



Update from Blaine and Kathleen Newhouse

October 2025

Dear Friends,

We are so grateful for the opportunity to partner with you in the work of the gospel! We praise God that God is blessing the ministry of the English Language Congregation (ELC) of the National Evangelical Church (NEC) in the Kingdom of Bahrain!

Presently, the ELC is in the midst of a **strategic planning process**—a process intended to expand the reach, depth, and impact of our ministry. This process has been greatly enhanced by the skillful leadership of the Director of Strategic Planning for the Mayo Clinic in Rochester, MN, Mr. Steven McNeil. In addition to his work with the Mayo Clinic, Steven also serves on the Board of Directors of our sister ministry—The American Mission Hospital (AMH). While in Bahrain for AMH annual board meetings, Steven and his wife Sheila regularly attend worship at the ELC. Recently, the McNeil's revealed that their experience of worship and our life in community has been both inspiring and transformative! As a result, Steven has offered his professional strategic planning services **free of charge** to ELC leadership in hopes of multiplying the amazing work God is doing in Bahrain and the Gulf region.

As you are one of our valued mission partners, we would like to invite you into our strategic planning process. During the upcoming year, I hope to share with you, not only our strategic planning outcomes but also the values, vision, and strategic outputs that will be revealed through the work of discernment we are committed to doing together.

Please continue to uphold the ELC and our strategic planning process in prayer. We are committed to know and do God's will during this next season of our life together in ministry. However, before setting our sights on the future, our initial work was to reflect on God's

faithfulness in the past. To that end, I am delighted to share the first of several ELC Strategic Planning updates with you, our dear friends:

The ELC Vision Narrative:

The narrative of the National Evangelical Church English Language Congregation grows from a spirit of missional imagination and deep and abiding faith. Stretching back more than 130 years to mission pioneers who believed the barren sands of Arabia could be transformed into fertile soil to nurture seeds of faith and fruitfulness for the cause of Christ.

Though Reformed Church in America missionary Samuel Zwemer is affectionately known and celebrated today as 'The Apostle to Islam', his early decades of ministry in Bahrain were exceedingly difficult, disheartening, and costly. Together with his wife, Amy and Dr's Marian and Sharon Thoms, these earliest servants of the gospel in Bahrain experienced significant personal losses and found little in the way of encouragement in their work.

Yet even though the barren desert sands yielded very little, Zwemer and others who came to serve the cause of Christ in Bahrain, continued to 'scatter seed'.

Today, we celebrate that seeds sown in faith more than a century ago are now producing an abundant harvest! The NEC worships and serves in 7 language-specific congregations with thousands of believers and spiritual seekers proclaiming faith in Jesus and serving others in Jesus' name.

Visitors to the ELC often comment on the rich diversity and spiritual fervor that enlivens our worship and life together in community. The ELC is truly a Revelation 7:9 congregation with believers from more than 60 nations and as many different languages, all committed to worship, prayer, discipleship, and service. This unique and inspiring integration of culture, spiritual gifts, and life experiences positions the ELC to connect with our local community in unique and varied ways.

Many of our ministries grow out of concern for justice or to show mercy to the dispossessed and marginalized. The ELC also partners with local NGO's and government agencies to serve and support the most vulnerable among us.

These and other acts of mission and service express our profound gratitude for all we have received in Jesus.

However, for all we have received, the ELC is also aware of mission opportunities and spiritual growth not yet realized. The ELC has incredible missional imagination and is eager to lean into the kind of risk whereby we would trust God to do what seems impossible in a predominantly Muslim nation—to plant churches, begin new ministries, train pastors, and continue to scatter seed—expanding the loving embrace of Jesus and the message of the gospel not only to the beautiful citizens and residents of the Kingdom of Bahrain, but to the very ends of the earth!

Please join us in praying for God to be glorified and God's Kingdom to advance through this process of Spirit-led discernment and planning. We pledge to keep you posted on all that we discover and the various ways the Spirit and Word are prompting our collective missional imagination and purposeful pursuit of the Great Commission and Great Commandment.

With sincere appreciation for your partnership in the work of the gospel,

Blaine and Kathy
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