

Cuba Current

JANUARY, 2017

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New Year, New Sister Church Visits

Groups throughout the North East District are planning trips to Cuba. Ortega UMC and Ponte Vedra UMC will be sending groups to District Conferences in Havana and Mayabeque. Linda Zelenka and Pearl Boles will be returning to Cuba from Orange Park UMC to visit Santa Fe. In March, Ponte Vedra will be sending a youth group to visit La Sierra, and Pastor Jeff McClendon (Dinsmore UMC) will make his first trip to visit La Europa in the Artemisa District.

In the past, all of our travel to Cuba was on charter flights. This fall, U.S. airlines began regularly scheduled service to Cuba. You can now fly on American, Delta, JetBlue, Southwest, and others from airports in Miami, Ft. Lauderdale, Orlando, and Tampa. There is even talk of service out of

Jacksonville. The net result of the increased service has been a decrease in air fares, with some promotional flights offered at \$100.

Travelers are using a mix of religious visas and tourist visas. Remember that the religious visas require at least 90 days to arrange. If you are ready to travel, let us know and we will walk you through the arrangements.



BIBLE VERSE:

For we are God’s workmanship, created in Christ Jesus to do good works, which God prepared in advance for us to do.

Ephesians 2:10 (NIV)



Ricardo, Bishop Pereira, and Icel Rodriguez at the Task Force

Cuba Task Force Welcomes Bishop Pereira, Ricardo, and Merly

The Cuba Task Force which coordinates *Methodists United in Prayer* throughout the Florida Conference met in Lakeland in October for their regular fall meeting. Bishop Ricardo Pereira, his son Ricardo, Jr. who is the church’s statistician, and the Bishop’s assistant, Merly Morejón, attended. Bishop Carter’s representative, Alex Shanks, welcomed the group on behalf of the Florida Conference.

Bishop Pereira recalled Bishop Carter’s first visit to Cuba and how the bonds of the ministry have strengthened. “The Cuba church is very grateful for the sister relationships and the help for pastors that has been ongoing from this ministry and wishes that a day will come when all the Methodist churches in Cuba will have a partnership with a church in Florida.” The group provided hurricane

relief funds for the Bishop to take back to Cuba.

Ricardo, Jr. noted that in the last 15 years, coinciding with the *MUIP* relationship (and contributing to the churches’ growth), the Methodist Church in Cuba has quadrupled in size with the number of members now about 43,200; attendance to worship about 60,000; 408 churches and 950 missions. The goal is to have a church

or worship center in each Cuba municipality. Currently they are at 99% of their goal.

Methodists United in Prayer celebrates its 20th anniversary at this year’s Florida Annual Conference. There will be a pre-conference session with the Bishop on Wednesday, June 7, a celebration dinner on Thursday at St. Luke UMC, and the Bishop will preach on Friday (“Revive Us Again!).

Pastors Javier and Kimy Visit District

Pastor Kimy Bravo (10 de Octubre) and wife Yoneisi returned to St. Augustine in November, their second visit. He once again preached at Grace UMC and First UMC (St. Augustine). Pete Royal coordinated their visit.

Pastor Javier Ramos was in southwest Florida on a non-MUIP visit, but traveled to our District to meet with George Reed, the MUIP coordinator.

Javier's church, Calabazar, was planted in 2015, and was recently paired up with Fleming Island UMC in a sister church relationship. Thanks to Pastor Heather Harding for making this happen. The church is already planning a trip to Cuba. We pray God's blessing on the new arrangement!



Pastor Kimy delivering the Word!

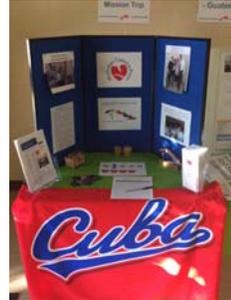
Christmas Blessings from Ponte Vedra UMC

Kudos to PVUMC!

