



2023 Year in Review



Paul Deutsch - Bahrain

A glimpse at what your support made possible:

It all looks different now—what a year 2023 has been, and how much clearer I can see what must be done! Let me give the highlights of 2023 as an RCA missionary working as a chaplain at the American Mission Hospital in the Kingdom of Bahrain.

- *January 26, 2023, comes at last!* It marked 120 years (exactly) since the first hospital in the Gulf Region was dedicated in 1903, but the real celebration on this day in 2023 was the dedication of AMH's new (additional) hospital—the King Hamad American Mission Hospital. Although it bears the King's name, it was his son, the Crown Prince of Bahrain, who attended the dedication service. I gave an opening prayer and recited Psalm 67.
- *Operation Lisa!* On a personal note, my wife, Lisa, had her right hip replaced in the middle of January (2023). The new hospital was not receiving such patients yet at that time, so it was done at another Bahraini hospital. It was interesting to see how other Bahraini hospitals function. Lisa would follow up this surgery with a left hip replacement in March!
- *March—the real start!* King Hamad American Mission Hospital is not a replacement hospital, but an additional location for AMH in the country of Bahrain. Although the new hospital was dedicated in January, and some of the outpatient clinics at the new hospital were open, it was not until March that we had our first inpatient there—which happened to be a hip replacement (not my wife). Chapel services also officially relocated to the new hospital in March. (But we still Zoom these morning devotions onto the screen of the old chapel!)



Prayer at the hospital dedication



- *How I make a big circle most days!* The main focus of my ministry is visiting patients and their families and visiting staff to give pastoral/spiritual care. The new hospital (in Aali) has 120 inpatient beds—much bigger than the 50-bed capacity of the Manama hospital. I anticipate more and more inpatients coming to the new hospital. The new hospital is about a half hour from the first hospital, but my day starts there (in Aali) in the morning with chapel service. I commute to the Manama hospital every afternoon to visit staff and patients there. I also continue to visit each of the three clinic sights once a week as before. There, I visit and pray with

the staff. In this way, I make a loop to and from the hospitals every day, ending back in Aali. I counted—for 2023, I delivered 56 chapel devotions and made 121 clinic visits! (This considers that I was in the U.S. for all of June!)

- *Parent's pride and a June bride!* “He is so young!”—that is what my wife and I were saying as we prepared to see our son, Jared, get married in Springfield, MO. He had just graduated from college and was marrying his college sweetheart. We traveled back to the U.S.—the first time we had been back since I arrived in Bahrain (December 2021), and watched my son get married on June 21st. It was a beautiful outdoor wedding. Dad (me) gave an opening prayer and statement. I asked, “Who gives this woman to be married?” The bride’s father answered, and took over officiating, until I administered communion to this new couple—my son and my new daughter-in-law, Chloe.



- *New Strategy!* I gave a lot of prayer and time to discern how best to serve AMH in a way that leaves the Pastoral Care Department and chaplaincy, and AMH as a whole, most effective in sharing the gospel. I held a focus group in which I asked the question, “What will promote a Christ-centered identity at AMH?” Using all the suggestions, I formed a model of goals that builds up our role as a Christian healthcare system that stays true to the intent of sharing the gospel in this part of the Muslim world. It focuses on three areas for 2024 and future years—building up transparency, building up Pastoral Care, and building up believers/seekers. The primary goal is to stay mission true so that we make the most of every opportunity to share Christ.

Memorable story from 2023

I was at one of our clinic locations. Five or six nursing staff and a doctor had taken a few minutes to sit down with me and listen as I shared with them about the compassion Jesus had toward the widow of Nain, the story found in Luke 7:11-15. Compassion is one of the biblical values mentioned in our mission statement. One staff member had come in late and sat down at the end. My time with them is only about five minutes—a brief pause in between patients. It is usually busy. Then I prayed for them and their work.

Sometimes they give me specific prayer requests—one of the nurses is pregnant, for example, or a nurse is sick. Perhaps they want prayer for their children taking school exams, or for travel. At other times it is for a sick relative. I am glad to support them in this way. I am glad they know there is a chaplain to care for them. Afterward, on this day, they all took time to get some chocolate I had brought before hustling back to work.

