

Letter from the Editor

Since the transfer of Cuban power announced on July 31, ECHO-Cuba has been monitoring information on Fidel's health while continuing to encourage, support and assist our partner ministries within Cuba. Over the past few weeks the most reliable information points to Raul Castro carrying the Cuban torch into the near future without the return of his older brother. As Raul gives direction to the ailing economy and government, the world watches with anticipation: Will Cuba open to the West? Will the US embargo end? Will it adopt a Western economic approach or swing Eastward? Indicators point toward a China type of economy with government guided, limited economic freedoms under a Communist umbrella.

But what about the Cuban Church? What will the future hold for the Cuban Body of Christ? Over the past few years, restrictions have increased rather than loosened. Financial and material support from outside of Cuba has once again been limited, criticized and even identified as "anti-revolutionary" (anti-Cuban). Non-Cuban ministry representatives have been black listed and denied entry with increasing frequency, and cordial contact between Cuban ministry leaders and foreigners has resulted in stern warnings, fines or worse. Our prayers are that this is temporary -a calcu-

lated short-term step for control, but as we ourselves learn from the experiences of Churches in communist China, the outlook is not good. Please pray for the Cuban Church. For the increased struggles and restrictions they face now, as well as those of the future. Pray for wisdom and discernment on behalf of Western Churches that will attempt to minister in Cuba, many of them for the first time. Pray that it would be God's kingdom they seek to advance in His wisdom, with an understanding of the Cuban Church's situation and history. Overall, pray that Christ would be glorified and His Church Body strengthened as Cuba steps through the next door of Providence.

Thank you for your partnership with ECHO-Cuba, and please keep our ministry in your prayers as well. Pray for our work in Cuba, in providing assistance to churches and Christian ministries with the Lord's guidance. Consider visiting and encouraging the Cuban Christians, or partnering with ECHO-Cuba on one of our many projects. Pray for our work in the US as we offer educational programs to the very Churches that will seek to go.

Now is a key time for Cuba. Please pray...learn...and then pray more.



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ECHO's Purpose and Vision

Things on the island of Cuba may be changing, but ECHO's mission remains the same:

Ministry Vision: Building and empowering the Cuban Evangelical Christian Church, and uniting those who can help, with Cuban Christians who need help.

Ministry Mission: ECHO-Cuba is a mission community of Christ-centered people committed to reaching the people of Cuba with the Gospel of Jesus Christ. We are strengthened by our compassion for the Evangelical Christian Church. We perform this mission through programs, which promote Christian education, capital projects, social & human services, humanitarian needs, agricultural entrepreneurship, and church organizational capacity.

Recent Highlights

Cuban Church Relations: Protestant pastor, Carlos Lamelas, went on trial on December 4, accused of "Human Trafficking" but had charges against him dropped. The Lamelas case is unusual, as thus far the Cuban government has not targeted religious leaders for imprisonment (Lamelas served 128 days). It's particularly noteworthy because his denomination belongs to the Cuban Council of Churches which has historically enjoyed close ties with the Cuban governing bodies. The move appears to be part of wider efforts to restrict religious freedom across the country.

A Saint Goes Home: In November, Dulce Montalvan Diez, founder and director of MANA ministries in Cuba went home with the Lord following a battle with cancer. Dulce, which means "sweet" in Spanish, had many years of faithful service both with the Assemblies of God Church as well as the Cuba wide ministry of MANA which assists the elderly and sick as they present the Gospel of Christ. Her daughter Esther continues running the ministry with the assistance of those the Lord has placed around her.

Pastors Trained in Central America: Last November, in collaboration with Capital & Council ECHO-Cuba ran the first of what we hope will be many strategic training programs for Cuban pastors. The program includes transporting pastors from Cuba to a central American country for two weeks of pastoral training. Please keep this promising program in your prayers.

Cuban Church Asks for "Ley de Culto": A group of pastors in Cuba are circulating a petition requesting that the government formalizes a law to spell-out what is and is not allowed for Cuban churches. The petition notes that permits regarding church activities are allocated differently throughout the island with no uniformity causing confusion and allowing for abuse by law enforcement. The request asks for specifics about church construction, worship practices, etc.

Ministry Projects

ECHO-Cuba assists churches of various denominations throughout the island by enabling them to carry out their God given callings through financial, and material partnerships. Projects range from micro-enterprise development, to after school Christian programs (with a meal) to purchasing and delivering nutritional supplements to those in need, to sponsoring pastoral conferences -all with the purpose of furthering the Gospel of Jesus Christ. These programs are made possible through our partnerships with churches and people like you. As Cuba faces change in the coming year, please pray for these ministries and consider adopting one yourself or with your church. Contact our office for details.

Traveling to Cuba

ECHO Cuba's Ministry Trip program is still going strong despite current events. Now, more than ever, the Cuban Church is desperate for encouragement and ministry. There is no need for you to have previous experience traveling to Cuba, or knowledge of Spanish, a missions trip to Cuba is possible through ECHO Cuba's Ministry Trip program.

Contact ECHO-Cuba

For more information on any of the above articles or ministry possibilities please contact us at: info@echocuba.org or call 305-884-0441

Vision for a Christian Cuba Blog / Website

<http://visionforchristiancuba.blogspot.com>

Vision for a Christian Cuba is an initiative organized by a group of concerned Christians from different denominations for the purpose of reaching the people of Cuba with the Gospel of Jesus Christ. ECHO Cuba is proud to be a partner with this amazing ministry and we are excited to announce the launch of a new Vision for Christian Cuba "Blog", an interactive, networking web platform for those who are currently involved in Cuba ministry as well as those desiring to learn about ministry in Cuba.

This blog has been specifically designed to provide non-political, Christ-centered information and mutual assistance on Cuba and ministry in Cuba, and will grow and adapt to future needs and situations since it is "user driven". We are excited about the potential this has to serve so many who have a heart for Cuba.

What we need are contributors. This site feeds off of the contributions of the Christian community who want to see Cuba reached with the gospel. All entries are screened first and may be posted anonymously or under an alias. If you would like to link your ministry's web site to the blog, post a link to your own website, or participate in spreading the word, please email us at: news@echocuba.org.



Sponsor a Laptop for a Cuban Seminary New program as of January 22, 2007

Through special arrangement with USA Notebook, Inc. from Pompano Beach, Fla, **ECHO-Cuba has the opportunity to acquire Compaq EVO N600C laptops with XP Pro, 20 GB Hard Drive** and a one year guarantee (a value of \$700) for Cuban Seminaries. On top of this we install **Bible software** such as: five Bible translations including the Spanish NIV and Greek, Bible/Hebrew dictionaries, history of Christianity, concordance, commentaries, studies on basic theology, maps, studies on biblical mission and more! **Our cost? Around \$300. each!** A gift of \$300 hand delivers this powerful tool to a Christian Seminary in Cuba. Please consider gifting one yourself, or with a study group or Church. Contact our office for details. Your gift gives a powerful tool in helping prepare Pastors for the ministry!