

Submitted by a Parishioner

On our most recent trip to Cuba, March 9-13, Judy, Jackie Watts, and I were able to not only bring in lots of much needed items but also to pay a visit to both of our companion churches in Ceballos and in Baraguá. Let me start off, however, by giving a HUGE shout-out to all of you amazing and generous folks from HCE who donated so many items! You have no idea how helpful you were and how much the people were helped. God bless you all for your love and generosity!

We arrived on Saturday, March 9th in the company of 5 other people into the city of Camagüey which is about 2 hours east of our companion churches and were met by our priest, Rev. Haydée Lugo Marrero. We were also met by 2 other priests who were there to pick up the other 5 people and take them to their respective companion churches in the towns of La Gloria and Vertientes. My goal on this trip was to bring along as many other people as possible and to have them go to their churches. Spread to love, as it were.

Then we made the 2-hour trek to Ceballos to our church of San Miguel y Todos los Ángeles, stopping on the way to drop off some items at the home of our other companion priest, Fr. Roberto Fayas in the town of Ciego de Avila. Fr. Roberto's main church is the church of San Lucas in that town. Then we hit the road again for the 20 km trip north to Ceballos where we stayed for the 5 days we were in Cuba. Besides attending the Sunday service at the church of San Miguel, making a trip to our other companion church, Santiago Apóstol in Baraguá and having a meeting with the women of the church of San Miguel, our 'mission' was not to help in the construction of the church, install a water system or build a fence around the property since that was all done years ago. The purpose of our visit was mainly to bring in the supplies, which included OTC meds (lots of them!), art supplies for the children's ministry, and books of Common Prayer in Spanish. It was also to hang out with our church family and to receive the many visitors from the community who came to see us. The people of Cuba and especially in small towns such as Ceballos and Baraguá feel so isolated from the rest of the world, so our presence there is a real shot in the arm for them. Friends in Ceballos have told me that the town really comes to life when we come to town. We feel the love as they receive ours.

Which brings me to our next trip which is tentatively planned for the week of Thanksgiving in November, specifically November 23rd-29th or thereabouts. Judy and Jackie are already signed up and I hope to be able to encourage others to come along with us both from HCE and other churches in the Diocese. No project is planned, but there may be one at one of the many additional churches we could possibly visit beyond our two. We are hoping to have a brand-new church bus in Cuba which would greatly facilitate our trip to and from Camagüey as to other parts of the region around our companion church. We will not be making the trip to Havana on this trip. That one will be next March when I hope to attend the annual church convention at the Cathedral in Havana.

Judy, Jackie, and I will be attending the Gala Cubana at Holy Trinity Church in Gainesville on the evening of April 12th and then I will be holding the area Cuba Committee meeting the next day in the parish hall of that church. By attending the Gala I hope to get some pointers to be able to do a similar fundraiser at HCE for our churches in Cuba.