

Pr. Sarah Mayer-Flatt is our "Synod Storyteller."

In this role, Pr. Sarah will share stories of her own, as well as stories that are part of our shared life in Southeast Michigan.

You can look for these stories online & on social media throughout the year.

You are welcome to quote from her stories, share them friends, or put them in your church newsletter. Please remember to give Pr. Sarah credit if you do so.

## **Take a Seat: "Tsiyon Family Hospital: A Miracle in the Making"**

Beloved,

A small village in Uganda now has access to medical and dental care thanks to a 501(c)3 that began by members of Zion Lutheran Church in Ann Arbor, MI. Building Up: Partnering in Health and Wholeness was incorporated as a secular organization in August 2020, right in the middle of the Covid Pandemic.

The name, Building Up: PHW was inspired by Ecclesiastes 3:1&3, "For everything there is a season and a time for every matter under heaven ... a time to break down and a time to build up." Building Up: PHW built and continues to support a medical facility, Tsiyon Family Hospital (TFH) in Sayyi, an underserved area of Uganda. In partnership with Rev. Dr. Elia Musasazi, pastor of Resurrection Community Church in Sayyi, a community dream is now a reality -- health services within an accessible distance from their homes. TFH has given a better future to so many individuals and will for many years to come. "Tsiyon" is the Hebrew word for "Zion" -- the church that initially sent the first mission team and continues to be a partner of Building Up.

Because the next nearest medical facility was 15-20 miles from his community, Rev. Dr. Musasazi saw the need and prayed for an answer. During a mission trip in September of 2018 a dream was shared with the Mission Team.. With a common goal between Rev. Dr. Musasazi and the members of Building Up: PHW, the Tsiyon Family Hospital (TFH) became a reality. The hospital was fully built by November of 2022.

Tsiyon Family Hospital opened its doors February 27, 2023 and recently celebrated two years of transforming and saving lives. Over 5,000 men, women and children received treatment at TFH, 3,478 children and adults have received immunizations. In this community this is epic. With ineffable joy and gratefulness, the Building Up team celebrates lives that were saved, babies born, dental care provided, and treatments administered because Tsiyon Family Hospital was available in this community.

Two days after TFH opened, early in the morning, an elderly man in severe respiratory distress was carried in by his family. He had pneumonia. The medical staff reported that without immediate treatment he would likely have died. I had the opportunity to meet the man in the morning after spending the night in the emergency room. My heart soared with joy! As a result of the hospital being opened two days earlier, this man's life was saved." This story is shared by the President of the Board of Directors, Claudia Werner, when asked what her favorite memory of the journey has been so far.

Tsiyon Family Hospital's medical equipment and supplies have been provided purchased with



funds from grants and the kindness of donors as well as fundraisers put on by the Building Up Advisory Council and Board of Directors. At one of the earlier fundraisers, which was a concert with a jazz singer in the backyard of Zion Lutheran Church, a doctor said he had a whole floor of hospital beds to donate. When the Vice President of the Board of Directors, Dr. Cynthia Browne, a radiation oncologist in the metro Detroit area, was given new chairs for her office she also was

able to donate all of the old chairs for TFH. These donations and additional medical equipment and supplies were shipped to TFH by World Medical Relief in Southfield, MI.

While this hospital has been a lifesaver for many, there is still some trepidation from local residents to come and be treated. "They are afraid it will cost too much, since it is a shiny, new building in the middle of their small, economically depressed community," said Werner. But patients are able to be seen for medical and dental care for pennies: \$1.40 to see a doctor, and that's only if they can pay. No one is turned away who needs treatment. A medical doctor at the clinic makes \$24 per day. The cost of dental care is significantly low as well. Two fillings cost \$9.

Building Up sent a Mission Team to Uganda in October 2024. They helped provide essential care and support during a four-day maternal/infant health clinic. 144 women and children received treatment, 45 children were immunized and 14 provided dental care. An abundance of dresses, shoes, shirts, shorts, toothbrushes, and menstrual kits were distributed. One does not have to have a medical background to be a member of a Building Up Mission team. Pastor Elia commented, "We have been greatly impacted by your love, support, and hands on work at Tsiyon Family Hospital. Sayyi and the community neighbors are forever grateful. Thank you!" There are three upcoming mission trips planned: March 2025, October 2025, and June 2026.

The goals for Building Up in 2025 is to secure funds to fully equip the operating room and purchase the carriage for the elevator at TFH. Currently a Solar Power recovery system is being installed to provide power when it goes out at the hospital. This is often a daily occurrence.

"Good health is the foundation of vibrant lives, thriving communities, and forward progress. I am convinced that together in 2025 we will continue to inspire and work toward a community of wellness," stated Claudia Werner, president.

You have the power to make compassionate medical care continue at Tsiyon Family Hospital. Your support will: strengthen the weak, banish fear, restore hope, and save lives until all people in the Sayyi community area have good health and peace.

Want to get involved and support the Tsiyon Family Hospital? There are loads of ways to participate! Collect a noisy or special offering, commit to donating \$X per month to support an employee or purchase a piece of medical equipment. Donate Thrivent or VBS t-shirts. Attend one of the many fundraisers sponsored by Building Up, (a Safari Run on June 15, 2025 or a Golf Scramble July 26, 2025 -- more information will be coming in the e-news about these events). Send a team from your congregation. Most importantly, pray for this ministry; for the patients and community members, the doctors, nurses, housekeeping and administrative staff, for Rev. Dr. Musasazi and his family, for Building Up: PHW, and for all the volunteers who help make the Tsiyon Family Hospital a safe and caring place.

You can check out more about Building Up: PHW on their website at [www.buildingup-phw.org](http://www.buildingup-phw.org). For questions or information, please contact the organization's president, Claudia Werner, [claudiawerner1952@gmail.com](mailto:claudiawerner1952@gmail.com).

Shalom,

Pastor Sarah  
SEMI Synod Storyteller

*P.S.: Have a story you'd like me to share about your own congregation? Send me an email ([sarah.flatt@gmail.com](mailto:sarah.flatt@gmail.com)) and I'll be sure to tell your story!*