

2010
MARCH

CONNECTING OUR COMMUNITY OF FAITH

CUBA: A LAND OF CONTRADICTIONS

BY GRACE GYORI

Editors Note: LVPC had a big presence on the Presbytery of Chicago trip to Cuba, January 10-18. Lora Oswald, Peg Hazenbush, Grace Gyori, Pat Ebers, and Jim Vey were part of a 12-member team led by Rev. Muriel Miller.



MEMBERS OF THE PRESBYTERY OF CHICAGO CUBA DELEGATION

Cuba is a complex, confusing combination of the first and third world. So we were told in our recent one week visit as a delegation sponsored by the Presbytery of Chicago. Education is provided without cost through university levels, but salaries for professionals can be as low as \$20 per month. Health care is available for all, also without cost, yet many don't have enough food to eat. Five star hotels appear along the Varadero beach, yet formerly beautiful architectural jewels in downtown Havana look like bombed out shells of their former grandeur. The contrasts seem endless.

For me, our week there was overwhelming. We had so much fun! We danced, enjoyed religious rock music, visited the world-famous

Varadero beach, worshiped in a number of Presbyterian churches, met the leaders of the church, rode in horse-drawn carriages and "taxis", visited numerous gardens of all sizes, and were taught the wonderful medicinal cures of endless herbs. We watched a spectacular puppet show depicting Jesus' birth with no traditional script. We ate incredible Cuban food every day. We celebrated a birthday at Ernest Hemmingway's fabled bar, the "birth place of daiquiris". We enjoyed several serendipitous moments which stand out as jewels in my memory.

Food

One such moment was a brief visit to Dr. Ofelia Ortega's hidden garden tucked away in the middle of the gorgeous Matanzas Seminary campus.

Dr. Ortega recently returned to Cuba after serving in Geneva, Switzerland as President of the World Council of Churches. We were awe-struck by the cactus garden, her passion. Her husband, a renowned theologian in his own right, impressed us with his equally beautiful "traditional" garden. During her tenure as president of the seminary, Dr. Ortega was the visionary for the extensive organic garden on the seminary property, which supplies the institution with healthy vegetables and herbs, also made available to the surrounding community. She lamented that we would not be present for a forthcoming lecture on theology and ecology she had prepared.

Another "unplanned event" took place on Sunday afternoon outside of Guines, where three of us spent the weekend. A horse and carriage transported us to a tiny farm that is a model of a Cuban organic garden. On less than an acre of land, we experienced first-hand the creative skills recently learned by a middle-aged couple. They have planted an extensive tomato patch and an area filled with squash plants that produces hundreds of pounds of squash. They've also planted over one hundred coffee bushes, protected by as many banana trees. In addition, they have guava, citrus, mango, plum, star fruit, and avocado trees. A goat, several pigs, rabbits, and chickens round out the farm. They have to give 20% of their produce to the government, and can keep or sell the rest. We were treated to coffee and fresh squeezed orange juice, all from their farm. We filled a happy afternoon in their home with stories and laughter.

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EDGE INTO EASTER

JOY DOUGLAS STROME

Wouldn't we rather remain in Lent
curled up with a good book
thinking about ourselves and
asking the fine questions of the faith?

Wouldn't we rather remain in winter
where it's easy to excuse sloth
where the short days
give us permission to hibernate?

Wouldn't we rather remain passive
introspectively weighing all the options—
and the only limit pushed
is squeezing in the time it takes to ponder?

We edge into Easter with fear and trembling
uneasy, that we'll be one of those disciples
who thought it an idle tale, the ones who
scattered at the first sign of trouble.

We edge into Easter still scratching our heads
wondering how it could have really happened
finding it rather odd that
God might be so demonstrative.

We edge into Easter with ants in our pants
trying to figure out how to react
or if to react
or when to react.

We edge into Easter with the hunch
that for it to mean something
we'll probably have to change
and oh we don't like change.

We edge into Easter trying to stuff the alleluias
back in the vault of our heart—
in that recessed place
that doesn't feel so exposed.

We edge into Easter anticipating that moment
when we peek inside the tomb to discover
that we, like Jesus,
can rise from the dead. ☩

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Faith

In spite of the many obvious limitations placed on the society by 50 years of communist leadership in Cuba, we found a lively, vibrant church, which clearly has benefited from universal education. I was duly impressed with their hymnology. Far from being mere translations of western hymnody, Latin Americans and Cubans authored most of their hymns.

It seems that each church has its own unique ministry. In one, the pastor is an accomplished jazz guitarist and has a fabulous combo. Here we danced the evening away! In another, we enjoyed a puppet ministry. Some churches teach tai chi, others have lending libraries open to the community, several have gardens and teach the use of herbal medicine, and another provides special services to disabled children. I spent a weekend at one church, where I witnessed and shared in the active engagement of senior members in the monthly educational event. All of these are partnered with congregations in the United States, including the Chicago Presbytery. These relationships are very important and highly valued.

