

Dear Friends of PAACS:

Oy vey! It is in the darkest times that the reality the Psalmist wrote about takes on its deepest meaning, “Even though I walk through the darkest valley, I will fear no evil, for you are with me; your rod and your staff, they comfort me.” In this broken world, we are not promised a trouble-free life but we can be assured that He will be with us. Civil unrest and disease are threatening the members of the PAACS family. We hurt with them. However, we also rejoice in the Lord’s faithfulness and bountifulness to us. We celebrate the addition of two more graduate surgeons from PAACS-Ethiopia. Please continue in prayer for PAACS and its family members.

The Editor



PAACS Bulletin Bulletin

Our goal: To train and disciple 100 African surgeons by 2020.

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Our vision: PAACS trained surgeons living the gospel and ministering to the sick.

Our Mission: PAACS exists to train and disciple African surgeons to glorify God and to provide excellent, compassionate care to those most in need.

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FROM THE EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

Dear PAACS Family:

As you may have heard, there has been violence in the areas surrounding Mbingo Baptist Hospital (MBH) in Cameroon. As such, the PAACS leadership is concerned about the safety of our residents at MBH and feels that the environment of conflict is not safe nor conducive for quality surgical training. For these reasons, PAACS decided to temporarily relocate several of our residents to another site and to allow a few other residents to take a short leave of absence. The details are given in the next story written by our Chief Medical Officer, Dr. Keir Thelander.

We are praying that the conflict in Cameroon will end soon. We are also praying that our residents will be able to return to MBH quickly once the violence in the area has ended. Please join us in praying for the people of Cameroon, Mbingo Baptist Hospital, their patients, and the PAACS residents and faculty. We serve a big God with whom nothing is impossible. Let us pray that the peace of Christ will reign.

Such turmoil will likely have unexpected financial demand and I praise God that we have just finished the last fiscal year for PAACS in the black based on preliminary numbers. Donors were very generous in June, making up the budgetary deficit and allowing us to reach our goals for the year. Thank you so much. Let us praise Jehovah-Jireh for His sufficiency!

Blessings to all of you,

Susan Koshy

Executive Director, PAACS

MBINGO PROGRAM TEMPORARILY RELOCATED

By Keir Thelander

Decades of political discord between the Anglophonic Northwest and Southwest Province and the remaining Francophonic portion of Cameroon has erupted in public demonstrations and occasional bouts of armed violence. Although no violence has been aimed directly at the Mbingo Baptist Hospital located near Bamenda in the Northwest Province, local conflicts since February have made life at the hospital unsettled, especially for the Cameroonian employees. By the beginning of July, conflicts between the government forces and insurgents necessitated the recognition that PAACS's highest priorities – the need for residents' (and their family's) safety and the academic demands of a high-quality training program – could no longer be met on the behalf of the PAACS residents who found themselves in this potentially dangerous environment. After much prayer and consideration of all the possible alternatives by the PAACS Commission and in consultation with the PAACS program director and faculty members on the ground in Cameroon, the decision was made to relocate part of the trainees and their families to another hospital which has not to date been involved in the conflict and also to place some trainees on temporary leaves of absence, awaiting a future clarification of the situation and the available options.

The CBC (Cameroon Baptist Convention) administers 6 hospitals in Cameroon and was gracious enough to help coordinate the relocation effort. Banso Hospital in Kumbo had previously been a site of PAACS training and has thus far been free of any armed conflicts. Housing and faculty issues were part of the problems to be solved in consideration of a move there. A chief resident finishing his training program was released a few weeks earlier to return to Sierra Leone and three trainees took leaves of absence from their training program, planning to make up the time at a later point. One of those taking a leave of absence was already at home in Nigeria and just stayed there. Nine trainees elected to move to Banso Baptist Hospital and will train there until further decisions are made.

PAACS requirements demand a certain faculty:trainee ratio which cannot be presently met at Banso under the present faculty numbers but which was felt to be acceptable compromise in the interim. Dr. Jim Brown and Dr. Jacques Ebhele are staying at Mbingo Baptist Hospital while Dr. Mark Snell is joining recent PAACS graduate Dr. Ben Malikidogo at Banso Baptist Hospital. Malikidogo is already employed at Banso.

