

Care for Cuba

222 baptized during Seminary study tour

[Campus News](#) | Posted on April 21, 2017



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By: Samantha Angeles

222 new believers were baptized in Cuba at the culmination of a spring break mission trip hosted by the [Seventh-day Adventist Theological Seminary](#) on the campus of Andrews University.

For nine days, the team of 24 Seminary students and three faculty sponsors led six simultaneous evangelistic series in various parts of Holguin, Cuba. The team also gave away clothing, musical instruments, 100 bicycles, 20 computers and 12 tablet libraries to pastors and Bible workers who have no transportation or access to Bibles, devotionals or other ministry materials.

On the final night, the six groups joined together in a basketball arena for a worship service ending in a call to baptism, with over 2,000 in attendance. The next morning, after a Sabbath program in the same facility, 222 new believers were baptized.

“A few years ago, it was unthinkable to do religious services in a public arena,” says Fernando Ortiz, director of the MDiv program and Care for Cuba organizer. “This was only the second religious congress held in Holguin, and the first one was also Adventist-led. None of this would have been possible or even imaginable at the height of Fidel Castro’s power when public worship or religious activities in a public setting were forbidden.”

Ortiz led the first mission trip to Cuba in 1998. When he became the director of the MDiv program in the Seminary, he united his passion for preparing pastors for ministry with his call to meet the needs of the Adventist church in Cuba. The result was “Care for Cuba,” the yearly study tour that made history in 2013 as the first North American Adventist educational institution to reach Cuba in almost 50 years.

“For decades, Cuba felt forgotten by the world, even the Adventist world,” says Ortiz. “We could not go there or send money for decades, and now it is time to recoup what we haven’t been able to do for 50 years.”

Since Care for Cuba began in 2013, 120 seminarians and seven faculty members have done ministry in Cuba, resulting in over 800 baptisms and hundreds of Cuban pastors and Bible workers equipped to do more effective ministry.

One unique aspect of this year’s trip is the first Care for Cuba youth evangelistic effort, where Seminarians practiced creative evangelism techniques such as a Frisbee ministry. The efforts drew 60-80 youth, young adults and university students to a rented Quaker church each evening.

“It was a true inside look of how to do ministry,” says Samuel Ulett, a trip attendee who will graduate from the Seminary in December. “It was great learning experience and an opportunity to learn how to do ministry in a different environment.”

The trip not only benefits the Cuban people, but also transforms the ministry of the pastors-in-training who attend.

“What I see for myself in the future is having a church where we communicate and interact with the community like we did in Cuba,” says Michael Shelton, a 2017 trip attendee. “If there’s anything I learned from going to Cuba, it’s the fact that people are longing for healthy relationships. They don’t want to know how much you know about the Bible—they want to know that you care about them, and that’s what it’s all about.”

Leif Cano, who will also graduate from the Seminary in December, agreed: “In the future, I want to do more of this with my church—go out to different places, and reach out in our community to those who are in need.”

Past Seminary students have been so inspired by the trip that they have organized Care for Cuba fundraisers and even led their own mission trips to Cuba.

“The trip has such a big impact on the students because they learn the New Testament model of evangelism, which cannot go wrong anywhere” Ortiz says. “They learn that

evangelism is a lifestyle. They may not win 222 souls in one year, but they can do effective outreach.”

“I wish I had more money, just so I could give it to this ministry,” says Uzziel Maldonado, a 2017 trip attendee. “Our money can only accomplish a little here, but over there, it can do so much. There, you can fund someone’s tuition, or even feed a family for a month with \$25. God’s work is advancing in Cuba, and all that money goes to God’s cause.”

Care for Cuba’s goal is to give 1,000 bicycles, 500 tablet libraries and 500 computers to the pastors and Bible workers in Cuba. To donate bicycles (\$150), tablets (\$100) or computers (\$100) on behalf of your family, church or business, visit CareforCuba.org. Your dollars will impact lives for eternity!

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