

MESSENGER

MONTHLY NEWSLETTER & PRAYER GUIDE



A flock of birds flying around the Temple Mount and Al-Aqsa Mosque compound in Jerusalem.

A COMMITTED ANABAPTIST UNDER FIRE by an EMM worker in Israel

This article was written in mid-December 2023. Due to the constantly changing dynamics of the war between Israel and Hamas, some details may have changed since this issue was printed. If any updates need to be made to this story, they can be found on our website. EMM.ORG/MESSENGER

“What? Don’t tell me you’re praying for our enemies! After the October 7 atrocities that were committed by our enemies on women, children, and babies, how can you? And don’t we have the right to self-defense?”

I felt under fire. Turning to the Scriptures, I received renewed conviction for my Anabaptist perspective and its ideals. I realized deep in my heart that to be a witness of incarnational love and to be a light and blessing to those around us in this land is not one-sided. Living within the Jewish community doesn’t mean I couldn’t equally sympathize with the

innocent Palestinian civilians. I deeply grieve for all the suffering that they have undergone in the past and are now experiencing in the present.

On October 7, 2023, Hamas militants stormed the border with Israel and murdered 1,400 people in the largest mass slaughter of Jews since World War II and the Holocaust. This attack was followed by a declaration of war by Israel — the nation retaliated with a massive response in Gaza in an attempt to displace Hamas. Accounts of suffering on both sides fill the news media. Both sides seek a military solution, but the path of continued violence only leads to more violence. Is there a way for Israeli Jews and Palestinian Arabs to coexist in the land?

As members of the Kingdom of God, how do we pursue “the Jesus Way”

during the heat of war? We need to seek to build the Kingdom of God. Pursuing Jesus’ Way involves going against the current. We are instructed to do the humanly impossible: love our enemies.

Over the years, we have joined other Jewish-background believers in Israel who have worked tirelessly to witness partitions removed between Jewish and Arab believers in Yeshua/Isa (Jesus). We have been encouraged to witness the ongoing reconciliation between these groups, who have historically been at enmity with each other! What a blessing it is to see these barriers taken down and the two sides united in one Body of Christ.

Doors have opened to effective bridge-building reconciliation activities such as retreats together in the desert.

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... CONTINUED FROM THE FRONT

Jewish and Arab believers are accepting their unity in Jesus the Messiah. Through the help of the Holy Spirit, they are serving Him together in the bond of peace.

However, in the midst of the ongoing war, disagreements abounded from the political tensions. The grief and sadness surrounding the conflict weigh heavily and bring out biased opinions. The relationships that took so long to develop were in trouble. We knew we needed to gather as many believers as possible and to seek the face of the Lord.

We struggled with the thought that our bridge-building efforts up to this point would be for nothing. About 130 believers who were leaders of congregations — both Jewish and Arab — met together. We realized that we were involved in spiritual warfare. We didn't recall any time beforehand when spiritual warfare was so intense. Everyone agreed that taking sides on political issues related to war was hopeless, for our struggle is not against enemies of flesh and blood.

In times of the chaos of war, prayer is the breath of life. During that day-long meeting, the Lord led us to begin a campaign that would vigorously call for a revival of prayer that would sweep throughout the land. The leaders returned to their homes and quickly prioritized prayer.

Believing leaders began arranging prayer meetings related to the war and its spiritual aspects. As a result, believers

around the nation are meeting to pray before the start of the day. Some of the house congregations within the emerging Jesus movement of which we are a part are waking up as early as 4:30 a.m. to pray together online before work. Others are gathering several times a week for prayer in the evenings. As we are building new communities of faith in an Anabaptist persuasion, it is rewarding to see people grow in their love for their “enemies.” Believers across the land are in earnest intercession for new believers to emerge in Gaza after the war.

We welcome your prayers for believers from Egypt, Jordan, Iraq, Lebanon, and elsewhere in the Middle East to send workers to share the good news with Palestinians in Gaza. Pray also for Israelis to experience authentic repentance and the recognition of God's invitation to a living, eternal relationship.

