

CRGA Newsletter

May | 2024 |

Upcoming Vision Trips

There are limited openings available for joining these wonderful experience to see Cuba and visit the churches there.

Vision Trip October 15 to 22, 2024

Contact Amy Hayden
amyhayden07@gmail.com

Vision Trip February 19 to 26, 2025

Spot for 1 lady (see Walt Noordam below)

Vision Trip April 22 to 29, 2025

Limited space available
Contact Walt Noordam
CalvaryRoadSecretary@outlook.com

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More Than We Expected

~Pastor Werner Peters

I tried to dissuade Pastor Michel Oduardo. He had invited me to preach at his Easter service at 6 A.M!

That was a first for me.

The three of us (Amy, Suzanne, and I) were excited to be there. But it meant rising at 4:30 A.M

after arriving at the resort the previous evening. At 6 A.M. the church was full. We praise the Lord that a number of people received Christ as their Saviour.



One thing became clear from this visit. God is on the move in Cuba! Hungry hearts are everywhere. More about that in this article.

Pastor Marcial Martinez was the first pastor we visited. He spoke of his conversion. Before he became a believer, he was a policeman. In Cuba it is difficult to be a cop without taking bribes to look the other way. So even before he became a Christian, he resigned from the force because of the corruption that he experienced. His mother was a Christian and would often invite him to attend church. One day, without her knowledge he followed her to church but remained outside and hid behind a bush and listened. Unbelievably, during the sermon the pastor, who had no idea that he was out there said, "Someone is hiding from God. You need to repent and get right with Him. Pastor Marcial then walked into the church and accepted Jesus Christ as his Saviour.

After being disciplined, he became a missionary, attended seminary, and became a pastor. Pastor Marcial faces two challenges. The one is the fact that so many Cubans are leaving the country. He has lost about 17 members to emigration. Yet God continues till fill the ranks of those who left with new believers. He is currently preparing 4 believers for baptism with many more to come. They have 7 small

groups that meet throughout his town, and they have 4 mission initiatives happening right now.

The other obstacle he faces is Santeria. Santeria involves divination, sacrifices, initiations and other occultic practices. In his town, one of the leading women in that movement has just recently converted to Christ. This has made him a target, but he has no fear because Christ is all powerful. Thank the Lord that we already have a church in Canada that will support him.

What's happening is more than I expected!

Another church whose pastor we support tells us that when he began his pastoral ministry in El Cobre, things were in disarray. The former pastor was involved in various businesses and the church suffered badly due to lack of pastoral care. The current pastor told us that due to a focus on evangelism and discipleship, in the past 8 months the church has added 400 new believers to their fold! He went on to tell of two influential individuals who were deep into Santeria in the town who became Christians. He has seen a massive movement of folks turning to Christ, but at the same time, Santeria and its witchcraft and idolatry practices remain the biggest challenge to his ministry.

We remember one pastor telling us that although members of Santeria in his town have his name on their list of people upon whom they are invoking curses, he doesn't fear them because his name is written in the Lamb's book of life! That's the kind of courage and boldness we need in our land!

It encourages us so much to travel in Cuba! To hear these stories and to see the boldness and joy of these believers in Cuba is an experience I wish upon all our readers. Please consider coming with us to see this for yourselves! This fall, there will be further opportunities to see this for yourselves.



A Note from the President

~Dave Ross



A glorious note of PRAISE to our God is appropriate to start this update to our wonderful Calvary Road supporters. Last year we felt a real burden to send a food container to Cuba. Praise God that although we did receive approximately \$10,000, (about 1/5 of the amount needed), in God's great graciousness He provided ALL the food from two Christian Gleaner organizations in Ontario, as well as the container itself from a very kind brother. However, as desperate as the need for food is in Cuba these days (and it is exceedingly desperate), we have been waiting on the Cuban officials to provide to us the final authorization to import form for approximately 3 months. I know that we all find it nearly impossible to reconcile this paradox, and so I ask that we all make this a matter of prayer to our God, so that He moves the hearts of these officials to issue our permit without further delay, so that we can get this container enroute as quickly as possible.

