

Cuba

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their lodging and presented the week's agenda.

Visiting President of Cuba National Churches

The first visit was with Rev. Maykel Báez Bruffau, Pastor Iglesia Bautista "El Jordan". Pastor Maykel Fraternidad de Iglesias Bautistas de Cuba (President of Cuba National Churches) carried us to Guanabacoa, La Habana, Cuba to visit his office and conference center where people come daily to learn about the gospel of Christ.

After an engaging roundtable discussion about the state of affairs of the Cuban churches, their outreach ministry in the inner city and urban area, he eagerly shared his future plans for improvements to his conference center starting with the newly replaced water barrels holding the water for the facility.

The water for drinking in Cuba presents great concern, generally attributed to the plastic used in their piping and possible lead contamination. Therefore, Pastor Mayel was overjoyed to share pictures showing new future designs for living quarters and to show the new water filtration system installed on the property. His heart's desire is to have a conference center that is conducive to the growth of his teaching and preaching of the gospel, and churches worldwide become more ecumenical. He said: "I want to teach the people the true gospel of Jesus Christ."

Martin Luther King Center

The delegation then visited the Martin Luther King Center. The center is a macro ecumenical association of Christian inspiration. Since April 25, 1987, it has nurtured the ethics of liberation.

The foundation is based upon popular education and a critical liberating, and contextualized theology. Paulo Freire led the discussions about the center's five major programs: Socio-theological and Pastoral Reflection and Training, Popular Education and Accompaniment to Local Experiences, Solidarity, Sustainability and Organization Development, and Popular Communication.

"We left the center filled with pride because not only was Dr. King's ideology advocating the rights of all human beings to live a full life, without exclusion or discriminations, and in harmony with nature still making a difference in America, but Dr. King was right: 'Love is the only force capable of transforming an enemy into a friend,'" Rev. Williams said.

Next the delegation visited La Margarita and the church of Pastor Zenaida.

In the sanctuary

After dinner the delegation entered the sanctuary filled to capacity and overflowing to the outside with members anticipating the evening message rendered by the Rev. Dr. Gloria L. Thomas and music by the Rev. Dr. Lamonte Williams. There was a spirited praise and worship service already in progress. There were songs of praise, faith, and trust in our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ.

The evening message was titled, "Someone Needs to See Your Faith in Action." The text was found in Mark 2:1-12. The sermon embraced the possibility of the embargo being lifted and normalization affecting the political, social, and economical structures in Cuba ... in this context meaning that they would be able to conduct business openly in the world including the United States and dialogue with their country's decision makers concerning the operation and growth of the churches. They were reminded that this could possibly mean more growth in the churches or a decline in church attendance.

However, the text was used to remind them that like minds, hearts that desire to follow through on the true mission (teaching and preaching about the love of Christ and God's salvation through Him for the world) operating in God's word, and having the same motivation to succeed is a formula destined for success. Nothing could stop them - not pride, culture, or people - nothing could stop them from reaching their goal of bringing lost souls into the presence of Jesus. Jesus the great physician is not willing that anyone should perish.

Pastors Zenaida and Santiago assured Dr. Thomas that this was a timely message appreciated and received by the church.

Dr. Williams used the moment to emphasize the connection of the African-American Old Negro Spiritual and Hymns to the struggle of liberation. He used songs like "Oh, Oh, Fix Me" as a moment of critical reflection on how change is possible if The

delegation only believe.

Also, songs like "Oh, Freedom Over Me" were used to educate the Cubans of the tenacity the Africans embodied on toward racial injustice and oppression. A brief homily was given before each song to demonstrate that the hymns and negro spirituals were the language of the historical African-American Church.

Dr. Williams also incorporated some modern contemporary songs showing the changes in the music genre of the African-American Church throughout its inception.

Songs like "Come on and Bless the Lord with me" integrated with the traditional Hymn "How Great Thou Art" were received with great inspiration. The Baptist Organization made the request for Dr. Williams and a delegation to return to do a weeklong music workshop to further their education on the African-American tradition of music.

Anniversary celebration

Next the delegation visited Pastor Mayel's church, celebrating its 48th anniversary of sharing (Capacitandonos y Mostrando el Mensaje del Reino) unity in the church. They experienced a concert of African and Cuban songs under the direction of Rev. Dr. Lamonte Williams.

That night, Dr. Williams played and taught words to the receptive congregation to some old African spirituals like "Fix Me Lord, Fix Me" and "Hallelujah." The music ministry assisted in translating the songs to Spanish and the spirit moved Dr. Williams to sing interchangeably from Spanish

to English on the songs.

Still feeling the high energy and excitement inspired earlier by President Obama's visit to Havana, the Ministerial Delegation visited the U.S. Embassy.

