



# Youthful Hope in the Midst of Trauma

**M**y dear brothers and sisters, here is the latest from our friends and fellow believers in the Reformed Episcopal Church in Cuba. Some of the news is very disheartening. They have suffered and continue to suffer much. Our prayers and support are essential to protect and uphold them in this very difficult and challenging, but rich mission field. You can see from the title, that I am going to devote the majority of this newsletter to the wonderful work that is being done with the children and youth in Cuba's parishes. However, I do need first to give you a picture of the troubling state of the church and society.

As with churches in much of the rest of the world, the Cuban church was heavily impacted by Covid 19 and most of their congregations' Sunday ministry has not recovered to pre-pandemic numbers. The pastors continue to minister as best they can to all the congregations through visits and small house meetings. As if Covid wasn't enough, Dengue fever is now sweeping the country, with most of the affected population suffering to recover without any access to needed medications. Many people have died.

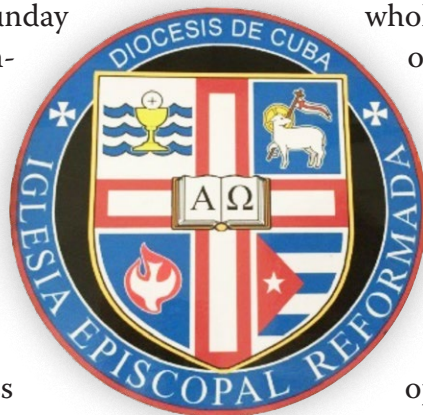
Bishop Willians wrote a great deal of his latest

report from his sickbed, while in recovery from Dengue fever. There are constant, rolling and long-lasting blackouts, with only a few hours daily of power to recharge his laptop.

Sometimes they are without power for a whole day. Following the last hurricane, the whole country endured a blackout for 27 hours! Even today some areas are without access to clean drinking water, electricity and food. Fuel is severely regulated and travel is restricted. A government official in each municipality controls the fuel. A private citizen may...if they are in favour, obtain only up to 20 liters of diesel once a month!

The government blamed the 27-hour blackout on the storm, but there was no real reason for the whole island to have been shut down. Most of the infrastructure was not damaged.

The blackouts were a deliberate response to civil unrest, demonstrations by people desperate for food, medicine, power and the freedom to express their dissatisfaction with the state of their society. The population are constantly intimidated, oppressed and imprisoned. Police roam the streets in civilian dress, beating those who would dare to speak out. Please be in prayer for protection for our brothers and sisters in Christ.





Rolando & Family, Moa.

## ■ San Marcos, Moa

Bishop Willians reports that the ministry of their parish continues despite the great difficulties they have been forced to face. There have been a number of deaths, including Willians' wife Reina and one of the lay pastors, Milton. Thankfully, in the midst of the struggle with Covid, Reina's passing and Dengue fever, Deacon Rolando has been there in support of the parish and the Bishop. Rolando reports that his family (above) is generally in good health, but he suffers from health problems with his knees and kidneys. He continues in ministry now serving a congregation of 30 made up of the elderly and sick from the parish of San Marcos, Moa. Rolando visits regularly, bringing them the gospel and Holy Communion. He also serves as the Assistant Pastor with Bishop Willians in the parish.

## ■ Diocesan Youth and Children's Program

Under the leadership of Bishop Willians and Archdeacon Alexei, it was decided that... post-Covid... the diocese needed to be proactive about reengaging with the community around them. They have begun this process by training parish leadership from the western and central churches in youth and children's ministry. Eight leaders were sent out and the response is very encouraging!

## ■ San Lucas, Venezuela

This congregation led by Pablo Ulloa Caballero and his wife Mileisi have, through prayer, amazing generosity and hard pastoral work, survived Covid reasonably well, even in the midst of their own and community's

medical issues. Their parish is spiritually healthy, but like many of the others, suffering with the lack of power, fuel, food and medicines, with many people sick. Those scheduled for surgery are required to bring their own supplies and meds! Pablo reports using his own salary to purchase food for families where the children would otherwise go physically hungry. However, as with the rest of the diocese, Nuevo Amanecer is busy also feeding them spiritually.

