



Worshipping in Havana

Father Paul Howden

Notes from Father Paul Howden who travelled with us to Havana in November

Arriving in Havana from St. Louis, Missouri was not as scary as I thought it would be. I basically sailed right through customs. Two of the Cuban brethren met me at the airport and drove me to where I would stay for the week. The place where Bishop Boonzaaijer and Canon Barclay lodged was two blocks away from my nice apartment that looked rough on the outside, but almost elegant on the interior. What you notice travelling around Havana is that most houses and buildings are barred up like a prison. This is the result of rampant theft. Also, you notice piles of garbage on the corners of the block. This is a horrible situation, and I even saw people picking through the piles of fetid garbage looking for things to eat. Though we saw many sad things, I came to love worshipping with our Cuban brothers and sisters. They put so much fervor and sincerity into the daily office, that each prayer is meaningful. Some of them use a smart phone and a blue tooth speaker to provide accompaniment for hymns and praise choruses.

It was a privilege for me to watch Bishop Boonzaaijer teach and lead worship. He taught a session on how to do the Daily Office, and Holy Communion, how to sing the canticles, and parts of the liturgy. He encouraged them to compose their own hymns and songs in the Cuban musical style. I enjoyed participating in a Holy Communion liturgy in which several men were prayed over to



Canon Barclay, Bishop John, Father Paul

serve as licensed Lay Readers, one, Pastor Raudel was ordained as Deacon, three Deacons, Eric, Tito and Rolando ordained to the Presbyterate, and then three Presbyters, Eric, Pablo and Rolando assigned as Deans. The Lord is indeed blessing the work in Cuba!

Church visits in 2025

Canon Barclay Mayo

In January, at the beginning of Epiphany, Bishop John and Canon Barclay visited the churches in the Holguin and Moa areas. We had an amazing time of visitation and celebration with Confirmations, Baptisms, Marriage Blessings, Liturgical Teaching and Divine Worship. It was wonderful once again to be able to visit with Pastor Walter's congregation in Holguin and Pastor Alcides in Unas (who have been received back into the REC) and with Dean Rolando in Moa, Angel in Tagua de Tanamo, Carlos, Ramiro and Reynaldo's congregations in Holguin.

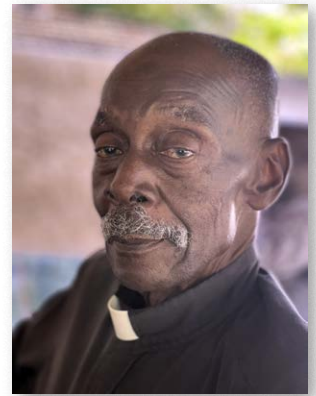
For the March trip to the Central Convocation, Bill Glasgow and Barclay Mayo travelled through Toronto carrying two complete HPiC medical kits. They arrived in Cayo Coco on March 2 and were passed through customs without incident. Canon Barclay did have to explain about the religious permit that Dean Pablo was holding outside the terminal; but it was successfully retrieved, and he was admitted. Bishop John arrived through Camaguey Airport on the 3rd, also without incident. The medical kits were successfully delivered to Florida, received, signed for and distributed by Dr. Fernando.

Canon Barclay notes, "We were welcomed to our B&B in Ciego de Ávila by Rocky and Mary, believers and English speakers who had previously worked at the Cayo Coco resorts. They were wonderful hosts and I would recommend to any travellers who want a relaxed and authentic Cuban experience." Our first translator, Jorge, is a Pentecostal Pastor who has planted many

house churches in Ciego de Ávila neighbourhoods. He travelled with us to Venezuela on Sunday. The other translator, Luke, isn't a Christian (yet) but was certainly curious and interested in what was being said as we ministered in the Florida church and neighbourhood extension works.

The first pastoral visit was to Nuevo Amanecer in Ciego de Ávila on Shrove Tuesday. We were wonderfully received by Pastor Tito, his wife Yamilet and daughter Lilian. After a service of Holy Eucharist with 12 Confirmations we watched a video presentation about New Dawn's vibrant youth ministry and received and discussed their very comprehensive annual report. Acting as our photographer, Bill Glasgow (Holy Cross, Abbotsford) was able to post pictures and comments daily on Facebook. Bill is also the *Cuba Chronicles* co-editor, so it was wonderful to have him travelling with us once again, to bring a different perspective of how our ministry in Cuba has been transformed over the years.

On Ash Wednesday morning, Bishop John, Canon Barclay and Bill headed to Santísima Trinidad (Holy Trinity), Florida to visit with Pastors Rene and Franklin. A service of Imposition of Ashes was followed by 26 Confirmations. Medications from HPiC and over-the-counter meds were portioned out and paperwork for HPiC completed. On Thursday we headed to Resurrection of our Lord (Resurrección de Nuestro



Pastor Franklin



+John, Franklin+, Barclay+, Yudi, Rene+, and Yuresli



Pablo+, Barclay+, Yamileisy, and +John

Señor), a house church run out of the home of Pastor Rene, Yuresli and their daughter Ana Maura. Rene reminded Canon Barclay that they met on his first trip to Cuba in 2013, when Alexei lived a similar house around the corner! Following prayers and refreshments, we headed to the parish extension El Sinai to visit with Miguel and Virgen Delores and then to Pastor Ricardo & Yamilet's home for a time of prayer and refreshment.