"We were greeted by American Security Officers working there and found them to be very friendly while maintaining an atmosphere of very strict security," said Dr. Williams.

The delegation was advised to make an appointment to visit the embassy. However, the delegation was permitted to take photos outside the gate.

The delegation was also informed that U.S. citizens (not on a religious visa) are encouraged to contact and register with the American Citizens Services (ACS) to obtain updated information on travel and security within the country.

Not the Cuba envisioned

The delegation left Cuba realizing that it was not the Cuba members had envisioned, rather it was more progressive than they had thought. There were several different modes of transportation around the city: old cars from the 50's used for taxis (most in need of repair), buses some double decked, carts driven by bicycle and horse. Many of the young people had cell phones (wore the clothes and hair styles "rocked" by the youth in America), and the hotels had direct Internet allowing people to send and receive emails. Some of the restaurants offered menus including lobster, salmon, spaghetti, and meatballs, hamburgers, French fries, and other varieties of food that

Americans are familiar with.

Dr. Williams said: "The money was a surprise when we learned that the CUC money has a slightly higher value than our American money."

"Moreover, we realized that the people were very loving and respectful of Americans, and our President Barack Obama. People in the churches are committed to serving the God of love and preaching the true gospel."

"On the day we left, they wanted us to bring you this message: 'We have the same Holy Spirit and we serve the same God in Cuba that you worship there in your churches in America.'"

Dr. Williams, second vice president of the Ministers' Conference of Winston Salem and Vicinity, was a delegate for the Ministers' Conference. Another goal of the trip was to establish a religious partnership with the Ministers' Conference.

There is mutual agreement between the U.S. and Cuban religious organizations that there is a need for a religious partnership. Furthermore, there was inspiring collaborative dialogue from Dr. Williams and the Cuban Pastors for partnerships with the United Holy Church of America Inc. Future meetings are underway for a week long revival in Cuba. The Prophetic Social Justice mission Trip was successful and met the objective to bring social transformation in the lives of the Cubans.

More information, pictures, and dialogue can be obtained by contacting the Rev. Dr. Lamonte Williams via email at revklwms@hotmail.com or 336-528-4570.



Photo by Timothy Ramsey

Rev. Leach gives sermon during service

Installation

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churches more often and get a feel for the community. Horton said she wants to get to know the people she is here to serve.

A committee of nurses, physicians and clergy chose Horton to succeed Rev. Dr. Lee Dukes, who recently retired after 35 years of ministry.

"It was a beautiful day and I'm even more aware of how blessed I am," said Horton. "Seeing all of my friends and colleagues from Lexington and Winston, I feel covered by God's grace. When people cooperate with you it's like an extra bonus. I'm grateful to have such supportive people around me."

Horton was showered with kind words and well wishes throughout the service. Representatives from the Ministers' Conference of Winston Salem and Vicinity, the Lexington Community Minister's

Conference, co-workers from Wake Forest Baptist Health, and members from her home church, New Bethel Baptist, came to support Horton.

"She is the embodiment of love and love does not face any barriers. She is the ultimate bridge builder and whether it's within the hospital or within the community, her love will transcend all boundaries and make that network of caring happen," said Jeremy Moseley, Director of FaithHealth Community at Wake Forest Baptist Health-Winston.

Rev. Dr. Dennis Leach, Sr. of Morning Star Missionary Baptist Church in Winston-Salem delivered the sermon focusing on the partnership of worship and work and how they are closely related. Leach said "It's a marvelous opportunity for her to touch the lives of people who are hurting and sick. The doctors are there but oftentimes people need a minister there to share inspiration and just listen."

When it was time for Horton to speak, she expressed her gratitude for everyone in attendance for their support throughout the process. She said it was an "honor and a privilege" to work with her colleagues from the hospital each and every day. Horton gave a special thanks to administrative assistant Kathy James, whom she called a "gift from God" for all of her assistance.

When asked about Horton, James said, "She is great and I knew from the beginning she was great. She has such a kind soul and a big soul, I know she will do excellent."

"It makes me feel very good on the inside and outside," said Horton's husband, George. "It also makes me feel a little nervous because my wife is going on a new journey and for a husband you can't help but worry about your wife as she moves on in life. With God's help and with everyone's prayers, she will do well."

Lesson

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"such is the kingdom of God." This is not to say that the kingdom is full of children, but of those who respond to Him with the kind of trust children give good parents. Simple childlike faith is what will help get us into heaven. After rebuking the disciples, Jesus took kids in His lap and blessed them. Jesus' concern for the children indicates God's concern for all people. Our mission, as Christians, is to people of all walks of life.

