

MESSENGER

MONTHLY NEWSLETTER & PRAYER GUIDE



Jonathan Bornman (center) with young adult attendees for a showing of *Unexpected Peace* in Tanzania. PHOTO PROVIDED BY THE AUTHOR

UNEXPECTED OUTCOMES by Jonathan Bornman

Watching *Unexpected Peace* (2024) with a group of young Tanzanians, a few months after a major outbreak of political violence, was far and away the most intense and engaged audience that I have sat with. They stayed after the film for two hours debating the issues raised and talking about the application of lessons learned for their situation. None of the film's stories came from their region, but they felt connected to the themes and internalized the message! What has emerged as most helpful for evaluating how different audiences connect with the film is to ask about their proximity to violence or their experiences of living in a mixed faith community.

Unexpected Peace is a documenta-

ry about nonviolence in a polarized world. It is a beautiful film with an original musical score. The camera work and the editing are excellent! Production quality is on par with movie industry standards. The best place to watch the film is in a movie theater. But most people won't have that experience because the people who most appreciate the film don't have movie theaters in their neighborhoods.

The film sets forth three stories, presented as parables. Stories about people and communities dealing with interrelated issues of forgiveness, nonviolence, and peacemaking. These true stories come from Christian and Muslim communities responding to violence and division.

Our goal as filmmakers, from the very beginning, was to make people think and ask questions. We wanted to tell these stories in a parable-like way to help people think about their own story, their own community, and the challenges they face.

At first glance, it appears that people gravitate towards the story most familiar to them. Mennonites in Lancaster, Pa., can relate to the familiar Amish story but struggle to connect with the other two stories. Murids in Harlem, N.Y., were wowed to see their own story on the big screen. And, when touring the film in Central Java, Indonesia, people barely understood the Amish story but found the complex interaction between the Christian pastor

and the Muslim militia commander engaging! Not to mention the fact that it was in their own language, whereas in the first two stories in the film, they had to read the subtitles.

When I introduced *Unexpected Peace* at the Christian University of Salatiga, in Indonesia, I felt a prompting from the Holy Spirit to set the film within a spiritual context. I turned to Ephesians 6:10–17, and I read aloud, “Put on the full armor of God, so that you can take your stand against the devil’s schemes.” I said that in our polarized world, one of the devil’s schemes is to spread dehumanizing hate speech, fear, and violence. Our film stands in resistance to these schemes. I continued reading, ending with verse 15, “With your feet, fitted from the readiness that comes from the gospel of peace.” Lifting one foot and pointing to my shoe, I invited people to embrace the way of Jesus and the gospel of peace.

Unexpected Peace is for everyone from any background and any faith. On April 7, 2026, I showed the film to a Muslim audience in Harlem at the ASA, a Senegalese community center. In the audience were four of the people I interviewed for the second story in the film, about the Murids who responded to violence with nonviolence and trust in God. Just before we started the film (6:30 p.m.), the imam came to me and requested that we pause the film for the evening prayer; Muslims pray five times per day at appointed times. We stopped the film at 7:25 p.m. Mats were brought out, and the imam led those gathered in the evening prayer time, a 20-minute break for prayer, then we resumed the film. The audience appreciated the film and was glad to see themselves and many of their friends in the film.

Discussion afterwards was enthu-

siastic, and no one hurried to leave. One woman asked, “What inspired you to make this film?” I replied, “I’m a Christian. I follow Jesus the Messiah. He is called the Prince of Peace. So, I made this film about forgiveness and nonviolence and peace because I follow the Prince of Peace.” My answer elicited many approving nods and smiles. One woman said quite loudly, “Isn’t that how it should be?”

The next day, Muslim chaplain Aisha McCord sent me a message, “Thank you for a wonderful, peaceful experience. The movie is very important because it spiritually and socially guides those who watch it towards a higher, more powerful, and enlightened path.” She added, “We need more movies like this to fill our conscious and unconscious mind with better humanitarian choices in times of emotional and spiritual need.”

And the imam for the community, Imam Abdou Mbaye, wrote, “Thank you, I learned some important lessons:

- In life, we should always plant good seeds, because one day we will be gone, and what we leave behind will either be forgotten or will live forever in people’s hearts.
- The Amish community teaches us about peace, tolerance, and forgiveness.
- The Murid community shows us the importance of being peaceful and sharing with others.
- The Solo community in Indonesia teaches us how to build peace, even when it is unexpected.”