The continuing and growing pervasive economic challenges in Cuba (very high inflation and nationwide scarcity of work, food, fuel and electricity) appear to be pushing the nation closer to the brink of survival. I think it's fair to state that if we experienced here even a fraction of what they have been experiencing there for many years, we would have a revolution in our nation. But Cubans have grown an amazing resiliency through all their years of hardships, and so the situation worsens every month, with no end in sight. I am persuaded that we all have been ordained in God's plan to come alongside our Cuban brothers and sisters in Christ for such a time as this.

And even though in some places where we sponsor pastors and missionaries, the work is very hard due to entrenched witchcraft, our courageous pastors there have pledged their lives here on earth to

faithfully preach the gospel of Jesus Christ. And so, even the power of witchcraft is being broken in a number of the witches themselves, and Jesus receives all the glory, and great spiritual growth then ensues in those areas. I am humbled and undone by the realization that God has appointed all of us to be a part of His story in Cuba in these days, and so I thank every one of you for your faithful support of this ministry, as the Cuban church remains one of the fastest growing evangelical denominations in the world! A special thank you to those who have recently started to sponsor a Cuban pastor or missionary. This is the one area of our ministry where the challenges in Cuba actually enhance our work, whereas all other areas are slowed or diminished because of the shortages there. Thankfully, pastor support has been our number one priority for approximately 7 years now, and God has seen fit to allow us to have now surpassed the 100 mark in this area. Thanks go to you all, but ALL praise and honour go to our God for this amazing reality. You can sponsor a Cuban pastor for \$75 a month and directly impact having more people in heaven; see our website for details on how to do this - www.calvaryroad.ca

We also thank our God for His enabling us to continue to take "Vision Team" trips to Cuba. We are presently doing 3 - 4 trips each year, and the upcoming fall / winter trip dates are noted elsewhere in this newsletter. If you have never joined us on one of these trips, I invite you to take a "vacation with a difference" as you visit the church in Cuba, see the Cuba that tourists rarely see, and enable Calvary Road to conduct our shared ministry there.

Thank you so very much for your faithful support of the work in which we partner together blessing the pastors, missionaries, churches and people of Cuba. Let us continue to keep all of them in our prayers. Thank you for all that you do unto the least of them through this ministry. May God bless and keep you through these times and may your gifts to them through this ministry continue to be a sweet-smelling sacrifice to our God.



A Whirlwind Week of Blessings in Cuba

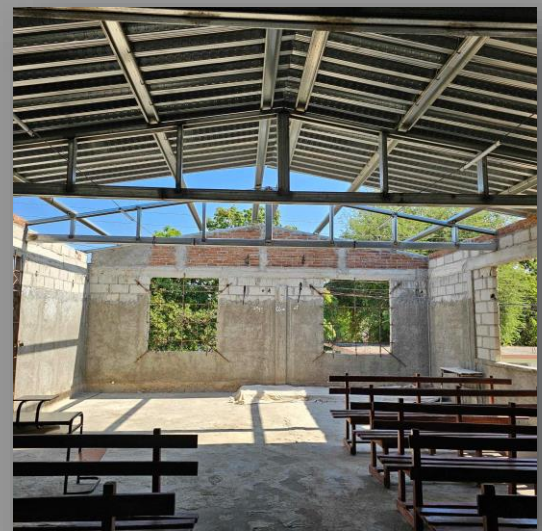
~Janet Wu

When Werner Peters (my former pastor) came back to Chinese Gospel Church in Toronto to preach last year, I happened to be back from BC where I had been helping my parents. After hearing his testimonial about the dire needs there with the believers having so little and yet so much, I was not only moved to go and help, I was also curious to see how God is at work there. And since I am in the process of moving to BC, I now have more flexible time to go, and have all kinds of donations to bring along.