Responding to a plea for help from retired UMC missionary Fletcher Anderson, Ponte Vedra decided to dedicate one-fourth of their special Christmas offering to make emergency repairs to a church in Camaguey. The funds are being matched by the Florida Conference, and are being used to:

- Add a bathroom
- Repair roof, windows, and doors
- Wall off the living area from the church
- Add a room for the new baby

Lakewood UMC is looking for a Cuba Coordinator. Please get in touch if you are interested.



St. Paul Visits El Mariel

Elaine and Fred Culvyhouse led a group of seven from St. Paul UMC to visit their sister church, El Mariel, in November. They also delivered clothing from Highlands UMC to their sister church, El Guatao.



“Extra Mile” Giving

Our first priority is to our local church. And if you have a sister church in Cuba, that too should be high on your list.

But having satisfied your priorities there, perhaps you are looking for other ways to support Kingdom work.

Please consider our Cuba ministry. The Advance is an official program of The United Methodist Church for voluntary, designated contributions. Through The Advance, you may choose to support particular, approved mission programs or mission personnel with financial gifts. One hundred percent of all Advance giving goes to the chosen mission project or ministry.

Contributions to the Advance are tax deductible. Cuba opportunities include:

- Advance # 100070 - supports *Methodists United in Prayer* (formerly

Cuba/Florida Covenant) by covering travel costs for Cuban Christians visiting Florida and ministries related to the Covenant.

- Advance # 100135 - supports the Cuba Methodist Seminary.
- Advance # 100140 - supports retired pastors of the Methodist Church in Cuba.
- Advance # 110030 – supports the purchase of house churches for new church planting as well as emergency repairs to existing facilities

You may place your donation in the offering plate (just note the Advance number) or you can send it directly to the Florida Conference:

450 Martin Luther King, Jr. Ave.
Lakeland, FL 33815

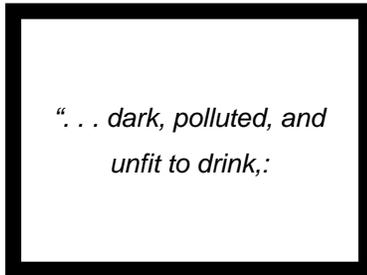
Please keep the Cuba ministry in your prayers.



First Water Purification Systems Arrive in Cuba

In November 2013, *MUIP*'s Dan Christopherson was at a remote village in Cuba when he saw a tractor pulling a tanker filled with fresh water to fill a nearby well. Curious, Christopherson asked his Cuban host what was going on.

“The pastor told me, ‘We’re bringing in that fresh water so you don’t have to use the water we use,’” Christopherson said. “I asked him why that was.”



The pastor took Christopherson inside his home and filled a glass with water from the tap. It was dark, polluted and unfit to drink. “This is what our water looks like,” the pastor said. “People wash dishes in this. They drink this.”

What he was told in that moment helped change him forever and probably helped save lives. Out of that single glass of water, a new

outreach for the Southwest District Mission Program in Cuba was launched.

Agape Flights is a Christian-based cargo service based in Venice, Fla. A private donor paid all transportation costs to deliver purification units.

Thanks to countless and dogged hours of work and negotiation by Christopherson and his wife, Janet—along with more than a little prayer and the help of many others—26 water purification systems were delivered to rural churches in Cuba.





Bishop Pereira comforts victim of Hurricane Matthew



North East District welcomes Jay Therrell as our new District Superintendent

Marianao welcomes in the New Year





celebrating **20** years of
CUBA-FLORIDA MINISTRY

- ♥ Tuesday, June 7, 3:00PM - MUIP Pre-Conference Breakout Session.
- ♥ Thursday, June 8, 5:30PM - 20th Anniversary Dinner. Cost: \$15.00 - RSVP with Renee Kincaid at: rkinc@tampabay.rr.com or 813-885-5674 by May 8.
- ♥ Friday, June 9, 7:00PM - Worship Service. Bishop Ricardo Pereira will be preaching.
- ♥ Wed-Friday, 8:00AM-5:00PM - Visit the MUIP Booth.

