

# Cuba Current

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2010

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## Special Trip Issue Report on Havana District Conference Trip

By George Reed

This issue of “*Cuba Current*” is devoted to reporting on our Cuba trip last week (2/4 – 2/11/10). Loree and I attended the District Conference in Havana, visited a number of churches in our District, and spent considerable time with our sister church, la Sierra. Though we were the only travelers from the North East District, we ran into several other Florida Methodists, in Cuba to attend other events.

waved through with all our bags (except the two which got left in Miami – more on that later) and no fee. Once outside, we were met by District Superintendent Antonio and Pastor Damián from la Sierra with lots of hugs.



### Travel Logistics

We traveled on a TACA Airbus charter (arranged through ABC Charters). While I don’t recommend it, we took in over 300 pounds of baggage, paying the overage of \$1/lb. Note: the normal overage fee is \$2/lb, but we had a letter from our pastor which seemed to have the desired result.



### District Conference

The flight was comfortable, arriving Havana in less than an hour. A representative from Havanatur delivered our visas (Praise God!) along with the visas for four other Methodist travelers on our flight (headed to the Pinar del Rio District).

From the airport, we took a van to D. S. Antonio’s church and home in Punta Brava. We enjoyed a fabulous dinner with Antonio and Gina (which started by candlelight . . . the power was out), followed by a lively service in their upstairs church. We had a translator for the entire Punta Brava visit. Lots of wonderful music filled the air, with plenty of abrazos

and besos at the end.

Friday brought a tour of three churches in our District, San Antonio de los Baños, Tumbadero, and Mayorkín. Reports on each of those visits can be found elsewhere on pages 3-4..

The Conference kicked off Friday at 8pm with an inspiring service at Habana Central. Central is a large, downtown (continued on page 2)

### **BIBLE VERSE:**

- *You are God's servants, working together; you are God's field, God's building. 1 Cor. 3:9*

Customs took some time, though we were eventually

## Report on Havana District Conference Trip (continued from page one)

church with a very enthusiastic pastor, Guillermo León (who used to be pastor at la Sierra). Loree captured some good video on her Flip cam which we will post on the Facebook website (<http://www.facebook.com/group.php?gid=95353262755>).

Saturday's Conference activities were at Mariano, another beautiful Havana church pastored by Bishop Pereira. Again, the music was out of this world. Both the Bishop and D. S. Antonio preached (among others). Antonio gave a presentation on his District and I said a few words about "Methodists United in Prayer." There were some 2,500 worshipers present (all of which were fed lunch!).

We met with all of the District pastors after lunch. A more detailed report on that meeting may be found on page 5. We returned home late that evening after a productive and inspiring day.

Sunday brought yet another great service at Punta Brava (with heartfelt thanks to Isle of Faith for their support – also on video).

### la Sierra

The rest of the trip was spent at our sister church (la Sierra) which is reported on page 4.

## Report on Punta Brava

Sister Church: Isle of Faith

Isle of Faith's Mike Oakes sent a package with us to present to Punta Brava. They now will be able to pay for a new floor in the new Temple under construction next to the existing church/pastoral home. D. S. Antonio and his congregation could not have been more appreciative. Mike is doing a great job with their relationship. We shot a lot of video and pictures which will be posted on our Facebook page (<http://www.facebook.com/group.php?gid=95353262755>).

### Missing Baggage

Our two missing boxes showed up at the airport a few days into the trip. A hastily arranged trip to the airport quickly yielded the boxes, but Customs had some heartburn. Both were large boxes: one with a bicycle, lined with toys and diapers, and the other, a small (!) P. A. system. After unpacking both boxes for inspection, and after a great deal of discussion among themselves, the Customs officials eventually waved us and our boxes back outside. No fees/ no confiscation. It was truly a God thing; had those boxes arrived with us and the rest of our baggage on time, they would never have been allowed into the country. I believe that Pastor Damián and his church members literally prayed them through Customs. There is no other explanation.



### Return Home

The return to Miami on the eighth day was perfect. The flight was on time and we were waved through Customs without even showing them our Treasury License copy. We are back with a re-energized commitment to *MUIP* and to our sister churches in Havana.

And yes, we'd go back tomorrow.

[gid=95353262755](http://www.facebook.com/group.php?gid=95353262755)).

thinking about building classrooms on the unfinished third floor.

Punta Brava is truly a church on fire in Cuba. D. S. Antonio and Gina (and their kids) were wonderful, loving hosts for our visit. With construction of the new Temple well underway, he is already



## Report on Tumbadero

Sister church: Macclenny

In a week filled with poignant moments, this visit was probably at the top of the list. First, Tumbadero is seemingly in the middle of nowhere, at the end of numerous dirt roads in a heavily agricultural (and obviously poor) area. We were received in the middle of the day by Pastor Ramiro Díaz, his wife Maiete, and a church full of people. A great service was followed with a wonderful spread of fresh fruit as we were treated like royalty.

Sadly, there is no longer a connection with their sister church. Years ago, their sister church helped them purchase a truck which they used to transport worshipers from miles around to the

church. The engine is now out of the truck and irreparable; a new (used) engine will have to be purchased. This church is in dire need and we need your help. Please check out the video and pictures once we get them onto Facebook (<http://www.facebook.com/group.php?gid=95353262755>).



