



March, 2016

Dear partners of God's mission in Cuba,

Earlier this year, we met in Miami with representatives of the largest evangelical denominations in Cuba. They shared how the recent shifts in diplomacy have generated a remarkably heightened interest among Americans about the church in Cuba. Indeed the whole world seems drawn to Cuba, not only by the country's proximity to the U.S., its beautiful Spanish architecture, 1950s romantic appeal, and history of fraternity with the church in the U.S., but also by an untapped opportunity for modern ministry in all sectors of society. Cuban church leaders welcome this interest. However, they are concerned that many well-meaning Americans don't fully understand the context and the limitations of their work on the island.

In fact, they are requesting that U.S. churches take some time to understand the specific circumstances of the church in Cuba. Learning about the complex challenges the church in Cuba faces will prevent misunderstandings and generate more beneficial outcomes. For example, they should understand that all religious activity in Cuba is overseen and strictly managed by the Office of Religious Affairs (ORA). In cooperation with other government agencies, the ORA issues permits to churches and religious organizations for activities ranging from clerical travel to conducting a concert to running a youth camp to importing food for humanitarian aid.

From what we have seen here at EchoCuba, the jubilant mood of the international community is masking the reality on the ground: at this time the Cuban government is not willing to bend existing rules that control religious activities. Under the current system, a foreign church or religious organization must partner with a registered local denomination to carry out social, religious, or humanitarian work in the country.

I trust you will join me in deepening our understanding of the real-world challenges the church in Cuba faces, so that our desire to serve can shift from proudly announcing, "We know what is best," to humbly inquiring, "How can we help?"

I want to again thank you for expressing your love and concern through your faithful support of all our programs. Because of you, we are able to offer thousands of lost and hurting people in Cuba with what they desperately need: the love of Jesus.

Please remember to send your confidential prayer requests to Mary@echocuba.org. We consider it an honor to prayerfully intercede on your behalf.

Grace, peace, and love be yours in abundance,

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

Dr. Teo A. Babun, Jr.
Chairman