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Evangelists and Bicycles for Cuba

BY CRISTINE ORILLOSA-THURBER

For 25 Andrews University Master of Divinity students and two Seminary faculty sponsors, March 15–25 was a journey of spiritual renewal as they embarked on the first Seminary study tour to Cuba. Participants were divided into five teams to conduct evangelistic meetings in Havana’s largest churches; each site hosted a student evangelist with the supporting team leading out in door-to-door visitation, worships, drama and children’s ministries. M.Div. student Alex Ruiz states, “There were many miracles, starting with the way we were united among the group. We were like a real family working together.”

Fernando Ortiz, director of the M.Div. program and study tour leader, says the purpose of the tour was to “enhance the student’s evangelistic, witnessing and church growth experience by providing the opportunity for real hands-on experience. It also was an initiative to help prepare participants for mission and ministry around the world.”

In the communities surrounding each church, the teams prayed with residents, studied the Bible and invited them to the evening meetings. While visiting a sick resident, M.Div. student Pierre Desruisseaux prayed fervently, claiming God’s healing power. A neighbor, who was a *santera* or spiritist, overheard the prayer and was so touched by it that she was convicted to attend the evening meeting and change her ways.

The teams and local church members started each day with prayer. They claimed the promise of the Holy Spirit to bless their plans. “What happened was nothing short of a miracle,” Fernando exclaims. “Residents in the surrounding communities started attending the meetings, and night after night the churches were packed to capacity. Through the workings of God’s Spirit, 100 precious individuals were baptized, and 100 more are getting ready to be baptized soon.”

The team also launched “Bikes for Cuba,” a project that excited the Andrews community. “It is quite difficult for



More than 50 pastors, Bible workers and ministerial students in the metropolitan Havana area received bicycles to assist in their ministry.

pastors and Bible workers to move from place to place [on foot] to visit their members and Bible study interests,” says Fernando. “Owning a car or a motorcycle is out of the equation as their \$20 monthly salary is hardly enough to buy food, and public transportation is scarce and unreliable.”

Andrews Seminary faculty, students and Pioneer Memorial Church members raised funds to buy 56 bicycles for

pastors, Bible workers and ministerial students in the metropolitan Havana area. Fernando reports, “These bicycles are, perhaps, the best investment an individual can make. A one-time donation of \$150, the cost of one bicycle, can potentially translate into hundreds of individuals for God’s kingdom.”

Bicycle recipients are able to double or triple their visits in a day. Presently, 300 pastors and Bible workers in Cuba are without transportation. “We want to provide a bicycle to each one of them to further advance the kingdom,” Fernando asserts. To learn more about the Bikes for Cuba project, visit <http://www.andrews.edu/mdiv/bikes> or write to mdiv@andrews.edu.

The Cuba study tour changed lives. M.Div. student Jon Remitera states, “I went to Cuba thinking I would go and help change lives, but I left having my own changed. God is moving in a powerful way in Cuba!”

Cristine Orillosa-Thurber is an administrative assistant with the Master of Divinity program at Andrews University.