Thirty-four medical students and high level officials participated in the first white coat ceremony at the Adventist School of Medicine of East-Central Africa (ASOME) in Kigali, Rwanda.

Dr. Patrick Ndimubanzi, the Director General of Human Resources for Health (HRH) at the Health Ministry said that the white coat marks the beginning of a life of service for the medics in the making, and called on them to regard “becoming a Medical Doctor” as a calling other than a job.

Dr. Ndimubanzi represented the Minister of Health, Dr. Daniel Ngamije on November 12, 2021 during the First White Coat Ceremony held at the Adventist School of Medicine of East-Central Africa at Masoro Campus in the periphery of the capital, Kigali. The medical school in Rwanda is the 7th world-wide established by the Seventh Day Adventist Church.

“Today is a transition, which means a new beginning, the beginning of a life of service and dedication. You are going to become Medical Doctors. This is more than just a job. It is a calling. A calling that requires to start with a training that prepares your mind, your body, and your heart,” said Ndimubanzi.

At least 34 medical students of Adventist School of Medicine of East-Central Africa (ASOME) wore the White Coat.

On September2, 2019 H.E President Paul Kagame presided over the facility’s inauguration. Kagame emphasized the need for a teaching hospital in the country and said that his government would provide land and some financial assistance as support.

Dr. Ndimubanzi called on the students to have patients at the centre of their work.

“…. but no matter what type of doctor you want to become, always remember that the patient is at the center of everything we do,” he added.

He called on the undergraduate medics to adopt a culture of learning continuously “because things keep evolving and we need to provide the best evidence-based care to our patients and our communities” and prepare for the challenges ahead, but should not hesitate to seek help.

Presiding over the First White Coat ceremony, Dr. Blacious Ruguri, the Chancellor of the Adventist University of Central Africa (AUCA) said the white coat is a physical symbol of values, responsibilities, humanity and assurance in ASOME.

“May this white coat be physical symbols of the values and responsibilities of learning medicine in ASOME. May your white coat be for each of you a mantle of compassion, a sign of assurance, a symbol of humility, and a reminder of your oath. Each time you put on your white coat may you remember whom you serve,” observed Dr. Ruguri.

The Chancellor said that the white coat is a universal symbol of integrity, selflessness, compassion, honesty and dedication to service and a lifelong commitment. Dr. Ruguri, one of the masterminds of the AUCA curriculum said that ASOME trains and prepares medical doctors with special Mission of becoming “medical missionaries” who follow the footsteps of Jesus Christ, the “Master Physician” and the “Great Physician”.

“Jesus Christ made each work of healing an occasion for instilling divine principles in the mind and soul. This was the purpose of Jesus Christ’s work. The power of example. The true physician is an educator. May your experience be the same as you start seeing patients or practising in the health posts, clinics, health centers and even those in the community at large,” remarked Dr. Ruguri.

He called on the future Physicians to “fall in love” with Jesus Christ the “Great Healer” who employed different methods of healing with tender, courteous grace and compassion.

Experts mostly from the medical profession from various parts of the world that blessed this “rite of passage” organized in honour of the class of 2027 stressed the significance of White Coat along highlighting its history.

“The White Coat is a symbol of truth, honest and purity,” observed Dr. Zeno Charles Marcel, the GC Health Ministries Associate Director.

High profile speakers at the ceremony including Dr. Eustace A. Penniecook (ASOME Founding Dean), Dr. Lisa Beardsley-Hardy (GC Education Director) and Dr. Peter Landless (GC Health Ministries Director) all paid tribute to the Arnold P. Gold Foundation that initiated the White Coat ceremony on August20, 1993 at the Colombia University College of Physicians and Surgeons, New York.

They said that the symbolic event welcomes the medical students into the profession of medicine and emphasizes the importance of compassionate care for patients as well as scientific proficiency

The ASOME students recited the Physician Pledge – a ritual, which is part of the event, representing their public acknowledgment of the responsibilities of the profession and willingness to assume such obligations.

“…may God’s Kingdom, His healing power and glory be experienced by those whom I serve, and may they be made known in my life, in proportion as I am faithful to this pledge,” reads the pledge in part.

Dr. Eustace A. Penniecook took the guests, the medical students and their families through the history of the White Coat, and remarked that beyond it Christians anticipate the white rob that Jesus Christ will give them on his Second Advent.