AIC Kapsowar), Dr. Lillian Mameti, (AIC Kijabe), Dr. David Schaeffer (Bongolo), Dr. Samuel Fabiano (CEML), Dr. Ronald Sutherland, and Dr. William Walker.
- A special highlight was listening to our 2024 PAACS Alumni Travel Fellow, Dr. Philadelphie Dembele share his impactful ten-year journey at The Women and Children's Hospital in Koutiala, Mali.
- We also took a moment to honor Dr. Bruce Steffes and his wife, Micky, for their outstanding long-term contributions and impact to the PAACS community.

## **Board of Directors Update:**

- The PAACS Board met on October 12th in a Closed Session to discuss critical topics such as finances, governance, and the 2023-24 audit. They also held philosophical discussions regarding hosting programs in mission vs. non-mission hospitals. In addition, they further discussed the role of research within PAACS programs.
- Updates on our five-year strategic plan and other major projects were also shared.
- Board elections brought fresh enthusiasm, with 7 members elected or re-elected, ready to continue driving our mission forward.

## **Saturday Session:**

- Our session, "Embracing the Call: Serving PAACS Through Long and Short-Term Missions," began with a panel moderated by Dr. Jim Smith, Joanna Thelander, Dr. Jeshiah Thiessen, and PAACS graduate Dr. Sam Fabiano.
- Dr. Dembele presented how visiting faculty can contribute to resident training.
- The day concluded with additional panels discussing how to engage with PAACS, whether short or long-term, and exploring PAACS' role in mission hospitals, funding sources, and sending agencies. These panels were moderated by Dr. James Smith, Dr. David Thompson, Dr. Tom Dykes, Dr. Stephen Montgomery, Kem Amstutz, and Greg Seager.

The PAACS Board of Directors decided that going forward they will meet three times per year and hold the PAACS Conference one time per year in the fall. Look for the dates for the next one in the near future.

Blessings,  
Susan A. Koshy, JD, MPH

# PAACS CONFERENCE

## PAACS Conference - October 2024



*Attendees of the October 2024 PAACS Conference*



*President of Hope Walks, Scott Reichenbach speaks on "Strengthening Healthcare Systems: A Training Approach".*



*Former Assistant Program Director, Dr. Jeshiah Thiessen presenting "To Madagascar & Back: Highlights of a PAACS Faculty".*



*PAACS Graduate and Program Co-Director, of CEML, Dr. Sam Fabiano speaks about Going and Growing.*



*Above: PAACS Alumni Travel Fellow, Dr. Philadelphie Dembele speaks to his impact over 10 years in Mali.*



*Left: Founder, CEO of CHSC with PAACS Graduate Alliance Nyrkuri.*



*Dr. Bruce and Micky Steffes with PAACS Founder Dr. David Thompson and Chair, Dr. Louis Pisters.*



*PAACS CEO, Susan Koshy with recent PAACS Graduate Armia Samuel and his wife, Alexsa.*



*PAACS Founder, Dr. David Thompson led a prayer and devotional to start the meeting.*



## **PAACS is grateful for the FY24/25 Board of Directors:**

Louis Pisters, MD  
*Chair*

Michael Skinner, MD  
*Vice Chair*

Emad Asham, MD  
*Secretary*

George Bayless, III **(newly elected)**  
*Treasurer*

Ervin Barham  
*Community Representative*

Stephen Doane, MD  
*Member-at-Large (GS)*

Erik Hansen, MD  
*Representative of the Consortium of Residency Councils*

Grace Kim, MD  
*General Surgery Council Chair*

Michael Langford, MD  
*Orthopaedic Surgery Council Chair*

J. Kayle Lee, MD  
*Member-at-Large*

Wayne Murray  
*Community Representative*

Mark Reeves, MD  
*LLU Representative*

Jonathan Saxe, MD **(newly elected)**  
*Member-at-Large (GS)*

Mark Snell, MD  
*Member-at-Large*

Efeson Thomas, MD **(newly elected)**  
*Graduate Representative*

William Wilson, MD  
*Spiritual Representative*

King-David Terna Yawe, MD  
*African Representative*

Ex-Officio  
Lee Sillin, MD  
*Governance Committee Chair*

David Thompson, MD  
*PAACS Founder*

Samuel Thompson, MD  
*Past Chair*

## PAACS VISIT TO MAHAJANGA: CELEBRATING 40 YEARS OF MAHAJANGA MEDICAL SCHOOL

*Ted Watts, MD*  
*Program Director, HVMM*



Recently, some of our PAACS Mandritsara team had the opportunity to attend the scientific congress celebrating the 40th anniversary of the Mahajanga Medical School. After a long journey—around 20 hours on the road across more than 500 kilometers—we arrived in Mahajanga. The event was a gathering of over 200 doctors and medical students from across Madagascar, and we were honored to be one of the event sponsors. The Dean, a committed Christian, was incredibly supportive of PAACS and made it clear to the delegates how important our program is for the future of surgical training in the country. He has expressed a strong desire to deepen our relationship, which we're praying will bear fruit.