The loss of the resident workforce at Mbingo has significantly affected the workload for the remaining surgeons at Mbingo. It may also affect the financial viability of the hospital. Please pray for Dr. Brown as well as previous PAACS graduates, Jacques Ebhele (General surgery) and George Ngock (General surgery and pediatric surgery), Dr. Evaristus Acha (ENT), Christopher Nana (Ortho) and Dr. Alvine (Ob-Gyn) who remain at Mbingo to provide emergent surgical care for the patients still coming to the hospital.

Please pray for the people of Cameroon – both patients and employees of the hospital for whom the violence is so disruptive. Pray for peace for the country and for an end to the hostilities and misunderstandings.

Please pray for unity between the CBC and PAACS as an attempt continues to try to resolve the varying conflicting needs and agendas. Pray for PAACS as it tries to determine how suitable Banso Hospital is for the full-fledged training program, to decide about a future return to Mbingo Baptist Hospital and to decide how to maintain the quality indicators of surgical training in the meantime at Banso Hospital.

Pray for the residents as this has disrupted their training and their families, particularly when they are so far from their own home countries.

Please pray for safety for all PAACS faculty and residents and their families. Pray for wisdom as they consider what to do as they consider their own families' safety.

The PAACS Commission will continue to re-evaluate the situation in Cameroon frequently and try to meet the requirements of safety and surgical education.

GRADUATION AT PAACS-ETHIOPIA

By Efeson Thomas

The Gutera Wolaita Zone Cultural Hall was the venue for the PAACS-Ethiopia graduation ceremony for Gezahegn Tilahun Tesfaye and Ebenezer Gezahegn Fanta. It was held on Saturday, July 28. They are the 13th and 14th graduate respectively from the PAACS-Ethiopia program.



Back Row (Left to right): Richard Slovek, Brian Hodges, H.E. Getahun Garadew, Ato Desalegn Enaro.
Front Row (Left to right): Ebenezer Gezahegn Fanta, Gezahegn Tilahun Tesfaye, Efeson Thomas

The program was emceed by Ephrem Gebreselassie. On the platform were seated Ato Desalegn Enaro (Chief Executive Officer, Soddo Christian Hospital), H.E Dr. Getahun Garede (Wolaita zone chief administrator), Dr. Efeson Thomas (General Surgeon and Assistant Program Director), Dr. Richard Slovek, (Orthopaedic Surgeon, Adjunct Faculty Member) and Dr. Brian Hodges (Orthopaedic Surgeon, Faculty Member).

Ato Desalegn Enaro, SCH CEO, began with comments remembering the early difficult times with accreditation from the Ethiopian government. He acknowledged the people who invested their time, knowledge and lives in bringing to the program to the place it is today, especially thanking the program directors, both past and present.

His Excellency Dr Getahun Garede, the Chief administrator of Wolaita zone and honored guest of the day, acknowledged SCH for the healthcare given to the people of Wolaita, the region and the whole country. On top of that, he gave thanks for training highly professional surgeons and helping the

government to achieve the goal set to promote the health of its citizen. He promised to continue giving all the necessary assistance from the government for the institution.

Dr. Efeson Thomas, one of last year's graduates of PAACS-Ethiopia and presently acting as the assistant program director of PAACS, addressed the frequent question from many as to why only a small number of residents were trained – it is because PAACS values quality as much as quantity. The broad-based exposure and experience is maintained through knowledge and skill transfer from short and long term visiting surgeons. He quoted Dr Paul Gray who used to say, "I love PAACS because PAACS loves Jesus." If the love of Jesus flows within the PAACS family, it is a fellowship which everybody enjoys despite many ups and downs.

Dr. Gezahegn Tilahun Tesfaye thanked his wife and family for their support. He thanked all of the mentors who have sacrificed to train him. He thanked the hospital staff and administrators for their part in his professional education. He closed by saying Christian surgeons have knowledge, talent, time and life-experience that they can share with their patients – they can pray with patients whether or not there is something to offer surgically. He asked for God's grace to return back what he has received.