Links to *Methodist Church in Cuba* related sites (Please “Like” us on Facebook)

<https://www.facebook.com/groups/MUIPNE/> (North East District)
<https://www.facebook.com/groups/284788674916479/> (Atlantic Central District)
<https://www.facebook.com/groups/726418440813124/> (Gulf Central District)
<https://www.facebook.com/groups/163441670431578/> (North West and North Central Districts)
<https://www.facebook.com/groups/486039714761767/> (South East District)
<https://www.facebook.com/seminarioevangelicometodista.encuba> (Seminary)
<https://www.facebook.com/metodistaencuba> (Iglesia Metodista en Cuba)
<https://www.facebook.com/metodistademarianao/> (Marianao)
<https://www.facebook.com/iglesiametodistadelvedado.delvedado> (Vedado)
<https://www.facebook.com/Iglesia-Methodista-Habana-Central-260729087652021/> (Habana Central)

Interview with Bishop Pereira:

<http://www.flumc.org/newsdetail/cuban-bishop-talks-of-covenant-changing-lives-6432138>

Water Treatment:

<http://www.flumc.org/newsdetail/finding-clean-water-6314262>

Florida Conference:

www.flumc.org/missionalengagement
www.flumc-missions.org/muip-covenant.html
www.facebook.com/missionalengagement
www.facebook.com/NEDistrictFLUMC

Methodists United in Prayer

149 South Roscoe Blvd., Ponte Vedra, FL 32082

<https://www.facebook.com/groups/MUIPNE/>

<http://flumc-missions.org/muip-covenant.html>

North East District Group Area Coordinators:

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Linda Zelenka, 904-269-0943

Cuba Current is published for Methodists in the North East Florida District involved with or interested in "*Methodists United in Prayer*." Email [George Reed](mailto:George.Reed) to subscribe.

"*Methodists United in Prayer*" facilitates prayer, love, exchange, and mutual support between the Cuba Methodist Church and the Florida Conference. We hope to increase the relationship between sister churches in the two conferences and focus on these priorities:

- **To pray** for one another and develop a common study of Scriptures.
- **To engage** in the interchange of peoples at Cuba and Florida Conferences.
- **To respond** to the priorities of the Methodist Church in Cuba.
- **To build** relationships between the Florida Conference and the Methodist Church in Cuba for mutual support and encouragement.
- **To enable** the training of pastors and lay people for the equipping of Cuban disciples.
- **To mutually share** the history, current events, culture, and spirituality of both Conferences.

- **Para orar** unos por otros y desarrollar un estudio en común de las Escrituras.
- **Para participar** en el intercambio de los pueblos en las Conferencias de Cuba y la Florida.
- **Para responder** a las prioridades de la Iglesia Metodista en Cuba.
- **Para establecer relaciones** entre la Conferencia de la Florida y la Iglesia Metodista en Cuba por el apoyo mutuo y aliento.
- **Para permitir** la formación de pastores y laicos para el equipamiento de los discípulos cubanos.

Sister Churches



Havana District	NE Florida District
10 de Octubre/Spring of Life	First (St. Augustine) Grace (St. Augustine)
Barbosa	Unconnected
Calabazar	Fleming Island
Capdevilla	Glynlea Grace Spring Glen
El Guatao	Highlands Garden City New Life Community Wesley Fellowship
El Mariel*	St. Paul
Guanabacoa	Unconnected
Guinera	Unconnected
Habana Central	Memorial
Jaimanitas	Arlington
La Europa*	Dinsmore Keystone
La Sierra**	Ponte Vedra
Luyano	Unconnected
Marianao	First UMC Jacksonville
Martín Pérez	Faith
Mayorkín*	Middleburg
Punta Brava	Isle of Faith
Regla	Calvary
San Antonio de los Baños*	First UMC Baldwin
San Antonio de Río Blanco**	Trinity (Palatka)
San José de las Lajas**	Ortega
San Miguel del Padrón	Asbury
Santa Cruz del Norte**	Swaim Memorial
Santa Fe	Orange Park
Santiago de las Vegas	Southside
Tumbadero*	Macclenny
Seminario	Christ-Neptune Beach
Vedado & Bauta*	Lakewood

*Artemisa District **Mayabeque District