## ■ Santisima Trinidad, (Holy Trinity) Florida

Archdeacon Alexei and Aniet's return to Florida with their family has revitalized life in this central and very important parish. Along with Moa, Holguin and Venezuela, the children and youth ministry focus has begun to



Children at San Lucas, Venezuela.



Childrens Ministry, Holy Trinity, Florida.



Florida Pastors' meeting.

bear much fruit. Alexei has requested some funds to procure the home attached to the Florida ministry centre and thereby expanding the facilities for this once again growing ministry and their community's children.

The archdeacon reports that on Thursday afternoons he is teaching a pre-seminary (Lay Ministry) course to 12 brothers. The objective is to commission them as Christian leaders who are involved in the different ministries (Evangelism, Teaching, Officiating etc.) He teaches general REC culture, conduct of ministry and theology. Alexei also meets weekly with the local clergy for encouragement and continuing education in pastoral ministry and conduct of worship according to Book of Common



René Manso Almaguer (centre) with Yuresli & Ana, Little Farm, Florida.

Prayer.

## ■ Great News!

Archdeacon Alexei has just presented Brother René Manso Almaguer (above) to the Bishop to be considered as a missionary for La Finquita (Little Farm) Florida. He is married to Yuresli Quesada Díaz

and has a daughter, Ana Maura Manso Quesada. A New Missioner, Rodreguez Valdez & his wife, Kenia Suarez Gerard, have just been sent to begin a missionary work in Camaguey.

Alexei has also asked the Bishop to license Ruleisy Llerena Guerra as a new missionary, to maintain the work of Rev. Ricardo Martín Barreto in Nueva Jerusalén in Agramonte. Ricardo's health is failing, but there is work to be done in the parish. Alexei's wife, Aniet continues her calling as a lawyer for the diocese and his daughter, Anaymee works in the diocesan printing and publishing office.



Rodreguez Valdez & Kenia, Camaguey.



Ruleisy Llerena Guerra, Agramonte.

## ■ Tito & New Dawn (Nuevo Amanecer, Florida)

Rev. Deacon Tito reports that his family is well, as is his ministry. He tells us that he is working more every day to be worthy of the Gospel of Jesus Christ. Tito is focused on the great commission and from the looks of the picture, wonderful things are afoot. He thanks us for our concern and our



Tito (back) & children, New Dawn, Florida.

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Cristo Redentor, Holguin

prayers and he indicated that they are keeping us in prayer as well.

Although the numbers are smaller, the process is the same at **Christ the Redeemer** and their church plant, **Nuevo Renacer (New Rebirth) in Holguin** as **Ramiro** and **Carlos** are bringing the gospel to the children and youth of the community. Ramiro asks that we pray for his wife Eva as she is suffering with anxiety issues. They pray for regularly for us, that the peace of Christ will rule in our lives. Carlos reports that they are ‘right with God’s grace.’ His family and church community are well and growing in faith every day as they learn to trust Jesus!

## ■ Havana: Eric & Marisol

Eric told me that they are healthy and fine. However, due to the desperation among the general population, their home has been burglarized 4 times! The social crisis is increasing, and times are much more dangerous in Cuba. Some of their church members are suffering illnesses with little medication and the lack of food. Eric and Marisol are helping the best they can with their own limited resources. They are praying for a political change in Cuba. Eric tells us that they are in desperate need for democracy for this country is in a total crisis.

“Pray for us, so the Lord may concede us freedom. I’ve known that our fellow brothers are in the same trouble, mainly in the eastern provinces. But the Lord is mighty and merciful, He gave us victory in Jesus!”



Eric & Marisol in Havana

## How You Can Give to the Cuba Mission

*Canadian donations should now be sent to:*

**The Central and Eastern REC Diocese of Canada,**  
157 Haddon Avenue North,  
Hamilton, Ontario, L8S 4A7  
[nelsonbuffett@gmail.com](mailto:nelsonbuffett@gmail.com) 905-527-1549

*or in the USA*

**c/o REC Board of Foreign Missions**  
23501 Cinco Ranch Blvd, Ste H120 #642,  
Katy, TX 77494  
[www.recbfm.org](http://www.recbfm.org)

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