



# The Anglican Relief and Development Fund Canada

## Trip to Cuba with Mission Team May 26 – June 5, 2017

It was a wonderful opportunity to be part of the team to travel to Cuba and visit with churches and friends in Cuba. I was invited to represent Anglican Relief and Development Canada, and to experience the ministry first hand. ARDFC's project to provide C \$ 60,000 for the purchase of a 12-passenger van was fully funded and transferred just before the trip. This van will be used to transport people and farm produce as well as generate income for the diocese. <http://www.ardfc.ca/projects.htm>

The trip started in Havana, where we were enthusiastically welcomed by suffragen Bishop Willians Menez Suarez and several fellow clergy. The following 2 days were filled with meeting new friends, understanding the needs of the Cuban believers and wonderful prayer times. On Sunday morning, we experienced a very moving service of Holy Communion at El Olivo Church. Our team members were asked to bring greetings, where some of us tried our



limited Spanish. There was lively music, excellent preaching (with simultaneous translation in English), a feeling of community among the 60 or so parishioners and of course snacks after the service. In the afternoon came a visit to a small church plant, Pan de Vida (Bread of Life) which meets on a covered patio. Here we met 2 recently baptized believers and again experienced a deep love and welcome.



The following 2 days meant travelling in a van across the Cuban countryside stopping in Florida (Cuba), Camaguey and Holguin, visiting churches, church plants and pastors as we travelled.



The Cuban countryside is lush and beautiful, and of course there are the beaches. Tourism and agriculture (sugar, tobacco, and coffee) are the key economic drivers. While travelling, our team had the opportunity to connect and share our individual life journeys. Our team consisted of Claudia

Dorrington (wife of Bp. Charles Dorrington, who was not able to travel), Barclay Mayo (Holy Cross Parish, Abbotsford), Patrice Weibelzahl (Ascension Parish, Langley), Ben Bernier (REC US), Trevor Walters (ANiC suffragen Bishop), Mike Tweedle (Celebration Parish, Barrie), and myself.



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The most exciting part of the trip was to witness and be part of the 4<sup>th</sup> Synod of REC Diocese of Cuba, under the able leadership of Bishop Willians. I was very impressed with the careful accountability in the Finance Committee meeting and the excellent reporting in the Standing Committee meeting. The Diocese is supported by parishes and individuals in North America. Initiatives like the van to be purchased, a farm owned by the Cuban diocese and other enterprises, will help to make the Diocese self-sufficient.



The Synod started with a moving service of Holy Communion followed by the Bishop's charge. The reading of the charge was a wonderful report of God's grace and blessing on the Diocese, and it included some of the challenges and disappointments. The presentation of the charge took 2 hours, and we learned that the 11 parishes and many small house groups now have an average attendance of 857. Many of these are new believers in Christ.

There was a presentation by each of the pastors of the 11 parishes. These were God stories, reports as to how God has blessed, and also reports of some of the struggles. This was about conversions, baptisms, home groups, caring for the sick and the poor. After each report, the pastor was prayed for, led by one of our team members. I was privileged, to lead the prayer for 2 of the pastors.

There was much prayer and new friendships were developed. This is the real Cuba, outside of beach resorts. People work hard and don't have the material wealth and conveniences we are used to. Yet, there is no shortage of laughter, families getting together, meals shared and caring for one another.

I am truly grateful that I had the opportunity, not only to facilitate the funds for the 12-passenger van project, but also to bring greetings from the ARDFC community. Please keep praying for the furtherance of the gospel in Cuba. This is a place where people are searching and God is working.



Respectfully submitted

Claus K. Lenk

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