Dr. Marco gave a fascinating talk on cow horn injuries—an all too common trauma in our region—while Dr. Toavina, a first-year resident, presented research on ureteric reimplantation for schistosomiasis. I had the chance to speak more generally about the PAACS program, and we also shared a few words from Matthew's Gospel about Jesus seeing the crowds, "like sheep without a shepherd", and responding to them in his compassion by teaching them and healing their diseases. It was a privilege to not only discuss our work but also speak about the heart of Christ's heart for the lost. We're praying that there might have been future PAACS trainees in that room!



It was an excellent chance to build connections, and we're especially encouraged by the possibility of a delegation from Mahajanga visiting Mandritsara soon. We're grateful for these opportunities to strengthen ties and are hopeful for what God might do through this growing relationship.

# ACS Clinical Congress

San Francisco, CA

The ACS Clinical Congress took place in San Francisco, CA, from October 19th-22nd. On Monday, October 21st, PAACS hosted a reception with nearly 30 attendees, including two of our graduates, Dr. Alliance Niyukuri and Dr. John Kanyi.

We are thrilled to share that at least two members of the PAACS family received distinguished recognition during the event. Dr. Jason Fader, PAACS faculty member at Kibuye Hope Hospital in Burundi, was honored with the ACS/Pfizer Surgical Humanitarian Award for his exceptional contributions to surgical care in underserved areas across Africa.

Additionally, PAACS Academic Dean, Dr. John Tarpley, was recognized as one of four Icons in Surgery. This prestigious session, moderated by Dr. Bill Richards of USA Mobile, highlighted surgical pioneers whose work has left a lasting impact on the field.

Please join us in congratulating Dr. Fader and Dr. Tarpley on these extraordinary achievements!



Dr. Jason Fader



Dr. John Tarpley



Drs. Alliance Niyukuri, Keir Thelander, and John Kanyi



PAACS Reception

CONFERENCES



# WORK IS NOT A FOUR-LETTER WORD - PART 2

John Tarpley, MD  
Academic Dean



The phrases "pray and work" (or "pray and labor"; Latin: *ora et labora*) and to work is to pray (*laborare est orare*) refer to the monastic practice of working and praying, generally associated with its use in the Rule of Saint Benedict. (Ora et labora - Wikipedia) We are enjoined "to work as unto the Lord" (Col 3:23). A contention of Martin Luther (1483-1546) with the book of James, which he called a "strawy epistle", evolved in part from his focus on *solo fido* or "faith alone" in his opposition to "works righteousness." James is a favorite book of the New Testament for me with its wisdom literature-like short aphorisms and Proverbs-like instructions. I like the resolution: "It is not faith; it is not works; it is faith that works."

In Jesus' encounter with the woman at the well, the section concludes with Jesus' observation: "The fields are white unto harvest." (John 4:35) The health care needs in Sub-Saharan Africa are nigh overwhelming on all fronts, whether care providers, medicines, vaccines, clean water, enough food, etc. We need to be at work but not workaholics. In Nigeria in the late 1970s, a senior missionary advised me: "Train and equip ten to do the work, not try to do the work of ten." The challenge is a marathon, not a sprint.

In my welcome to incoming first year surgical residents to Vanderbilt in the two decades 1995-2014, I reminded them they are physical, emotional, psychological, spiritual beings with needs like hydration, food, exercise, sleep, social interactions, friendship, and love. It was important "to hoe one's spiritual garden" and to water one's friendships lest they become arid and die. Jessica Grose in her New York Times column of 28.06.23 observed: "Almost everyone needs community to flourish." What is your community or communities?

Forty years later, accelerated by the COVID pandemic and endorsed in this digital era with nigh universal attachments to our devices and social media, we are morphing into atomistic individuals with a loss of personal interaction and community formerly provided by on-site work rather than working from home, the decline in church attendance, and fewer social gatherings. This century we hear much about wellness and work-life balance. See the Table below.