■ Back to Cuba after 11 years

Bill Glasgow

As I posted on my Facebook page, "Don't go traveling with a bishop if you want a relaxing trip—ours [Bishop John] doesn't stand still: pastoral meetings, multiple services, and parish visits—all in one day." This was an average day while in Cuba this past March, 2025. Even our rest day was exciting, meeting at a Christian Centre whose leader, Pastor Carlos, has an amazing plan to empower Christians in discipleship and evangelism throughout Cuba (ministries include a sports program training coaches and athletes, music outreach, youth ministry, men's and women's ministries, and more). They invited us to send our church members there for training!

We had a teaching & check-in day at the Parish of San Lucas, Venezuela-Ciego de Ávila with the Very Rev. Pablo and Bishop John, preparing for Confirmation the next day. Many of the churches are in early stages of getting established, so the Rectors convert their homes to churches: one side

Saturday and Sunday were both spent with Dean Pablo and his parish family at San Lucas Venezuela; Saturday for a parish visit and time to hear of Pablo's work as Dean of the Central Convocation. On Sunday 11 people were Confirmed, and we shared at the Lord's table together. It was great to see so many children in church. They filled the sanctuary!



Children returning home from church on the "Sunday-school bus".

they live in, and the other side is where the church holds services.

Multiple confirmation services at different churches were scheduled for Bishop John. Pastor Pablo generously hosted us as we worshipped with him and his congregation. Many children witnessed the "man with the funny hat and the long, curved stick" laying hands on and anointing the 11 candidates. After the service, we celebrated, ate delicious Cuban food, and then saw off the "Sunday-school bus" (horse-drawn wagon) as it returned the younger church members back home. I was deeply encouraged by the ministry taking place in the communities we visited and look forward to going back.

The Children's ministries in these churches are an amazing blessing, and the future of the church. Yamilet and Lilian, Mileisy and Yamileisy, Malin Maria and Yanet have helped the churches to grow and thrive. We are hoping to connect them with Pastor Carlos in Cespedes and utilize their VBS system and resources, using the children and youth ministries as a catalyst to plant new works particularly in the surrounding Central neighbourhoods of Ciego de Ávila, Florida and Venezuela, Holguin and Moa. Dean Pablo has asked us to facilitate the beginning of that relationship.



Bill, Canon Barclay, Bishop John, and Pastor Carlos

How Can You Help?

The Rev. Canon Barclay Mayo*

We are in desperate need of your help! The board has asked me to encourage "Come and See" trips as soon as possible... with the East Convocation as a priority, but to the other two Convocations as well. Even one couple in each area travelling to resorts in Guardalavaca, (Holguin/East) Cayo Coco (Ciego de Ávila/Central) or Veradero (Havana/West) on vacation and willing to visit with at least one of the local churches while there, bringing the Convocations' salaries and a med kit, would be immensely helpful. That could potentially get 6 med-kits and \$30,000 (1/4 of the budget) into the hands of our churches without the crippling exchange rate. Please call Canon Barclay at 604-815-8309 for more information as soon as possible.

In order to continue covering all the pastors' salaries & diocesan expenses, we need to raise \$126,000 USD annually. The Canadian portion (half) comes to \$63,000 or just over \$5,000 USD/Mo. That is

sixteen pastors and their ministries for the average cost of one Canadian ministry! It is an amazing "bang for the buck", as it were. Thank you to those who have been faithful donors over the years. Could I ask you to please share this newsletter with your congregations and with any others who may be feeling the call to support God's work in a foreign land. The CRA is telling us that the new charity application should be approved by August. In the meantime, please continue to send your donations to the charities and addresses listed below.



Canon Barclay delivering much needed medical supplies to a local doctor

How You Can Give to the Latin America Mission Society - Cuba Mission

Canadian donations should now be made out and sent to:

**The Diocese of Central and Eastern Canada of
The Reformed Episcopal Church,
10 Welch Lane, Hamilton, Ontario, L9C 0G1
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.rec-bfm.org**

For more info about the Cuba Mission please contact:

The Rt. Rev. Charles Dorrington, REC Diocese of Western Canada,
70-7570 Tetayut Rd. Saanichton, BC V8M 2H4 | 250-507-0730 | revchas@shaw.ca or
Mrs. Claudia Dorrington, Corresponding Secretary, REC-ANiC Society | 250-652-8850

The Rt. Rev. Trevor Walters, ADoC Assisting Bishop (ret.), walters34@shaw.ca

The Rt. Rev. Walter Banek, REC USA, wrbanek@mac.com

The Rt. Rev. John Boonzaaijer - Suffragan Bishop of REC Cuba, john.boonzaaijer@gmail.com

To explore how you can become more involved, please contact:

The Rev. Canon Barclay Mayo, Mission Partnerships Coordinator, barclay.mayo@gmail.com | 604-815-8309

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