



The Cuban church enters uncharted territory

August 5, 2015

Dear partners of God's mission in Cuba,

Normalized diplomatic relations between the United States and Cuba took another step forward on July 20th with the formal re-designation of the Cuban Interests Section in Washington, D.C., as its new embassy.... Secretary of State John Kerry is scheduled to attend a flag-raising ceremony at the new designated U.S. embassy in Havana on August 14th.

What's coming next is all new uncharted territory for the Cuban evangelical church. Organized religion has been active since 1982 when Fidel Castro gave the green light to begin operations after being shut down for the first 25 years of the Revolution. Now, an unprecedented window of opportunity is opening for growing God's church in Cuba. First, the church is expanding: currently two million people, or roughly 18 percent of the population, identify themselves as Protestant. And the government has started to permit churches to provide independent neighborhood humanitarian services such as transportation, meals, and care for elderly and disadvantaged Cubans.

The Cuban evangelical church will have an opportunity in mid-September to use Pope Francis' visit to leverage new opportunities to expand religious expression. EchoCuba is helping protestant leaders craft a strategy on how to approach the government to leverage the pope's visit. When the pope goes to Cuba in September, he will have a larger-than-usual influence over the Cuban government since he is receiving credit for brokering the beginning of the U.S.-Cuba normalization talks.

Protestant churches currently conduct neighborhood humanitarian services. They provide transportation, obtain medical supplies, and provide meals. Church-affiliated social services are permitted to receive educational, financial, and material support from sister organizations in the United States. In return, the Cuban government demands that church-affiliated organizations on the island serve people without regard to their religious beliefs.

But the church needs pastors and leaders with sound theological training to make the most of these new opportunities and shepherd their flocks with care. Sadly, many Cuban Christians remain vulnerable to the influence of cults that distort the truth of the Bible. That's why at EchoCuba, we have a strong ongoing commitment to provide protestant leaders with a solid foundation in God's Word to help ensure that the message of the Gospel is not compromised.

Thank you for expressing your love and concern through your support. Because of you, we are able to offer thousands of lost and hurting people in Cuba what they desperately need: the love of Jesus. And please keep in mind that we consider it an honor to prayerfully intercede on your behalf, so don't hesitate to let us know how we can be praying for you.

Grace, peace, and love be yours in abundance,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Teo A. Babun, Jr.', is written in a cursive style.

Dr. Teo A. Babun, Jr.
Chairman

EchoCuba is a ministry of Outreach Aid to the Americas, Inc.