

March 2026

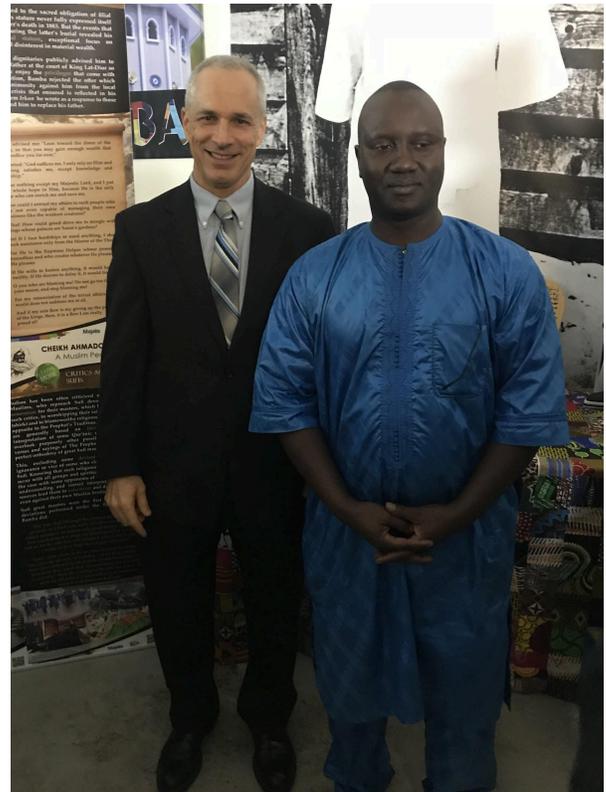
Joining Jesus – Building Bridges

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Dear friends, thank you for walking with me year after year. Many of you have been part of this ministry since 2012. Thank you for your encouragement, gifts and prayers that have sustained me and this ministry.

The mission statement for Eastern Mennonite Missions Christian-Muslim Relations Team is “We seek to demonstrate Jesus’ kingdom in friendship with Muslim people.” Since sometime in 2013, my newsletter has been titled “Joining Jesus Building Bridges.” Taking those two statements together gives a pretty solid description of the heart of what I do as a missionary. I join Jesus in building bridges between people and God, between people, between Christians and Muslims. Demonstrating Jesus’ kingdom happens with words, actions, teaching, training and equipping, preaching ... yes, I’m involved regularly in all these things. On another level, I demonstrate Jesus’ kingdom through real friendships, the kind of friendship where there is mutuality, love and respect, and genuine interest in the wellbeing of the other. On February 13, I lost one of those special friendships.



My dear friend Elhadji Djibril Diagne (age 57) passed away unexpectedly after a short illness. He and I were in the middle of planning an April screening of Unexpected Peace in Harlem. It was a complete shock for me and a tremendous loss of one of the key players in my network of friends around the world.

We first met in 2017 when I went to Harlem to begin my field research into Murid practices of nonviolence. Walking on 116th St. in Little Senegal, I met Abdoulaye Thiam and told him why I was there. He quickly gave me a phone number and said I must call Djiby. Our first conversation lasted more than 20 minutes and we were friends from the very beginning, a divine appointment that turned out to be pivotal in my research. Djiby was one of the respected leaders at the core of everything happening in the Murid community in Harlem. His stamp of approval and his advocacy led to me being “adopted” by the Murid community and given access to nearly everything as if I was an insider. Djiby encouraged people to talk freely with me and went out of his way to help me, even hosting me in his home for a week!

Over the years our friendship grew and we would sometimes call each other just to chat. When I published American Murids: A lived Muslim practice of nonviolence, Djiby read and commented on the first draft. When I had a dream about Murids and Mennonites in France, Djiby was my second phone call. He helped organize a meeting of Murids and Mennonites on November 25, 2023, in Paris. The papers from that conference were published as A Cry for Peace: Mennonites and Murids in Conversation in December 2025 and Djiby was one of the guest editors.

Djiby was my first call to get permission to shoot part of Unexpected Peace in Harlem. He got all the permissions and helped set up the interviews. Best of all, my interview with him about nonviolence is one of my favorites in the documentary!

We talked frequently about faith. We sought to understand one another and help our communities better understand each other as well. Djiby was a bridge-builder like me and saw the value of real friendship. I thank God for placing him in my life. I write this tribute to reveal the actual meaning of “We seek to demonstrate Jesus’ kingdom in friendship with Muslim people.” Djiby and I were friends and through our friendship I saw Jesus’s kingdom being revealed.

Unexpected Peace WITF Premiere

I’m excited to announce that [Unexpected Peace](https://www.witf.org/UnexpectedPeace) will be shown on WITF-TV on March 19 at 9 PM and March 22 at 6 PM. Following those dates, it will become available online at <https://video.witf.org/>

My Trip to Tanzania — January 20 to February 3, 2026

I went to Tanzania with a long list of goals, many of which were realized and others that were not. The important aspect of the trip was to spend days of quality time with my partners from Peacemakers Confessing Christ International (PCCI). Bishop Amos Muhagachi and his wife, Pastor Esther, are both on the PCCI steering committee. Recently they started Tanzanian Peace Building Initiative (TPBI), and they are actively engaged in bringing together Muslim and Christian leaders with government officials to build peace and create healthy relationships between community leaders. Bishop Amos requested that we bring *Unexpected Peace* to Tanzania so they can use it in their peace-building work.



In Dar es Salaam, their son Victor (who lived in our home and went to Lancaster Mennonite High School for two years) helped organize a preliminary screening with about 20 Gen Z leaders to gauge interest. That same group helped me to find a respected movie production studio who has already submitted a proposal for dubbing *Unexpected Peace* into Swahili, the language spoken in Tanzania and eight other East African countries. The Tanzanian Peace Building Initiative request opens the door for many to watch the documentary in their own language!

Praises and Prayer Requests

1. *Pray for the dubbing of Unexpected Peace into Swahili.*
2. *Pray for the implementation of a plan to distribute and use Unexpected Peace across Tanzania and East Africa.*
3. *Pray for me as I raise financial support for and prepare to lead a learning journey to Palestine and Israel in May. There are currently three committed participants and several others still considering.*
4. *Pray for Carol and me along with our whole family. We are thankful for each one of them and wish God’s blessing and favor on each.*