Dr. Ebenezer Gezahegn Fanta pointed out that God was the real reason for the celebration. Similarly to Gezahegn, he thanked his family, mentors, hospital staff, the PAACS surgical teachers and all of the missionaries for their contribution to his education and discipling. He closed with a special recognition of his wife in her role as spouse and mother of their children.

Gezahegn Tilahun Tesfaye is from Awasa, 140 km from Soddo and Ebenezer Gezahegn Fanta is from Shashemane, 120 km from Soddo.

Both Gezahegn and Ebenezer will stay on faculty at Soddo Christian Hospital until December (and completion of the COSECSA exams). Efeson Thomas is leaving Soddo Christian Hospital to work at Myungsung Christian Hospital in Addis Ababa. Dr. Andrew Chew, PAACS program director, will return from home assignment during the first week of August.

The ceremony was followed by a lunch celebration at Abebe Bekele Hotel, the largest hotel in Soddo.

REINTRODUCTION TO PEDIATRIC SURGERY FELLOW

By Yves Mpongo

(Editorial Note: Yves is the pediatric surgery fellow at BethanyKids at Kijabe Hospital in Kenya. He and his wife, Sakinatou, are known to you from their time at PAACS-Galmi).

I was born in January 31, 1979 in a Christian family. Although we were raised with Christian values with my father who was a Pastor, my personal relationship with



Christ increased when I started medical school at the University of Kinshasa. I graduated from medical school in 2008. I first heard about PAACS from a PAACS alumnus who is a friend of my family.

I moved to Cameroon in 2010 and worked at the Protestant Hospital of Ngaoundéré which was a former PAACS training site. Ngaoundéré was a blessing for me as it was there that I met Sakinatou, who was born from a Muslim Fulani family and became the first Christian of their family. We got married in May 17, 2012 and joined the SIM Galmi Hospital PAACS General surgery training program in Niger in September 2012. Although Galmi is a dry and hot place, it was fertile for us as we were blessed by two children: Benazir born in June 2013 and Aaron born in October 2014.

During my training, I have been particularly touched by the children and the need for the pediatric surgery care. Progressively, I had the conviction that God wanted me to do it as a ministry. I graduated in June 2017 from general surgery training at Galmi Hospital and served at Kibuye Hope Hospital in Burundi before joining the PAACS Bethany kids Pediatric Surgery Fellowship program at Kijabe Hospital.

Although it means more years of training and work, I believe an adequate care from a well-trained pediatric surgeon will tremendously help the kids and families with real pediatric surgical needs. I trust the Lord to guide me during the training and at the end to the place he wants me to serve.

NEWS SHORTS:

- **Ethiopian Unrest Also Affects Soddo Hospital:** Ethiopia has also suffered several months of unrest between certain tribal groups and the government forces. Late last month, there was a clash between an angry mob and the police in the Wolaitta region of Ethiopia. An angry mob clashing with the police threw stones over a wall of the compound of Soddo Christian Hospital. The windows of the home of Dr. Brian Hodges were broken – terrifying the children whose rooms were suddenly subjected to showers of glass. Stray bullets went into the homes of two other missionaries.

The local mob violence did rapidly calm down and no further damage to the hospital compound was sustained, but the stress induced in the minds of young children who do not understand has lingered. Please pray for a sense of peace and the presence of God for the Hodges, their children and the hospital employees who were affected in other ways.

- **PAACS Remediation Exam:** A 200 item multiple choice remediation examination was given to 41 PAACS residents on Saturday, July 28. Twenty took it of necessity and 21 more took it for additional practice. The results had not been obtained by the date of publication of this PAACS Bulletin. The next testing date will be Wednesday, September 5 when all eligible candidates for the written Membership and Fellowship examinations for COSECSA will sit their exam. The oral examinations for those who successfully pass the written exam will be in Rwanda December 3 and 4.

- **Arusha Surgeons Participate in Laparoscopic Surgery** (taken from the COSECSA newsletter): Scaling up safe Surgery is one of the goals of Tanzania Surgical Association (TSA). In its endeavours to promote skilled and therefore safe Surgeons, TSA



took this opportunity to organize a one-day Pre-conference Laparoscopic Workshop on 29th May 2018 in collaboration with Arusha Lutheran Medical Centre (ALMC) which is one of the leading Laparoscopy Centres in Tanzania. Laparoscopy (Minimal Access Surgery) has gained popularity in the world due to its many advantages over the conventional open Surgery. When carried out with sufficiently trained staff it is relatively safer and has long term cost benefit due to early return to productive life.