A certain ruler, a certain man, a certain woman ... these certain people are of little consequence in identity, they could be you or me, but the question, the action, or the desired outcome surrounding them is what is significant. The "question" here starts with flattery, "Good Master" and then identifies what is wanted: "what shall I do to inherit eternal life?" (Luke 18:18). Of course Jesus is not flattered and does not answer the man directly. He indirectly points out the man's lack of preparedness to receive, knowing that the man thinks himself completely ready. He acknowledges to Jesus' reference to the command-

ments that he follows them all. Jesus says good, here's what's left then for you to do. Relive yourself of your treasure here on earth and help the needy. By so doing you will gain treasure in heaven and be free of the weight associated with earthly treasures and you may follow me (Luke 18:22). Wealth can be, it doesn't have to be, but it can be a hindrance or a danger to its possessor. "Christ was not teaching that it is difficult for one who trusts in riches to enter the kingdom. He was showing that it was utterly impossible." (Pentecost, The Words and Works of Jesus Christ, Zondervan)

Who then can be saved? Don't try to figure it out ... God has already worked it out (Luke 18:27).

For Your Consideration: Why was Jesus eager to bless the children? What does it mean to be a child of God?

Life's Application: We tend to complicate life sometimes by over thinking. Simply put, "When we trust in the son, we are reconciled to the father (see Romans 5:10-11; 2Corinthians 5:18-21). We need to free our minds and lose ourselves in Him. We can then approach God with eagerness and sincerity. Just as trusting children approach their parents.

Rel. Calendar

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anniversary celebration will include a historical photography and artifacts display from 1871 through 2016 on Saturday, May 21 from 10 a.m. until noon. Anniversary Day is casual attire. A cookout luncheon and a Ministry Fair concludes the celebration. Pastor Jenkins, Anniversary Chairperson Sheila Robinson, the Anniversary Committee and the St. Paul Church family invite you to join them for this historic celebration. For additional information, please contact: Sheila Robinson, Anniversary Chair via the church at 336-723-4531.

May 22 Initial sermon

On Sunday, May 22 at 4:30 p.m., Wilhelmina W. Gilliard will preach her initial sermon at New Life Community Church Ministries located at 390 Parkwood Avenue. The public is cordially

invited to attend. The host pastor is Rev. Anthony E. Johnson, Sr.

May 22 All-music service

At the Unitarian Universalist Fellowship of Winston-Salem, 4055 Robinhood Road, the UU choir, directed by Mignon Dobbins, will present "Yearning to Breathe Free," its annual all-music service, at 10:30 a.m. on Sunday, May 22. Early services will resume after Labor Day. At the 9 a.m. Forum, John Cavallo will review the book "How the Other Half Banks: Exclusion, Exploitation and the Threat to Democracy," by Mehrsa Baradaran. More information visit www.uufws.org.

May 22 Choir anniversary

New Birth Worship Center, 1033 Newbirth Drive, East Bend, invites everyone to join them on Sunday, May 22 at 3:30 p.m. to celebrate the Youth Choir's

19th anniversary. The guest choirs are Mt. Olive Baptist Church Youth Choir, Winston Salem, and Tabernacle United Church of Christ, Yadkinville. Dr. James L.E. Hunt is the pastor. For additional information, please call 336-699-3583 or visit www.newbirthworshipcenter.org.

May 22 Pastor appreciation service

St. James A.M.E. Church will celebrate the seventh anniversary of the Rev. Dr. Steven L. Lyons on May 22 during the 10 a.m. worship service. Dr. Lyons was appointed the Pastor of St. James in 2009 at the 116th Session of the Western North Carolina Annual Conference of the African Methodist Episcopal Church. The preacher for the occasion is the Rev. Herman L. Gladney, senior pastor of Emmanuel A.M.E. Church, Fredericksburg, Virginia. The public is invited to attend. St. James is at the corner of Patterson Avenue and 15th Street directly across from the U.S. Post Office.

May 22 School of Ministry

Holy Trinity Full Gospel Fellowship Center will have School of Ministry in session Sunday, May 22, 4 pm - 5 p.m. The church is located at 5307 Peters Creek Pkwy. The facilitator will be Pastor Richard C. Miller, Sr. Come grow with us in the word of God as we study Biblical principles to enhance your daily life. For more information please contact the church office at 336-784-9347.

May 22 Missionary Union meeting

The Forsyth County Missionary Union meeting will convene Sunday, May 22 at 3 p.m. at Providence Baptist Church, 319 Nelson Street, Kernersville. Youth and young adults will meet at 1:30 p.m. Seniors will meet at 3 p.m. Carolyn Kearns is president of the Providence Union. The president of the Forsyth County Union is Lenner P Jefferies.