What I am doing here in Bahrain, I can do much the same back in the U.S., but here, I can share the love of Christ with many of the 33 different nationalities that work for AMH. Many more nationalities I meet as patients. People from all over the world have come to Bahrain to work, to live, to support families back in other distant lands. Some have very professional jobs, others are laborers who manage to make a very low salary seem like so much to their destitute families back in their home country. As a missionary chaplain, I have come here to Bahrain, too—I don’t have to go to their lands to reach out to them. I meet them here in Bahrain. What a privilege this opportunity affords me.

The staff member that came in late and had sat down, I recognized. I had interacted with her before. She was friendly. She was Muslim. She knew who I was. And this time, she stayed behind after everyone had left. She asked if she could talk with me for a few moments.

“Lord, work through me”, I silently prayed. “Help me say what words to say, Holy Spirit.”

She shared about some hurts she recently experienced. She asked more than once that our conversation be confidential. I assured her each time that it definitely was. (For that reason, I won’t share the details).

I could see by the end of the conversation that her burden and her pain had lifted. God had helped me encourage her and affirm her. I shared with her from the life of Christ, and I shared my own experience of Christian faith. That was all just plain witnessing. She thanked me for being such a good listener.

“That’s why I’m here,” I said.

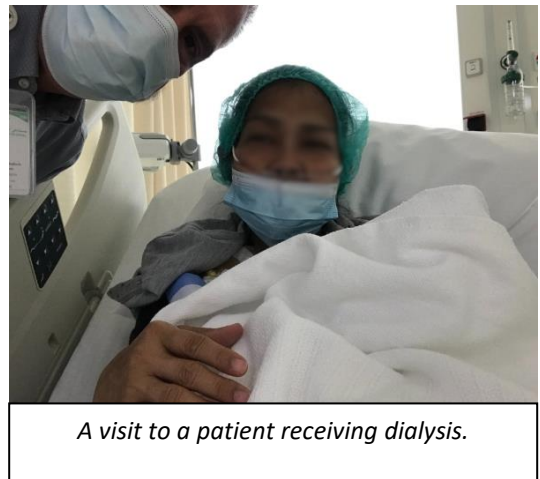
I assured her that I would pray for her and I silently thanked God that He would use me to make a difference.

And that is all made possible—that a Muslim can hear a Christian witness—because I have your support and have been sent.

Our challenges of 2023

Any job, any work, will have challenges that must be faced and overcome. These challenges are, in reality, the actual work that we do. We work to overcome challenges. Challenges don’t have to be negative, but all outcomes can be positive if God is at the center of the purpose and effort.

This year has brought a lot of good changes at AMH—the biggest of which is the opening of the new. What a difference! The new hospital pushes the work of the healthcare we offer to higher levels of excellence and service. We have added many new specialties, added much more experience, and added to our ability to address more serious matters of health. I anticipated this. I anticipated the need to expand what I could do as part of the healthcare system and expand the coverage that it would take to meet the growing pastoral and spiritual needs of the staff and patients. I have to expand to meet these growing needs.



A visit to a patient receiving dialysis.

The chaplain at AMH also stands guard to be a mission compass of true north—keeping the hospital system pointed to its original purpose. As a hospital grows and adjusts to cultural challenges, keeping the mission in focus (as in any ministry) has to be even more intentional. The missionary chaplain is a mission champion. We are here, AMH is here, to share the gospel—not just give healthcare.

Please Pray

In 2024, I begin with a grand strategy to meet these growing demands and intentionally maintain a true north that keeps the AMH mission true. Please pray for some of the following strategies I have in place, which include:

- Emphasizing and making visible the mission statement of the hospital, so that we characterize who we are by what we do in an intentional manner that emulates God’s character. This sets us apart from any other hospital in this region.

- Establishing a Volunteer Program of Chaplains. I hope to be able to assemble Christians who have the desire and aptitude to visit our patients. I particularly am hoping to recruit qualified people to visit people I am somewhat limited to visit due to cultural boundaries. In this way, I hope to increase the number of patients that pastoral care can visit.
- Establishing a network of Christian doctors and nurses and other healthcare workers that can fellowship together and encourage each other in their Christian walk. I am hoping this can be organized on a national level (nationally for Bahrain), and that Christian healthcare workers in this nation are strengthened and better trained to share their faith in their workplace (whether at our AMH hospitals/clinics or other hospitals in Bahrain).

As always, please pray for our safety in this region of the world!

We rely on your prayers and support, and thank you for your faithfulness!

Chaplain Paul Deutsch