



February 2023

Dear Friends,

January 26, 2023, was a red letter day for the ministry of the Reformed Church in America in The Kingdom of Bahrain—the official dedication and grand opening of the King Hamad American Mission Hospital!

Exactly 120 years earlier—on January 26, 1903—the 24-bed Mason Memorial Hospital was opened by RCA missionaries Drs. Sharon and Marian Thoms. It was the first modern healthcare facility in Bahrain.



Roughly 10 years prior, shortly after stepping ashore in Bahrain for the first time, RCA Missionary Samuel Zwemer extended hopeful, healing hands to this small island nation off the coast of Saudi Arabia by opening a rudimentary medical dispensary. On that day, I doubt Zwemer ever considered the possibility that such an inauspicious beginning would eventually grow to include five medical campuses, a 21st-century state-of-the-art hospital, and a grand opening and dedication attended by Bahraini Royalty, the U.S. Ambassador, and other international dignitaries, as well as Medical Directors and professionals from some of the more highly regarded health care centers in the world!

The story of the RCA ministry in Bahrain is long—over 130 years long—and the initial chapters of the story are not especially inspiring. Those who answered the call of missionary service in those early years knew much in the way of toil, frustration, and loss and very little in the way of fruitfulness. Samuel Zwemer lost a beloved brother who came to Bahrain to serve. He and Amy buried their two young daughters—pulled from their loving embrace by malaria. One of the two original doctors, Marian Thoms, together with two of her children also died in Bahrain while serving. Other missionary pioneers arrived in Bahrain full of hope yet, for



At the Christ's Chapel dedication

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a variety of reasons, were not able to weather the blistering heat and other forms of deprivation. They returned to the states broken of body and spirit.

Perhaps these tragic losses would have felt less burdensome had the fruit from their labors been more evident. But such was not the case. Reflecting on his efforts to share the gospel in Bahrain later in life, Samuel Zwemer sadly confessed:

'We have fished all night and caught very little.'

In the way of fishing for souls, Zwemer and his colleagues indeed had 'very little' to show for their efforts. Yet the story of mission and ministry in Bahrain reminds us that God asks us only to be faithful—to love and to serve and to trust that God will provide the increase in God's perfect time. Despite such unimaginable loss and so little evidence of fruit, these early missionary pioneers were steadfast, choosing to love and serve the people of Bahrain. 130 years later, we see and celebrate that their commitment is bearing miraculous, God-honoring fruit! You see, there is a reason the dedication of the new King Hamad American Mission Hospital was selected for January 26 of 2023. It's because the current king, King Hamad bin Isa Al Khalifa, has such high regard for the legacy and ongoing ministry of the Reformed Church in America. It was King Hamad who gave the land for the new hospital. It was King Hamad who gave the 45-million-dollar lead grant for its construction. And it was King Hamad who selected January 26 for the dedication—to honor the missionary pioneers who established the first hospital in Bahrain 120 years earlier. Hear again the words of His Highness King Hamad:

We are forever grateful that Samuel Zwemer and the other RCA Missionaries chose to care for and serve us when we had nothing of value to give them in return. We honor their legacy and the faith that inspired them to serve. We will never forget what they did for us and for this land.

We praise God that a ministry carved out of desert sands and hearts that seemed hard to the gospel, thrives in the 21st century! We praise God for the thousands who gather for worship each weekend at the National Evangelical Church founded by RCA missionaries more than a century ago. We praise God for the sterling reputation of the American Mission Hospital and how highly her legacy and current service are regarded by kings and commoners. We praise God for the ongoing impact of The Al Raja School—even as we reflect upon tens of thousands of lives transformed by the love of Christ in the context of education.

For these and so many other evidences of God's faithfulness over these past 130 years, we praise God, we honor those who laid such a costly sacrifice on the altar of surrender, and we thank you for your prayers and partnership with us in the work of the gospel!

With great affection,

Blaine and Kathy Newhouse
RCA Global Missions
Kingdom of Bahrain

P.S. To watch a video produced by the Crown Prince's court of the special day, visit <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=seICK9CYXbk>

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