

CUBA OUTREACH MINISTRY #638 NOVEMBER 3-11 2024

Trip Report - by Walter Jakimczuk

Travel Day

And so it began very early Sunday morning, a team of 9 people including seven (7) members from Bethel Baptist Church departed in 3 vehicles traveling from Strathroy to Toronto Airport. The day earlier our team mates from Quebec (François and Sylvie) have already traveled from Montreal and were in Santa Clara Cuba. One of team was unable to travel this trip due to a serious health issue that came up but was supporting us in so many other ways. We managed to place all our 50 pound bags in a van while the other vehicles carried the rest of the team.

The weather and roads were very good for travel. The process through Toronto airport was smooth. No issues. Everyone this trip was experienced and prepared for whatever came our way.



After a 3 ½ hour flight we arrived Santa Clara Cuba. There was the usual procedures of checking documents with something new to us. The pre-flight document (QR code) required included an Electronic Visa in place of the usual paper forms we use to receive during the flight and had to fill out.

The team managed to clear Cuban Customs and Immigration with minimal delay. There were some people questioned but eventually cleared to leave.

Pastor Kiki met us in the parking lot with a 14 seater van and 1956 car waiting to take the team and bags to Buena Vista Hostel in Santa Clara. A place we have been using for the last ten years able to accommodate up to a 12 member team. After a supper we went over our plans for the week taking in consideration for the special circumstances that Cuba was experiencing. Black outs of electricity was going to be a factor we have to contend with. No power. No fans. No A/C. But we did have solar powered lights and flashlights.



Sorting Day

As our normal the next day (Monday November 4th) we organized and executed our Sorting Day held at the First Baptist Church in Placetas. In their Community Room. All the bags were opened one by one, the contents of which were previously organized in Canada and carefully gone through. Each bag contained items specific for the individual pastor and family we support. The remaining extra items which was mostly medicine and medical things were reorganized for distribution.

This was the first trip to Cuba that we were told it was not safe for us to be out on the streets alone as the people are far more desperate than ever before, no food...no hope.

In addition to what we brought this trip we included 200 square feet of black fibre glass mosquito screening for each and every pastor to help cover their windows and door ways in their homes. Hopefully to reduce the many diseases carried by mosquitos and provide some relief.

The remainder of the day was spent delivering the bags to the pastors living in the Placetas area. We did not want to increase their hardship getting their bags home. Our visits had to be kept short since we would be spending more time with them at Camp.

https://photos.google.com/share/AF1QipPiPGU9GvRq37BherRbpneFes2bpRIzsqvqRy9H3zIJDtk0Be8yyvKus_nUDlwkcQ?key=M2N3dTFsbkZEUTQ5ZGswcktFMHRta0pqV3RrRmVB



Checking the Camp Day

The location of the Camp we were going to hold the Pastor's Retreat was near Santa Clara. It's a Christian Camp called, "CANIP Activities National Centre of the Presbyterian-Reform Church in Cuba.

We spent the day checking the Camp out and planning the details of the activities. It was suitable for our purposes. The Camp administrator said the electrical grid there was on a priority line that feeds the water pumping systems. It only blacks out when the entire country of Cuba blacks out. Little did we know that for the next three days we experienced continuous black outs so much so we had to leave the Camp earlier than planned due to lack of water. They did have a portable generator that could supply some limited power enough to hold the Marriage Enrichment Seminar.



That afternoon we visited our good friend Pastor Fernando of Camajuani who we have known for over ten years. He has access to some amazing resources one of which is Study Bibles. When we first met him in 2013 he provided for each and every pastor we supported then a Study Bible free of charge. Once again on this trip when Fernando heard of our Pastors Retreat he happily supplied these Study Bibles. We are not free to acknowledge what organization provided these Bibles only we are to thank God for his goodness and provision.

Day One of Camp (66 attending)



As always there was a lot of excitement as all the pastors and their families gathered to meet and greet each other. Catching up on news and checking out how everyone has been doing. A very dynamic atmosphere. Energized. Regrettably some people could not come because they could not get a break having commitments like taking care of elderly parents. Some Pastors and their families were ill and chose not to travel thereby exposing others... It was only after our trip we found out that some attending people had hepatitis A, which can be contagious. The guest speaker did a great job of the Marriage Enrichment Seminar. He was the same speaker who spoke once before in 2016 in Placetas during our Pastors Day then. Since then he and his wife experienced the death of their Child. His wife thanked Belinda for her kindness and the medicine she sent to them while their child was very ill. They spoke of a special program called, "Daughters of the King" that was instrumental in his wife's recovery grieving their child's death. This program will be coming to Cuba from an organization from Venezuela that is need of support (\$4,000.00 USD). Any help would be appreciated.

Day Two of Camp (88 attending)



We planned a time the pastors and their families could come for a time of renewal, worship, and teaching particularly lessons were taught and planned activities done. There was a swimming pool enjoyed by many. The Camp had to be cut short as it ran out of water forcing its closure.

Dorothy had to quickly go back to Buena Vista Hostel in Santa Clara to retrieve all the necessary items in a red duffle bag, and return to Camp to do a Presentation a day earlier than planned. This was able to be presented and it was well received.

Some ladies from Bethel Baptist Church had sponsored a Special Romantic Dinner for the Pastors and their wives to be held that night. Our Team played host, setting up the Dining Hall, decorating, table cloth, setting tables, and serving our Pastors and their wives. When the Romantic Dinner concluded we had to say our good byes and leave the Camp.

With the change in plans the following morning after Camp, the Team was sharing the usual breakfast, devotional and prayers. There came a time of special sharing and more specific prayer requests. Personal requests of health, infirmities, and relationships. There was time to draw even closer to our God while praying for one another.

During one of our visits to a place called Vega de Palma we checked on the process of water well being dug for a missionary (Salvador). As usual in Cuba there were complications. During the dry season the well dries out, The water well needs to be dug further, some 12 metres more in rock. A need to rent the necessary drilling equipment. More costs. Next trip Lord willing we will return to see this project through. Water is so vitally important.



Melodie and Sylvie shared their experience traveling with the delivery person from the church in Placetás going out and feeding the most vulnerable people of the Community in their homes (one was living under a bridge) saying how it was a real eye opener and a great experience.

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In the town of Remedios while celebrating Pastor Jorge's daughter Isabella's 15 birthday we learned the new generation does not ask nor expect the parents for the traditional 15th birthday celebration due to such economic hardships. We were told by a lady she was afraid we would not come to Cuba because of all the bad news and the current situation.

Black outs, hurricane (west of us), earthquake (in the east 6.8) Hepatitis A

How do you explain it? It's like asking why the Canadian Geese fly south every winter. We have to go. It's just that important.

Next trip Lord willing April 20 2025