Finances

As in many impoverished nations, there is a high dependence on remittances from family members in the U.S. The close proximity to our country clearly fosters this dependency. It is very difficult for Cubans to receive visas to travel here, as it is for Cubans here to return home, even for a visit. The U.S. embargo is writ large in most conversations, and is seen as responsible for the obvious scarcity of so many goods. Clearly, the numerous hurricanes and frequently mentioned climate change also continue to take their tolls on the tiny island nation.

We were very cognizant of the fact we were in Cuba for only a week, and we conversed with a very select segment of the population. We cannot pretend to understand the numerous nuances and issues that raise more questions than answers. That's why I feel overwhelmed by this extraordinary experience, for which I am so very grateful. ☩

CALENDAR



MARCH

EVERY SUNDAY

Sunday service in the Sanctuary at 9:00 a.m. and 11:00 a.m. Childcare is provided in the Mulford Room. Coffee hour and time for fellowship immediately follow both services.

Sunday school for children at 10:00 a.m. Classes for ages 3-4, grades K-2, 3-5, and 6-up meet in the Parish House.

Choir rehearsal at 10:15 a.m.

Share your thoughts about faith and life in Begin@10 class, 10:00 a.m. in the Chapel.

Free parking is available in the Recycled Paper Company lot north of the church. Access the lot from the alley.

ADVANCE WARNINGS: SIGN UP NOW!
Lenten Pot Luck—See March 28

TUESDAY, MARCH 2

Regular exercise is the key to vitality, so join the Seniors in Motion fitness class. An exercise specialist from Advocate Fitness leads the group. Class begins at 10:00 a.m. in Fellowship Hall.

Young Adult Lenten Study meets at 6:30 p.m.

Crossroads Intergenerational Lenten Study meets at 6:30 p.m.

WEDNESDAY, MARCH 3

Senior Book Group meets at 12:15 p.m.

Worship Committee meets at 6:00 p.m.

Choir rehearsal at 7:15 p.m.

THURSDAY, MARCH 4

Senior Movie Matinee at 12:30 p.m.

Deacons meet at 6:00 p.m.

FRIDAY, MARCH 5

A Taize service features scripture reading, repetitive singing, and meditative silence, combining traditional worship forms in a contemporary way. The goal is to enable participants to remain open to the voice of God and discover the prayer within themselves. Join us tonight at 7:00 for Taize.

Cafe Pride provides a safe social space from 8:00 p.m. to midnight for lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgendered and questioning youth and their allies, ages 16-24.

SUNDAY, MARCH 7

Lake View Pantry food donations and Two Cents A Meal offerings will be taken at the morning worship service.

Sue Cox will give blood pressure screenings between worship services.

MONDAY, MARCH 8

Eco-Justice Taskforce meets at 6:00 p.m.

Finance Committee meets at 6:30 p.m.

Social Justice Committee meets at 7:30 p.m.

TUESDAY, MARCH 9

Seniors in Motion meets at 10:00 a.m. See March 2.

Young Adult Lenten Study meets at 6:30 p.m.

Crossroads Intergenerational Lenten Study meets at 6:30 p.m.

WEDNESDAY, MARCH 10

Senior Book Group meets at 12:15 p.m.

Choir rehearsal at 7:15 p.m.



THURSDAY, MARCH 11

Senior Movie Matinee at 12:30 p.m.

Spend time with long-time LVPC members at a Presbyterian Homes Fellowship from 2:30 to 4:00 p.m. in Evanston. The gathering offers an opportunity to stay connected with an important part of our church family. Volunteers are welcome. Contact Sue Cox at (773) 281- 2655 for more information.

FRIDAY, MARCH 12

Cafe Pride meets from 8:00 p.m. to midnight. See March 5.



SATURDAY, MARCH 13

LVPC's men meet for breakfast at 9:00 a.m. in Fellowship Hall.

The LVPC Book Group meets at 10:00 a.m. to discuss *The Other* by David Guterson.

Join LVPC's women for brunch at 10:30 a.m. in Fellowship Hall.

Volunteers will help serve a meal at Lake View Men's Shelter, beginning at 7:00 p.m.

SUNDAY, MARCH 14

Daylight Savings Time begins. Set your clocks forward one hour, or just be early for church!

TUESDAY, MARCH 16

Seniors in Motion meets at 10:00 a.m. See March 2.

Young Adult Lenten Study meets at 6:30 p.m.

Crossroads Intergenerational Lenten Study meets at 6:30 p.m.

WEDNESDAY, MARCH 17

Senior Book Group meets at 12:15 p.m.

The Lake View Parents Group meets at 6:00 p.m. for discussion and fellowship. While the parents are meeting, kids are

invited to The Gathering Place. They'll sing songs, play games, and learn more about the Bible.

Choir rehearsal at 7:15 p.m.

THURSDAY, MARCH 18

Senior Movie Matinee at 12:30 p.m.

FRIDAY, MARCH 19

Cafe Pride meets from 8:00 p.m. to midnight. See March 5.

SATURDAY, MARCH 20

Session meets at 9:00 a.m.

SUNDAY, MARCH 21

After both services today Parish Nurse Sue Cox will provide us with Ten Healthy Minutes. She'll enlighten us about a health topic in just 10 minutes.