Unexpected Peace was broadcast by the central Pennsylvania PBS TV station, WITF, on March 19 and 22, 2026. Getting on PBS is a major accomplishment for any documentary, and we are greatly honored

that they chose to show our film to their viewers. As a result, the film is now available on their website and will soon be available to PBS stations nationwide.

A Mennonite congregation in Lancaster played the livestream from WITF of the March 22 TV broadcast in their church sanctuary, and over 40 people gathered. Excellent discussion followed as members of the congregation wrestled with the stories and ideas. With the U.S.-Israel war against Iran very much on everyone’s minds, people talked about conscientious objection (as seen in the documentary’s introduction) and about our complicity in the war as American taxpayers. We even had an outspoken heckler — not a church member — who had come to provoke.

Thanks to European Mennonite friends and partners, plans are underway for a European Tour of *Unexpected Peace* in January and February 2027. The plans include dubbing the documentary into several languages, including French, which would be a blessing to West Africans as well. At the same time, Mennonite Bishop Amos Muhagachi and the Tanzanian Peace Building Initiative are working on dubbing the film into Swahili to reach the millions of Swahili speakers in East Africa.

Unexpected Peace was produced by Director Michael Hostetler and Director of Photography Ehab Assal, along with me, and in partnership with Eastern Mennonite Missions, as well as many, many donors. This journey continues to surprise me, and I look forward to seeing how God will use this film in the years to come.



Jonathan Bornman is a member of EMM's Christian-Muslim Relations Team.

AUGUST DAILY PRAYER

WEST AFRICA

- 1 | Pray for the Bambara in the Gambia. Over 80% of this people group is Muslim. Pray that God would reveal his son to them in a way that is impactful to them, so that as one of the most powerful and influential people groups in West Africa, they can share him with others.
- 2 | Ask the Lord to call short-term workers to serve in West Africa.
- 3 | Pray for Jon and Heleen Yoder as they prepare for a visit to Sierra Leone in the coming months to support the local team at the beginning of a new school year.
- 4 | Ask the Lord to call long-term workers to serve in West Africa.

CENTRAL ASIA

- 5 | Pray for the Dargin in Uzbekistan, who are comprised of 100% adherents to Islam. In Uzbekistan, many raise livestock. Pray for provision for their physical and spiritual needs, and a revelation of Jesus to them.
- 6 | Ask the Lord to call short-term workers to serve in Central Asia.
- 7 | Pray for the Lyuli in Uzbekistan. Over 99% of this people group is Muslim. As they are a close-knit people, pray that God would reveal himself to them, and for effectiveness in sharing him both within their clan structures and beyond.
- 8 | Ask the Lord to call long-term workers to serve in Central Asia.

OTHER PARTS OF THE WORLD

- 9 | Join William Higgins in prayer for his trip to Kenya during the first two weeks of this month. Pray for safe travel, good health, and for blessings as he teaches two classes in the Kenya Mennonite School in Migori (MATCO).
- 10 | Pray for the children of EMM worker families, as they prepare for the back-to-school season.
- 11 | Pray for those completing service with EMM and are returning to their home contexts. Lift them up during this transition.

12 | Please join Mike and Nancy Hostetter in prayer that God will provide a full-time English teacher and part-time English teachers for the remainder of the school year for PROMESA Mennonite School in Cusco, Peru, which ends in December.

13 | Join J.C. Ebersole in praying for the All-nations Association of Bible Schools (AABS) Africa Director as he works to expand AABS into several countries in East Africa. Pray for divine connections and favor with church leaders and a productive visit in each country.

14 | As Carissa Sherer is in the U.S., on leave from ministry in Guatemala for 3 weeks this month, ask the Lord to fill her trip with rest, meaningful time with family, and renewed connections with friends and supporters.

