

“This is Your Home”

Our trip to Cuba was an incredible experience on many different levels but one of the most striking features of the churches we visited was outreach on a direct and personal level to both congregants and members of the community, including in churches that do not have a full-time pastor. These small congregations have learned how to “do church” without the financial and membership resources that we take for granted.

In the small churches we visited, congregations of a couple of dozen members

- Ministered to the elderly by doing their laundry, providing meals two or three days a week, and conducting prayer houses in members’ homes.
- Visited the elderly in nursing homes and collected scarce toiletry items for their use.
- Organized soccer and baseball teams to provide children and teenagers a safe place to go after school, and provided religious instruction to children whose parents did not grow up in the church.
- Ministered to disabled children by taking the church to their homes when the children were unable to participate in regular services.
- Provided clean water to the community through the Living Waters program, where churches open their doors three or four days a week for members of the community to come with containers to collect clean drinking water.
- Educated the community about the effects of Climate Change, and started “Guardians of Creation” clubs.
- Organized monthly cultural events for church and community members to share their art and poetry.
- Funded and provided transportation to send children and youth to church camp.
- Trained church and community members in diaconal outreach.
- Organized a “Hemingway” camp and took children to Havana, many for the first time, to visit cultural sites.

Despite the scarcity of resources our brothers and sisters in the Cuban Presbyterian Church live stewardship in a personal and direct way that should inspire all of us to reconsider the gifts that we can share with the church and community. As I was leaving the last two churches we visited in the Havana presbytery, the ministers said to me: “This is Your Home.” The church is our home, whether in Cuba or Tallahassee, Florida, and as sisters and brothers in Christ it is our calling to make the church our home.

— Janet Bowman