I felt privileged to join in the group that later organized a gathering of about 80 Arab and Jewish leaders. We prayed for the innocent civilians in Gaza, recognizing that both Muslims and Christians are suffering terribly. One Arab believer shared about how 21 of his relatives were killed in one of the bombings. The Hebrew-speaking leaders in the group expressed great sorrow and prayed with this brother who was experiencing this devastation.

I sense God's spirit moving when I experience the sensitivity that both Arab and Jewish believers are extending to one another. They are not only pray-

ing for their “enemies” but are genuinely recognizing the massive suffering throughout the region. These believers are praying for relief to be sent from around the world. We are praising God for all of these prayer groups that are popping up.

We're thankful that no rockets have been fired into our city yet. More than 10,000 rockets have fallen all over the rest of the country. Pray with us that this war does not spiral out of control — we do not want to see death and destruction.

May God help us to pray according to his will, pulling down the strongholds of the spiritual enemy: Satan. May God turn the war around so some good might come out of it. Thank God for the nationwide prayer revival that is occurring around the land. We pray that the words of Micah 4:3 become a reality:

He will judge between many peoples and will settle disputes for strong nations far and wide. They will beat their swords into plowshares and their spears into pruning hooks. Nation will not take up sword against nation, nor will they train for war anymore.

Then peace will reign under the Messiah's worldwide rule.

This EMM worker and his wife serve in Israel, providing spiritual leadership for a growing network of house churches comprised of both Arab and Jewish believers in Jesus. His name and exact location have been withheld for security purposes.

ISRAELIS & PALESTINIANS

The Holy Lands sit between the Mediterranean Sea and the Jordan River and are home to three of the world's major religions: Judaism, Christianity, and Islam. The area is a complex and conflicted region that dates back over 3,000 years to the time of Issac and Ishmael. Still today, religion, ethnicity, and politics play significant roles in the daily lives of many people here.

Israelis, although they were originally inhabitants of this land, had been displaced from Judea for centuries until 1948, after the United Nations created the framework for a Jewish state in the formerly British-controlled Palestinian territory. Hundreds of thousands of Jews from around the world, many of whom were Holocaust survivors, relocated to Israel.

However, the territory was not void of people. In 1945, there were already 1.7 million people living in the region, many of whom were Arabs, both Muslim and Christian. Decades later, conflict regarding possession of the land continues to plague the peace in this region.



JANUARY DAILY PRAYER

1 (FRI.) CAMBODIA | Pray for John and Debbie Coats as they walk alongside and mentor the teachers for the after-school children's programs. Pray for wisdom for Debbie in her work with public health education.

2 (SAT.) WEST AFRICA | Pray for individuals and families to be called to join the work of leadership development and church planting in West Africa.

3 (SUN.) PERU | Pray for Holly Hollenbach as she adjusts to the culture and climate in Peru. Ask God to give her grace as she serves in the outreach portion of the Advance program.

4 (MON.) GLOBAL | Pray for Jon and Heleen Yoder as they continue relationships with friends and partners in Sierra Leone. Pray for wisdom as they support the continuing development of Nyandengoh!, a children's disability ministry. Pray for them as they lead short-term trips to the region.

5 (TUES.) BELIZE | Join Tim and Julie Groff and their family in praising the Lord for rest and refreshment during this time of home leave and sabbatical. Thank the Lord for the time they enjoyed with family and connections with friends and supporters. Keep them in prayer as they wrap up their time in the U.S. and transition back to their work in Belize.

6 (WED.) U.S. | Pray for God to call Advance Local participants for the fall of 2024 to serve in Lancaster, Baltimore, or New York.

7 (THURS.) CZECH REPUBLIC | Pray for wisdom for a church planting team in Dobříš as they continue to have services. Lift them in prayer as they discern how to best engage the community. Pray for Jan Heindel to know what her role should look like.

8 (FRI.) CAMBODIA | Pray for Lena Kauffman as she begins her outreach portion of the Advance program. Ask God to give her grace as she adjusts to the culture and climate in Cambodia.

9 (SAT.) VIETNAM | William Higgins will be traveling to Vietnam in March to teach. Pray for wisdom and guidance as he prepares for this trip.