Years	Workplace wellness programs and surgeons	Work life balance and surgeons
1970-1980	0	0
1981-1990	0	0
1991-2000	2	0
2001-2010	2	29
2011-2020	21	175
2021-2024*	17	146

## PubMed Publications

\*2 1/2 years - Through September 2024

Heb. 10:25 instructs us on "not forsaking the assembling of ourselves together." We need social interaction just as we need clean air and water, adequate food and rest, etc. Regular worship and a Bible study group, singing in a choir, playing an instrument in a praise team are good for one's body and soul.

John Baillie (1886-1960) in his SEVENTH DAY: MORNING entry in The Diary of Private Prayer (1936) prays:

I praise you for the work thou hast given me to do:

- I praise Thee for all that Thou hast given me to fill my leisure hours:
- I praise Thee for my friends:
- I praise Thee for music and books and good company and all pure pleasures.





## Axt Family is Moving

Jason and Meridith Axt are moving to Eldoret, Kenya to work with Moi Teaching and Referral Hospital (MTRH) through a partnership with Indiana University and AMPATH.

Jason and Meridith and their four children moved to Kijabe, Kenya, in September of 2019 to join the AIC Kijabe / Bethany Kids pediatric surgery team. In those five years the consultant group has grown from Drs. Axt and Ken Muma, to include Dr. Britney Grayson and their recent graduate Dr. Mehret Enaro.

Jason will begin work in November with MTRH and the COSECSA pediatric surgery program. He will remain active in pediatric surgery development, research, and training in Kenya. "We still strongly believe in the mission of PAACS and will remain friends of these institutions."

Meridith will be home-schooling the children (now ages 12, 10, 8, and 6) continuing her work as a writer.



## Galmi Birth Announcement

Dr. Clarisse Girincuti (chief resident) and her husband Adas are pleased to announce the birth of their daughter Alva on September 5th, 2024.



## PAACS Alumni

Congratulations to PAACS Alumni, Dr. Mugisha Nkronko, who was recently sworn in as the President of the Medical Association of Tanzania.



## PAACS Resources

The PAACS 2023-2024 Annual Report has been published and can be found [here >>>](#)

# 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.
- May God sustain, protect, and provide His grace to all PAACS residents, faculty, graduates, and their families. Pray for their spiritual well-being.
- Pray for the PAACS Senior Trainee Conference October 26-November 3rd.
- Pray for second year residents as they prepare for COSECSA oral exams in November.

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

- Vitumbiko Erwin Mwafulirwa
- Caleb Mzati Kapengule
- Madalitso Newby Kumwembe
- Mumba Wongani Kangabakako
- Jonathan Chimkonda
- Ayenew Gaye
- Yohannes Wayessa Debebe
- Natnael Temesgen Sumoro
- Kalkidan Gulilat Taddessa
- Zenebe Haile Edomiyas
- Getiso Tarekegn Asfaw
- Mekbib Abebe Mekengo
- Habtamu Tadesse Lugo
- Yodahe Tadesse



## PARTNER WITH PAACS

GIVE (U.S.)

GIVE (CANADA)

GIVE (OUTSIDE  
U.S. & CANADA)

# ARTICLES ON SURGERY

*Compiled by Margaret Tarpley*

- [Implementation of an Intensive Surgical Simulation Week for Medical Students in Rwanda](#)
- [Perioperative Process Mapping to Identify Inefficiencies at a Tertiary Hospital in Malawi](#)
- [Unveiling the Lasting Impact: A 15-Year Follow-Up of Short-Term Surgical Mission Experiences](#)
- [Machines matter too: including biomedical engineering partnerships in global health initiatives](#)
- [Strengthening surgical systems in LMICs: data-driven approaches](#)
- [Faith as a complex system: engaging with the faith sector for strengthened health emergency preparedness and response](#)
- [Comparison of treatment results of femoral shaft fracture with two methods of intramedullary nail \(IMN\) and plate](#)
- [Bacterial contaminants in stored blood and blood products at Zomba Central Hospital Blood Bank: assessing the possible risk of post-transfusion sepsis in a resource-limited setting](#)
- [No biomedical engineering policy means no sustainability in health systems: perspective through a case of local biomedical training program in Tanzania](#)

Read more articles compiled by Margaret Tarpley by [clicking here!](#)

## CONNECT