The workshop had a total of 28 participants comprising of qualified surgeons and surgical trainees from various hospitals in the country including Bugando, Mbeya, Muhimbili, KCMC, Hydrom, and ALMC. It involved lectures on important areas of laparoscopy in the morning and in the afternoon, participants had opportunity to assist and/or observe live operations in the operating rooms.

The workshop was organized under the leadership of Dr Kisanga Paul A who is a qualified laparoscopic Surgeon and a member of the World Association of Laparoscopic Surgeons. Other facilitators and instructors included Dr Wendy Willmore, Dr Mbona, Dr Dave Halter and Anesthesiologist Dr Laurence.

- **Tenwek Hospital Hosts Neurosurgery Trauma Course** (taken from the COSECSA newsletter): On 23rd June, a Neurotrauma course was held at the Tenwek hospital in Kenya. The course was attended by 86 trainees. The course was conducted by COSECSA in partnership with the Neurological Society of Kenya. The workshop was facilitated by Will Copeland, Moody Qureshi and David Olunya.





- PAACS Orthopaedic Surgeons Take Oral Exams:** As readers of the Bulletin are aware, PAACS Orthopaedic faculty, Dr. Dan Galat (Kijabe Hospital) and Dr. Dylan Nugent, (Tenwek Hospital) were to take the oral exam for the American Board of Orthopaedic Surgery (ABOS) in late July. This was to be a precedent-setting event since they are the first orthopaedic surgeons to sit for this exam while practicing primarily in another country. The ABOS exam was held in Chicago, IL this week and both surgeons were optimistic after the exam about their performance. PAACS is proud of the incredible work, energy and time that Drs. Galat and Nugent put into preparing for this exam and very thankful to those on the American Board of Surgery who helped change their rules, thereby making it possible for overseas physicians to sit the exam. Please join us in praying for good results for both Dr. Galat and Dr. Nugent. They hope to find out their final scores in approximately four weeks after the exam.

- Bongolo Finishes Nurse Anesthetists –** Jeff Lane, MD, anesthesiologist at Bongolo Hospital in Lebamba, Gabon announced on Facebook July 30 that four nurse anesthetists had completed a program which started February 12, 2018. The six-month long program was designed to improve their skills. Lane has just completed his first year of service at Bongolo.



ANNOUNCEMENTS:

- **Errata:** In the June edition of The PAACS Bulletin, it was stated that Alliance Niyukuri was the first Burundi national to be trained. We were very aware of Gisita Theophile Nkesha who is practicing in Burundi, but our records had wrongly stated that Rwanda was his nation of birth. His daughter kindly corrected our misinformation.
 - **Birth Announcement:** Sean and Heather Dupont are glad to announce the birth of their fourth child, Graham Suleiman Dupont. He arrived on July 16 weighing in at 7 pounds 15 ounces (4.1 kg) and measuring 19 inches (48.3 cm). His three brothers, Calvin, Sam and Zeke, are thrilled. Sean is a PAACS faculty general surgeon at SIM-Niger Hospital in Galmi, Niger. They praise God for the healthy child and pray that all of their passport and visa paperwork would go through quickly so they can return to service in Africa as soon as possible. Congratulations to the Dupont family and welcome to young Graham!
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- **PAACS Accepting Applications for 2019:** PAACS is accepting applications for residency training slots in General Surgery, Orthopedic Surgery, and Pediatric Surgery. Start date for the residency is January 2019. The initial application and ALL requested documents are due by August 15. An additional supplemental application with recommendations and questions is due by September 15th. To fill out the application visit our “Become a PAACS Resident” page: <https://www.paacs.net/involved/become-a-resident/> and follow the submission instructions. We look forward to hearing from you!
 - **Mark your calendar** for the following events you may wish to attend:
 - **Prescription for Renewal**, October 12 – 14, 2018. In addition to the usual program of spiritual encouragement focused on medical missions, Dr. Lou Zirkle will oversee a SIGN nail course on the Saturday afternoon. Register at <https://www.samaritanspurse.org/our-ministry/prescription-for-renewal/>
 - **PAACS Commission and Council meetings** will be held November 2-3 at the Hilton Garden Inn in Des Plaines, IL. Commission, Specialty Council and PAACS Committee members are invited to attend this meeting. All PAACS Program Directors and faculty in the US at the time are also invited to attend. We are asking that the Program Directors and faculty let us know (susan.koshy@paacs.net) that they will be in the US because we would like them to present about their program at the meeting.
 - **Global Health Mission Conference**, Louisville, Kentucky, November 8 – 10, 2018. Register at <https://www.medicalmissions.com/events/gmhc-2018>. The sister conference, **Remedy**, will be held March 28 – 20, 2019 at the First Baptist Orlando Church in Florida.