TUESDAY, MARCH 23

Seniors in Motion meets at 10:00 a.m. See March 5.

Young Adult Lenten Study meets at 6:30 p.m.

Crossroads Intergenerational Lenten Study meets at 6:30 p.m.

WEDNESDAY, MARCH 24

Senior Book Group meets at 12:15 p.m.

Choir rehearsal at 7:15 p.m.

THURSDAY, MARCH 25

Senior Movie Matinee at 12:30 p.m.

FRIDAY, MARCH 26

Cafe Pride meets from 8:00 p.m. to midnight. See March 5.

SUNDAY, MARCH 28

Holy Week begins with Palm Sunday services at 9:00 and 11:00 a.m.

The all-church Lenten study of the book *An Altar in the World* by Barbara Brown Taylor culminates with a potluck lunch and discussion by all the classes involved. It begins at 12:30 p.m. in Fellowship Hall.

TUESDAY, MARCH 30

Seniors in Motion meets at 10:00 a.m. See March 5.

Young Adult Lenten Study meets at 6:30 p.m.

Crossroads Intergenerational Lenten Study meets at 6:30 p.m.

WEDNESDAY, MARCH 31

Senior Book Group meets at 12:15 p.m.

Choir rehearsal at 7:15 p.m.☞

THE 2010 WOMEN'S RETREAT: CONNECTING WITH OUR BLESSINGS, ONE ANOTHER

BY PATRICIA SIMMS

"Let me keep company with those who say 'Look!' and laugh in astonishment and bow their heads," says Mary Oliver, our poet-guide. And so, on January 29, with an act of faith and the turn of a key, we headed northwest to Stronghold Retreat Center on Rock River in Oregon, Illinois.



BRENNA SANDEFUR AND KOREN RACOLTA ENJOY THE WOMEN'S RETREAT

We gave ourselves the gift of time. What did we receive in return?

- Sweet, uplifting, evocative poetry; some from Mary Oliver, lots from us, her companions on the journey.
- Delicious, lovingly prepared and planned meals shared with friends both new and deepening (some were both).
- Bracing cold weather in the woods, along the river, and outside our windows while we toasted comfortably by the well-tended fireplace.
- Nature dressed in her best winter finery; beautiful, glistening snow with a diamond white full moon to illuminate it.
- Subtle, hitherto missed winter sounds. Blessings for the attentive. Lost on the efficient.
- Marvels, mysteries, memorable moments, "Ahas" and "Nu-uhs" too numerous to counts.

We did look, laugh and, like Oliver, now see our world in a reverent, new way. That's the faith-food we ingested to nourish our new hunger for finding blessings.

So we lit candles and gratefully prayed, "You are my beloved daughter; with you I am well pleased."

We found a wealth of blessings out there in the woods, or did they find us?

If you were not able to join us, see our video and poetry on the LVPC website. Come with us next year!☺

WHO YOU KNOW

BY ERIC
DIEKHANS



KIRSTEN GETTINGS

Kirsten Gettings has been a member of LVPC for almost a decade. She was married in the church and her children Kiera (5) and Aiden (10 months) were baptized here. Kirsten is an Elder, Chair of the Christian Nurture Committee and teaches Sunday school.

Where did you grow up?

Mercer Island in Washington State. We belonged to a large Presbyterian Church where my mom ran the children's programs. I guess I've almost come full circle. It was a beautiful place to grow up, but I love the diversity of LVPC.

What's your most vivid church memory from your childhood?

When I was a freshman in High School, I went to a weeklong church camp in Canada with some of my friends. We left at midnight and had to take a bus to a ferry, which took us out to an Island. It was the most amazing week for me. I had been confirmed already, but I made a whole new dedication to God. We each had to stand up and read a commitment letter, which made it even more meaningful.

What's the most interesting comment you've heard from your Sunday school students?

I asked them what they thought God smells like and somebody responded, "Fresh air."

What's the best advice you've ever received about parenting?

To remember that I am not perfect and parenting, like everything else, is a work in progress.

What do you look forward to doing most when spring finally arrives?

Taking the kids to the park! Aidan will most likely be walking when Spring comes and I don't think Kiera will stop running for a couple of days once warm weather arrives. It will be a blessing to us all.

How are you spending summer vacation?

I'll be teaching creative drama at a summer camp in Evanston. You can check it out at www.summerstuffdaycamps.com.☺

LVPC



ARTS

Kara Kesselring performs:

March 14, 21, 24, 6:00-9:30 p.m., Stetson's Chop House,
Chicago (312) 239-4491

John Vessels featured in:

Hello Dolly, March 25-May 2, Beef and Boards Dinner
Theater, Indianapolis, www.beefandboards.com.

MONEY



TALK

*A monthly update from LVPC's Finance Committee.
January 2010*

Member giving and other income:	\$27,431.84
Withdrawal from reserve accounts:	+ \$6,166.63
Total expenses:	- <u>\$24,856.50</u>
Net over/under budget:	\$6,450.34

Submission deadline for the April issue is March 15. Send
articles, calendar listings, rants, and raves to Eric Diekhans
at ericdiekhans@ameritech.net. ☯

CHIMES

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