

CUBA NEWSLETTER

Miracles follow the Plow



Allen Thompson preparing soil for planting yucca

People in Cuba are experiencing suffering – lack of jobs, a broken economy, divided families, devastating hurricanes. Christians also participate in this plight, but with hope – a trust anchored in Christ who often in pain

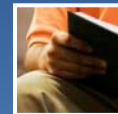
brings new life. The plow – tears, losses, vulnerability – all take their toll. The fruits in our life come only after the plow has created a longing for God. In this issue read stories of God’s gracious working after the plow.

GOD LOVES CUBA

Our Goals



To pray for spiritual awakening and work toward gospel renewal through concentrated workshops training pastors and lay leaders who train others.



To provide literature that is gospel saturated and applicable to the needs of growing Christians.

Los Pinos Nuevos Churches



150 churches planted by Cubans from pre-Castro missionary foundations. Deeply evangelistic these leaders are starting new churches in major cities. 500 young leaders are enrolled in the extension seminary.



Innovations in outreach ministry from compassion initiatives during crisis times to mobilizing youth in the arts.

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What’s happening in 2011?

In the midst of hardships, God is meeting the needs of his people. Items:

° *The Center for Leadership Training* is now operating in Havana and Holguín immersing leaders in gospel truth that in turn is taken to dozens of leaders in their churches. Gospel renewal is emerging and spreading.

° The Los Pinos print shop has published three manuals: *Instruments in the Redeemer’s Hands*; *Galatians: so great a salvation*, and *Seven Days Praying with Jesus*.

° A tractor has been purchased to enhance production at the church farm and ease economic hardships.

Lois Kehlenbrink returns to teach in her homeland

One of the advantages of growing older is that one can actually begin to see how God weaves His redemptive purposes throughout history. After being uprooted from Cuba in 1960 under difficult circumstances, my parents with their four children were confused and sad, wondering what good could come out of this situation. Surely we would return in a few months and my father could continue pastoring churches, as well as running the print shop, and my mother teaching at the seminary. I was eleven years old at the time.

Well, our sovereign God had

other plans, better plans than we could ever imagine, behind the scenes. I did not return until 50 years later in 2010 and began to observe just how active God had been throughout those years. I returned again this past September to be a part of the International Church Planting Center's vision to strengthen, equip and encourage the pastors and leaders of the Los Pinos Nuevos churches.

On both ends of the island, in Havana and Holguín, centers for the development and ongoing training of



Lois, center (white blouse) front row, leading workshop with leaders from the Los Pinos churches in Holguín, Cuba

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Why go back to farming?



1980's Russian tractor purchased to advance production in 20-acre church farm

The average wage for a teacher or medical doctor is \$25 a month (\$600 pesos). You can imagine what ordinary people earn! Ration cards have been issued to provide monthly allotments of staples like rice and beans. But these supplies, at the most, only last a week. So people are forced to find food in the underground economy.

Now small farms are permitted and the Los Pinos churches have goals to purchase a dozen of these farms to assist church people and their neighbors with food. The Holguín church is on its way now with this tractor and irrigation equipment to have multiple crops a year. Two families from the church are managing the farm which also doubles as a quiet retreat location for camps and small group workshops.



Lois and Mary Beth meeting with young Cuban artists

Young artists are being mobilized to use art as a medium to share the gospel

Pastor Alfredo Forhans is excited about this new avenue to expose intellectuals in his city to the gospel. Recently Alfredo shared thoughts in an email:

“We are very excited about a new opportunity that God has opened for us. Hennier has been invited to have an exposition of his art and that of other artists in the art gallery of Holguín. We already have the theme: idols of the heart and the human search for justice and meaning.

These Christian artists have asked me to give the opening words. Pray that God will be glorified as we introduce this theme and allow visitors to view the paintings.



Hennier shows some of his paintings that won prizes at recent art exhibition

Frank's new-found joy

Frank and his wife Ariadna (not pictured) are extremely talented. The government commissioned one of them for a painting that is hanging in a government building. As Mary Beth and Lois visited with him at his studio, he shared part of their spiritual journey.

“My former evangelical church did not have much appreciation for art, so, in



Frank showing off his studio

obedience, we were considering abandoning our art work in order to follow Christ.

“But last year we were loaned Tim Keller's ‘The Prodigal God’ DVD to watch. The insights from Keller's talk introduced us to a new, free life in Christ. With the encouragement of Pastor Alfredo and a new understanding of how God wants to use our gifts and art for His glory, we now want to impact the art community with the Gospel.”

It was exciting to see Frank's enthusiasm and hunger to grow as he joined in the recent workshop in order to be more fully equipped as God's ambassador.

Lois teaching (con't)

pastors/leaders have been established. As a biblical counselor, my workshop was to prepare the pastors to equip each member of their churches for the ongoing work of one-to-one ministry. God calls each one of His children to be His ambassadors, representing Him to one another.

We used Paul Tripp's *Instruments in the Redeemer's Hands* as our textbook, had it translated by a very skilled Cuban translator, Alain Escarrá, and obtained permission by P & R Publishing Company to print copies free for Cuba. It was a very intense summer raising funds for this project, editing each chapter of the book via email (360 pages), as well as the actual printing of the book in Cuba on an old Japanese Amada 500 press that broke down at times and needed to be repaired with meager technical supplies.

Nandy Quesada, the director of "Los Pinos" publications, and his team worked night and day to finish this project on time, sometimes running out of white paper and having to use beige paper as well. It was hard work, yet, oh my, what a blessing it is turning out to be.

There were 20 participants at the module in Havana and 40 in Holguín. Each participant has committed to take the training back to their home church and training 20 other leaders. Each returned with 20 additional books. The pastors and their wives were visibly moved by the curriculum and it was precious to see seasoned pastors dealing with their own hearts, applying the Gospel to their marriages, and wanting God to change them.

The subtitle of the curriculum was *People in Need of Change Helping People in Need of Change*. In contrast to the legalistic culture that many of them had learned and had embraced

throughout the years, they are seeing in a clearer way that the Christian life is not them trying to control and maintain God's laws and regulations for themselves, nor them trying to control the members of their own congregation, but it is a personal relationship of love that they enjoy with God, whereby justification and adoption is the first step, enabling them to have that relationship in which God **then** begins His work of change.

Several pastors throughout the modules confessed how harsh, judgmental, and condemning they had been to members of their churches, and that they were now going back to ask for forgiveness. They wanted to return to restore, to rescue, and to be a part of God's work of ongoing salvation. Pastors were crying, drawing near to one another, asking for forgiveness. God is pouring out His blessing on the island. Alberto, one of the pastors from Holguin, came to me at the end and said: "This wasn't just another seminar; this is a historical moment that has changed the culture of our church. Something happened – people are being transformed."

Since the church in Holguin does not yet have their own church building, the Baptist church allowed us to use their facilities and some of their leaders also attended the workshop. At the end, they told Alfredo and Alberto that they could use their facilities for all future modules. I share this humbly and gratefully, fully aware that this fruitfulness is simply because God has been working behind the scenes for the past 52 years and longer; He has heard the cry of His people, and He has chosen this particular time in history to pour out His blessings on Cuba. He is sovereign, accomplishing His purposes throughout all the sorrow, hardships, deprivation, and sufferings of the past years. As Tim Keller, my pastor, says, "You'll never know that God is all you need, until God is all you have."
--Lois Kehlenbrink