CENTRAL EUROPE

- 15 | Pray for Karen Hess as she interacts with mothers who visit Crossroads library in Prague, Czech Republic. Pray for meaningful conversations with those who are seeking, that they would be drawn closer to God as he meets them in their journey.
- 16 | Ask the Lord to call short-term workers to serve in Central Europe.
- 17 | Pray for Vojta and Stacy Prkovi, who are entering a time of sabbatical. Pray for the ability to hear God's voice and to walk in obedience to the things he's calling them to.
- 18 | Ask the Lord to call long-term workers to serve in Central Europe.

SOUTHEAST ASIA

- 19 | Join Timothy and Madison* in thanking God for twenty years on the field and being able to see their twins graduate in May! They never dreamed this would be possible, but God has done exceedingly more than they could have imagined in work and school. All glory and praise to him!
- 20 | Join Brody and Abigail* in praying for wisdom and discernment for support raising and for a smooth transition as they move out of their home. Join them in praising God for unexpected blessings.
- 21 | Ask the Lord to call short-term workers to serve in Southeast Asia.

22 | Join Mark and Sarah Schoenhals in prayer for physical, spiritual, and relational protection over members of LEC house churches in Northeast Thailand as they grow as disciples of Jesus and seek to disciple others.

23 | Ask the Lord to lead and guide the search process for the Southeast Asia regional representative role.

24 | Join Steve Horst and Bethany Tobin in prayer for their children, Anjali, Manny, and Tierzah, as they begin a new school year; for new friendships and growing in their relationship with God.

25 | Ask the Lord to call long-term workers to serve in Southeast Asia.

LANCASTER, PA.

- 26 | Ask the Lord to call volunteers to serve at Neighbors Community Center at Hub450.
- 27 | Pray for the process of getting the 433 N. Prince Street house set up. Pray that it comes together for Advance participants to be able to stay there starting this fall. Pray that the renovation and furnishing is able to be completed by the end of this month.
- 28 | Pray for wisdom and discernment for EMM CAO staff in the processing of many applications, for both short and long-term assignments. Praise God for the call that he is placing on people's lives!
- 29 | Join Phil and Linda Gottschalk in praising God for their safe journey from Bucharest to Romania to Lancaster. Praise God for the positive time of connections and refreshment in the Netherlands. Pray for their continued role teaching online with the Baptist Theological Institute in Bucharest, Romania.
- 30 | Pray for Daryl and Jen Hoover as they transition from Costa Rica to Pennsylvania. Pray for those filling their roles at VidaNet. Pray for their son Adam as he starts a new school with new friends.
- 31 | Pray for God to call business leaders to sign up for the Business Leaders' Breakfast hosted at Hub450 next month, on September 15th. Pray that it is a meaningful time as the theme "Local Business — Global Impact" is explored.



Eastern Mennonite Missions

PO Box 8617

Lancaster, PA 17604-8617 US

ADDRESS SERVICE REQUESTED

BUSINESS LEADERS' BREAKFAST

Tuesday
September 15
7-8:45 am

Hub450
450 N. Prince St.
Lancaster, Pa.

RSVP to this
free event by
September 4



EMM.ORG/BREAKFAST

LOCAL BUSINESS — GLOBAL IMPACT

Discover a remarkable story of faith, business, and global impact. Join us to hear how a local business owner stepped into a unique marketplace mission in Central Asia.

Due to security concerns, names and locations are not included. You will need to come to learn more!

When you support EMM's Impact Fund, you enable us to recruit, equip, and send EMM workers around world.

\$876,412 RECEIVED
AS OF JULY 15, 2026

\$1,645,000
2026 IMPACT FUND GOAL



EMM.ORG/GIVE

Communications director: Catherine Merkey
Digital communications coordinator: Julia Tsai

Messenger, Vol. 103, No. 5, August 2026 is published monthly by Eastern Mennonite Board of Missions and Charities, PO Box 8617, Lancaster, PA 17604-8617, serving LMC: A Fellowship of Anabaptist Churches and other Anabaptist partners. Postage paid at Lancaster, PA. POSTMASTER: Send address changes to *Messenger*, PO Box 8617, Lancaster, PA 17604-8617.

This issue was printed on FSC-certified partially recycled paper by Executive Printing in Elm, Pa.

When reporting address changes, please include address label information, if possible. Send changes to linda.hoffman@emm.org.

To sign up to receive *Messenger* for free, visit EMM.ORG/MESSANGER or contact 717-898-2251.