

## **Cuba Task Force**

Rev. Kevin Morris, Chair

### **Congregation to Congregation Partnerships: Presbyterian Reformed Church in Cuba-Peace River Presbytery**

#### **Partnership Principles**

- A. Since the Peace River Presbytery partnership is with Matanzas Presbytery of the PRCC, congregations of Peace River Presbytery may establish sister relationships with a congregation of Matanzas Presbytery. This partnership covenant is from May 2018 through May 2023.
- B. A congregation's sister church partnership is a formal mutual agreement entered by the Sessions of the two congregations and approved by both presbyteries.
- C. Congregation sister church partnership agreements are for a specified period of time, usually three to five years, and may be renewed.
- D. Since presbytery ministries extend beyond congregations, initiatives with presbytery covenant partners, such as Mision Peniel, Cedarkirk, and Beth-El are encouraged.
- E. Partnership activities are reported to the appropriate oversight bodies and require regular evaluation in ways mutually agreed to by those charged with oversight.

#### **Essential Features of a Partnership**

*Such mutual commitments as the following are central aspects of congregational partnerships.*

- A. Regular prayer support in Sunday corporate worship, prayer circles, special occasions in the life of each church, intercession for each other's pains and joys.
- B. Mutual Bible study and lectionary use, both daily and Sundays, book studies, etc. using materials available or as mutually developed.
- C. Regular communication through whatever means available: email, letters, photographs, videos, etc. often through persons traveling in and out of both countries.
- D. Exchange of visits as possible. While annual visits are desirable, time and expense may make that difficult. This aspect of partnership is highly desirable; partnership is enriched and deepened by the mutual friendships built in repeated contact.
- E. Mutual sharing of human and material resources for program and mission. At the present time, one of the inescapable realities of partnerships between U.S. and Cuban congregations, is the great disparity in financial resources between the two. In the spirit of sharing, U.S. partners are led to give dollar support to the urgent needs of the sister congregation in Cuba, facing new opportunities for growth and mission. It is important that U.S. partners exercise discernment in such giving in order that unnecessary opportunities for jealousy and competition do not arise among PRCC congregations. CPTF maintains knowledge of the overall situation in the PRCC and can advise in this process.

#### **Commitments to the Peace River Presbytery**

- A. Encourage an annual Cuba Partnership Sunday and maintain openness to respond to particular needs in the Cuban sister congregation and the church in Cuba that may arise.
- B. Willingness to share visitors from Cuba with other churches or groups in Peace River Presbytery or other faith groups.
- C. Reporting of all funds contributed to the partner congregation or other entities in Cuba to CPTF for report to PC(USA) as required by the U. S. Government license. Transparency and accountability in funding are extremely important for all partners both in the U. S. and Cuba.
- D. Working to restore normal relations between the U. S. and Cuba.
- E. Willingness to maintain contact and participate appropriately in the activities of the Presbyterian Cuba Partners Network, composed of the presbyteries, congregations and other Presbyterian entities in partnership with the PRCC.

## Getting Started

*The supervision of church to church partnerships is the responsibility of the CPTF which regularly reports its work to the Presbytery Steering Committee and to Peace River Presbytery. Here are some process matters to keep in mind.*

- A. Study and reflection are a must before entering into a Cuba partnership. CPTF is prepared to suggest resources and to meet with the Session or a partnership exploration group to provide background and orientation.
- B. In many instances, it seems to work well for the Session to name several persons as a committee or commission to oversee such exploration and relate to CPTF in the process leading to a partnership decision.
- C. All congregation to congregation partnerships require prior approval of CPTF. CPTF maintains contact with Cuban leadership at all levels and is aware of their thinking as to which congregations are priorities for US partnerships. CPTF can therefore suggest options for choice to congregations of Peace River Presbytery
- D. When the decision to enter into a partnership has been made, it is customary for a group from the congregation to visit the Cuban congregation to enter into the partnership. (That does not mean that previous visits or contacts may not have been made.)

## Planning Visits to and From Cuba Partners

- A. Plans for all visits, either to or from Cuba, must be developed in contact with CPTF and should be made far in advance. Certain government regulations, both in the US and Cuba, must be met and coordination with visits of other US partners is necessary to avoid overtaxing facilities, transportation and human resources in Cuba.
- B. For initial visits, until persons in the congregation develop experience, CPTF will designate an experienced trip leader and conduct an orientation for the visitors.
- C. Persons or church delegations visit Cuba under the authority of the license granted by the U. S. Treasury Department to Peace River Presbytery; thus, such visits are legally sponsored by Peace River Presbytery. All members of such trips share the costs incurred by CPTF for trip leadership.
- D. A fee of \$50 per visitor has been set by CPTF as a contribution to the administrative expenses, incurred by the PRCC and must be factored into the trip budget.
- E. All Cuba visitors on trips sponsored by Peace River Presbytery must fill out an application form and a waiver of liability, and an evaluation form after the visit. Visitors must also be willing to share their experience in the congregation and with other churches in Peace River Presbytery.

## Partnership Principles

1. **Shared Grace and Thanksgiving** - Partnership calls all partners to confess individual and collective failings, to seek forgiveness for complicity with powers of injustice, to repent from histories of shared exploitation, to move toward common celebration of Christ's sacrifice of reconciliation, and together to give thanks and praise to God for all gifts of grace and renewal.
2. **Mutuality and Interdependence** - Partnership calls for interdependence in which mutual aid comes to all, where mutual accountability resides, and no partner dominates another because of affluence or "expertise."
3. **Recognition and Respect** - Partnership calls all partners to respect other partners in Christ, and to recognize one another's equality before God.
4. **Open Dialogue and Transparency** - Partnership calls for open dialogue where a common discernment of God's call to mission is sought, where Scripture is the base for prophetic challenge, where local initiative is respected, where differences are meditated with Christlike compassion, and where all partners are transparent about their activities and support.
5. **Sharing of Resources** - Partnership calls for the sharing of all types of resources: human, cultural, financial and spiritual, especially including friendly conversation and faith-transforming life experiences.