I was still apprehensive about going though, as the last 3 times I had tried to go on a missions trip, the plans either changed or the trips were cancelled altogether. In fact, this original trip was scheduled to be last November, but had to be rescheduled to this trip with Walt and his team in March. Thankfully, it finally happened, and I was able to pack approximately 150 lbs worth of donations of various toys, laptop bags, household, and clothing items, many of which had barely been used, thinking I would be able to bless the Cubans with material and monetary donations. In actual fact, the opposite was true as the Cuban church leaders had blessed me much more by sharing their immense passion for the gospel, their extraordinary hard work and laser-focused dedication for discipleship and leadership training, despite many leaders leaving to emigrate elsewhere; along with much sacrificial giving for one another and loving persistence in serving the church community amidst the worst economic crisis and runaway inflation they have and are experiencing. Many of the pastors and missionaries walk or bike many kilometers just to get to their church/mission, some do not even have an actual building to work in. Many of them, along with their members, struggle with basic needs like food, employment, transportation, and simple cooking equipment like refrigerators and pressure cookers, while trying to

help their members with their own issues simultaneously. Pastor Josue and his son Emmanuel themselves travel for hours every morning to bring us and to introduce us to the church leaders and to interpret for us, while offering us wonderful hospitality from the women and helpers there. Pastor Josue even “rolled up his sleeves” to cut up coconuts under the hot sun for us and set up the bicycle that we had brought down even though he had dress clothes on. One of the missionaries who is in his 70’s even rides a motorbike to get to his mission and to our meeting!

Thus, although I was initially overwhelmed and disoriented when I first arrived to Cuba, not knowing where we were going, what we were actually doing and what to expect, the Lord certainly had other plans to clear my mind and to open my eyes to see the incredible and wonderful work of church-planting and church-building He is accomplishing through Pastor Josue and his leaders, as if He is systematically building an army of soldiers both in Cuba and for sending abroad once they emigrate. As well, and to my biggest surprise, I had the special and wonderful privilege of working alongside the fun, talented and loving team of 6 others from Sarnia and Toronto who showed me their own generous, industrious, and loving hearts and hands in coming and supporting the Cuban church and their leaders year after year!



Pastor Profile: Marcial Martinez

Pastor Marcial Martinez's journey of faith began in an unexpected way. Once a police officer, he quit his job after realizing the extent of deception within the system. With no employment and a family to feed, he reluctantly accompanied his mother to church. Little did he know, his life was about to change.

During a sermon, the preacher's unexpected words, "Hey you, hiding in the bush," jolted Marcial out of his hiding place. Feeling embarrassed, he stepped forward. That moment became a turning point. From there, Marcial's journey of faith began.

Eleven years ago, Marcial and his wife, Yarideinys, found themselves at Restoration Church, a small congregation of 50 members. Today, the church boasts 85 members and an attendance of 120-130.

Overseeing a district of 54 churches stretching from Santiago to Guantanamo, Pastor Marcial's influence extends far beyond Restoration Church's walls. With six baptisms in the past year and four more scheduled, the church is witnessing growth. There are currently four missions and seven small groups, with plans for more in the future.



One of the biggest obstacles Pastor Marcial faces is the prevalence of Santeria/witchcraft in the town. However, even in the face of such challenges, he has seen remarkable transformations. One woman deeply involved in Santeria, known for cursing others, has since turned her life around after finding Christ.

Today, Pastor Marcial finds support from within the church, his wife's work, and occasional financial assistance from his father-in-law in the United States. Despite the challenges, Pastor Marcial's faith remains unshakeable, and his commitment to Restoration Church unwavering.

Ways to Give

Send a cheque to:

Calvary Road Gospel Association
PO Box 571
Moncton, NB E1C 8L9

E-transfer:

CalvaryRoadGospelAssociation@gmail.com
(Please indicate your name and email address in the transfer message)

Via Canada Helps:

<https://www.canadahelps.org/en/dn/4454>



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