PRAYER REQUESTS:

- Pray for the PAACS residents who took the remediation exam in late July and for wisdom regarding any action necessary after the results are known. Pray for all the residents who will be taking the written Membership and Fellowship examinations for COSECSA on Wednesday, September 5.
- Praise God for the graduation three days ago at Soddo Christian Hospital and for the graduation at the PAACS-Galmi Program this coming week (August 5). Pray for wisdom for them as they leave their places of training and return to their own cities and countries or wherever God would have them serve.
- Pray for the resident selection process that will soon start in early September. Pray that God will lead the right men and women to this training program and that the program directors and their teams will make the right decision as led by the Spirit.
- Please pray for peace for Northwest Cameroon and for the employees and patients at Mbingo Baptist Hospital. The risk of serious violence remains a concern. Pray for strength for the surgeons remaining at the hospital to take care of the huge patient load. Pray for the financial stability of the hospital and the CBC.
- Please pray for the residents and two faculty members now at Bansa Baptist Hospital in Northwest Cameroon. Pray for the adjustment of the residents and the families to this new place and pray that the training program will get back to full pace. Pray for those residents who have taken leave of absences during these troubled times. Pray for the faculty members who have a heavy load here. Please pray for safety for all PAACS personnel and their families. Pray that PAACS will have the wisdom about all the decisions in the future.
- Pray for the civil unrest in Ethiopia and for the effect it is having on the missionaries, their families and the hospital employees. Pray that peace will come – both physical peace between warring factions and spiritual peace from the Spirit. Pray for healing for the traumatized children at Soddo.
- Pray for Yves Mpongo as he faces the stresses of the pediatric surgery fellowship and for all the PAACS trainees in all the programs.
- Please continue to pray that God will call additional career surgeons to join the PAACS faculties. The manpower situations in Egypt, Ethiopia, Gabon, Kenya, Malawi, and Niger are particularly of concern and some situations (Ethiopia, Malawi and Niger) are critical.
- The O'Connors at Bongolo Hospital in Gabon have asked for you to pray that God would provide surgical coverage for them during their home assignment September and October of this year.
- Pray for those faculty members on home assignment in August (Dylan Nugent, Dan Galat, David Halter, Tim Berg, Rich Davis, Jeff Lane and Debbie Eisenhut in the USA) – for their rest, for the times of speaking and fund-raising and for the times of medical work.
- Pray for those programs which have faculty members absent on leave – that God will give them strength and rest to continue.

- We ask for special prayer for Adam Davis. Rich Davis and his family has just arrived home for their regularly scheduled home assignment and had to admit Adam to Cardiac ICU at the Los Angeles Children's Hospital for a diagnosis of presumed myocarditis. His heart failure was treated with strong medication and his echocardiogram showed severe disease. The heart biopsy did not show any significant scarring. The prognosis is unknown at the present, but he has responded and is on oral medications. Discharge is imminent. Please pray for comfort for Rich, Stacy and the family, for healing for Adam and for wisdom for his physicians.
- Praise God for the safe birth of young Graham to the Duponts. Pray that the needed visas, passports and paperwork will be done in a timely way to allow them to return to service in Niger.
- Praise God that Drs. Galat and Nugent were given the opportunity to take the ABOS exam and that they felt they performed well. Pray that the results will confirm that.

Editor: Bruce C. Steffes, MD, MBA, MA, FACS, FWACS, FCS(ECSA), FICS