10 (SUN.) GLOBAL | Give thanks to God for his provision during the previous year. Ask him to call his people into their mission roles and to release resources for the task.

11 (MON.) LEBANON CITY, PA. | Pray for Michael Clancy as he interacts with Jubilee Ministries and the students of Lebanon Rescue Mission. Pray for three men that he walks with currently.

12 (TUES.) CENTRAL ASIA | Pray that representatives of Jesus' love and grace would build connections to the Meskhetian Turkish culture through "people of peace."

13 (WED.) THAILAND | Pray for clarity for Steve Horst and Bethany Tobin as they balance different aspects of their life. Pray that as they spend time praying and listening, God directs them in choosing where to invest their time.

14 (THURS.) CHILE | Pray for mission interns to join the work of a camp ministry in Tenglo Island, Chile.

15 (FRI.) SOUTH ASIA | Praise the Lord for land for the church that Vince and Clara* lead to build a gathering place. Pray for wisdom in designing the building and funds to build. Pray for God to continue to draw people to himself and for members to grow in Christ.

16 (SAT.) CENTRAL ASIA | Pray for God to send workers to the field to work in business for transformation and teaching English.

17 (SUN.) NETHERLANDS | Pray for encouragement and perseverance for Bob and Miriam Phillips as they minister in their church, neighborhood, and city.

18 (MON.) GERMANY | Pray for Matthew Baugher as he begins his outreach portion of the Advance program. Ask God to give him grace as he adjusts to culture and builds relationships in Germany.

19 (TUES.) NORTH AFRICA | Pray along with A. and A.* that they will have good opportunities to continue building relationships with leaders in villages. Pray that A. can be a good friend and mentor for three men he currently seeks to walk with and disciple.

20 (WED.) U.S. | Pray for God to raise up Kingdom Team staff to serve with youth in the summer of 2024.

21 (THURS.) GLOBAL | Pray for the EMM Curriculum team in their work to develop a user-friendly, informal pastoral training curriculum for workers and partner churches around the globe. Pray for good discernment around the content and format of the courses.

22 (FRI.) U.S. | Pray for God to call volunteers for the new Neighbors Community Center at Hub 450, in Lancaster, PA.

23 (SAT.) CENTRAL ASIA | Elizabeth* is working on a podcast; please ask the Lord to help her get it launched and use it to bless many people.

24 (SUN.) CAMBODIA | Pray that God will grant wisdom and favor to the mission workers who work among the Khmer.

25 (MON.) SPAIN | Pray for Paula* as she continues to train and resource others to minister to persons with trauma through the ministry of Petra Peacebuilders. Pray for her as she also ministers to people walking through deep trauma.

26 (TUES.) EUROPE | Pray for the Council of International Ministries staff and workers in Europe, a group in which EMM participates. Pray that they will encourage each other well during their virtual meeting today. Pray for God to soften hearts and break down walls to following him in locations where many consider Jesus no longer relevant to life.

27 (WED.) WALES, U.K. | Pray for Carol Wert in her teaching roles and for Alan Wert in his facilities management role. Pray that they would be salt and light to the people God brings their way in Wales, U.K.

28 (THURS.) FRANCE | Pray for workers to join a developing team in Marseilles, France, to establish a witness and reach out to the many immigrants in this city.

29 (FRI.) U.S. | Pray for the Human Resources team as they support employees. Pray especially for grace as the organization transitions to a new medical insurance administrator.

30 (SAT.) EL SALVADOR | Pray for Ethan Horst as he begins his outreach portion of Vida220. Ask God to give him grace as he adjusts to the culture and builds relationships in El Salvador.

31 (SUN.) HONDURAS | Pray for Austin and Griselda Zeurcher as they train pastors, leaders, and youth for missions and ministry. Ask God to be with Griselda and the other women who love and care for the mothers in El Nido.



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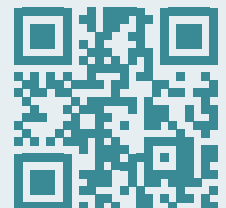
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WORKER UPDATES

REAPPOINTING Daryl & Jen Hoover | Costa Rica

CONCLUDING SERVICE Sarah Martin | Peru

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