## Report on San Antonio de Rio Blanco

Sister church: Trinity (Palatka)

We delivered an envelope from Bob Murff to Pastor René Dominguez and his wife Sonia, received very enthusiastically. Pastor René in turn



gave us a CD for Trinity. This is another good example of a good sister church relationship. But there is work to be done. The Temple has structural problems. In fact, the roof was caving in (though it has

since been repaired). The church owes \$1,000 to the brothers who repaired the roof and current living conditions are, at best, primitive. Our efforts in the future at this church will make a huge difference.

## Report on San Antonio de los Baños

Sister church: Lake Shore

- 400 attending
- 185 members

New pastor Hernán Tamayo has been there since July, '09. Good relationship with Lake Shore.



## Report on Mayorkín

Sister church: Middleburg

Mayorkín is an excellent example of a great sister church relationship. Pastora Ellen of Middleburg sent an envelope which was joyously received by Pastor Enoel Guitierrez and his wife Yunix. In turn, they had an envelope for Middleburg. Middleburg is also in the process of arranging for a U.S. visit for Pastor Enoel.

We were treated to a wonderful lunch of cuerdo, arroz, and a salad arranged in the form of a cross. The church is also located in an agriculture area. They have experienced extraordinary growth

through effective local evangelism, and are now cramming literally hundreds of wor-

shippers into a space we would consider fit for 25 or 30 people. They desperately need to expand and have the space to do so. A large tent is probably the next step. They also need a computer monitor.



## Report on la Sierra

Sister church: Ponte Vedra

This is our own sister church and we spent much of our week there. It is also a great example of the difference made through *MUIP*. The church and the pastor's living conditions are in much better shape than they were on our visit over two



years ago. The congregation is enthusiastic and growing. We hosted a pig roast at the church and fed over 80 people (from a town of around 2,500).

Pastor Damián's English has dramatically improved (and my Spanish has got-

ten a little better), so we got by just fine without a translator. We did have a few laughs as Damián kept pronouncing "eggs" as "epps." We caught up with old friends and made some new ones. And we were honored to be asked to be godparents for Damián's and Samira's baby, expected in June.

## Report on Vedado

Sister church: Lakewood

Though we did not have an official visit to Vedado, we did visit with the pastor and watch a few minutes of a service. Fellow District Coordinators Pete and Betty Perez are to be commended for arranging significant support from Lakewood recently. Vedado is a beautiful church in Havana, next door to the Methodist National Office.



*Worshippers in Vedado*

## Report on the Pastor Meeting at the District Conference

As you can see from a number of articles in this month's "Cuba Current," we have several mutually successful sister church relationships in place. Unfortunately, we have some in serious need of improvement. Pastors move, lay people move or get busy, and sometimes things just fall apart.

We met with all 21 pastors at the Conference. We delivered a number of envelopes at that meeting including:

- Orange Park to Playas de Santa Fe
- Isle of Faith to Punta Brava
- Trinity (Palatka) to Mayorkín
- River of Life to Martin Perez

- Middleburg to San Antonio de Rio Blanco
- St. Paul to el Mariel
- Ponte Vedra to la Sierra

But a number of the pastors complained that they either 1) had not heard from

*Some Cuba pastors  
complained that they had not  
heard from their sister  
churches in months, years, or  
ever.*

their sister churches in months or years, or 2) had never heard from their sister

churches. Most vocal with these complaints were:

- Bauta – Oak Crest
- Santa Cruz del Norte – Swaim
- Santiago de las Vegas – Southside
- Tumbadero – Macclenny

If you are affiliated with one of these churches, please call me or Pete Perez and let's work out a game plan to get you connected to Cuba. If for some reason you don't wish to be a sister church, we need to know that as well.

## May North East District Caravan in the Works!

D. S. Antonio has agreed to an eight person caravan to Havana in May, though exact dates are still pending. The trip will be for eight days. If you are interested in participating, please let us know NOW!

Let us know also if your church has a U.S. Treasury License for travel to Cuba in place and valid through May (there may or may not be time to apply for and get a new Treasury License in time for the trip). You also need a valid (through May) U.S. Passport. I will work on a more precise budget, but it will likely be a minimum of \$1,400 per person.



## Methodists United in Prayer

149 South Roscoe Blvd., Ponte Vedra, FL  
32082

<http://www.Facebook.com> Search Groups:

"Methodists United in Prayer North East District" and  
"United in Prayer—Cuba & Florida Methodists"

<http://www.methodistsunitedinprayer.org/>

<http://groups.yahoo.com/group/larednetwork/>

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*Cuba Current* is published for Methodists in the North East Florida District involved with or interested in "**Methodists United in Prayer.**" "Methodists United in Prayer" facilitates prayer, love, exchange, and mutual support between the Cuba Conference 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.

## Sister Churches



Havana District	NE Florida District
Bauta	Oak Crest
Capdevilla	Glynlea Grace Harmony Chapel Spring Glen
Central	Avondale
La Europa	Keystone
Guanabacoa	Mandarin
El Guatao	Highlands Garden City New Life Community Wesley Fellowship
Jaimanitas	Murray Hill
Loma de Cañita	1st UMC Starke
Marianao	CrossRoad
El Mariel	St. Paul
Mayorkin	Middleburg
Playas de Santa Fe	Orange Park
Punta Brava	Isle of Faith
San Antonio de los Baños	Lake Shore
San Antonio de Rio Blanco	Trinity (Palatka)
Santa Cruz del Norte	Swaim Memorial
Santiago de las Vegas	Southside
La Sierra	Ponte Vedra
Tumbadero/Callazo	Macclenny
Martin Pérez	River of Life
Vedado / University	Lakewood
Artemisa	Community (Lake Como)
The Retirement Home	1st UMC