

Cuba Sees House Church Revival Despite Oppression

Economic reforms in Cuba are well underway, but they don't appear to be having the intended effect.

Raul Castro's regime implemented massive layoffs of hundreds of thousands of public employees that were meant to be absorbed by Cuba's almost non-existent private sector. The resulting poverty has given way to despair.

Meanwhile, churches are seeing growth. For years, they pushed the legal limits just by meeting, and it's still dangerous for students, religious teachers and leaders, especially in rural areas, to be outspoken Christians.

According to WorldServe Ministries, Christians are considered counter-revolutionary, meaning they may be unemployable, denied access to housing and put under surveillance. The government has also placed restrictions on the church, thus concealing success and growth by limiting the size of each church.

Even with these challenges, WorldServe's John Dyck says, "God is sovereign in these things. And as events in Cuba are changing politically and socio-economically, it opens up opportunities for us to make the gospel even more relevant to people there."

Cuba's new spiritual dynamic includes rapid house church (casas cultos) growth, evangelistic missions, and relief work and community development. Dyck goes on to explain, "In speaking to pastors and leaders, they talk frequently about the fact that people in the midst of difficult economic times are realizing that they don't necessarily have a lot of power in their own lives to change things, so they turn to that spiritual side."

As a result, revival is springing up in Cuba, and many are coming to Christ. "A few months ago," Dyck says, "there was a series of amazing meetings in Guantanamo: a young lady was called by God to speak to crowds of people, and that spread to other parts of eastern Cuba, particularly. That's one area of revival. There are other parts where pastors are going in to plant new churches."

Resourcing this growth is a challenge. "We're hoping that God will open doors for us to, in the end, send about 100,000 Bibles into Cuba," says Dyck. "It can be very difficult to get a hold of a Bible because there are no Christian bookstores. So be praying that God works this out so that we can bring in the Word of God and make it available to people."

A visit last month with Tyndale House publishers and the head translator of the Spanish Contemporary Language Bible has brought some exciting news. "We had an opportunity to meet with over 800 pastors and leaders in different conferences throughout a week of meetings and discuss what this Bible could be," says Dyck. "These pastors looked at this as an opportunity for the gospel to become something more contemporary for people who are reading the scriptures."

In order to get permission to bring in 100,000 Bibles, WorldServe is working through the Bible Commission, which is part of the Council of Churches in the government branch. The cooperation has opened many new avenues of opportunity.

Dyck urges prayer over the whole project. There's a lot at stake. "Once the man on the street is able to read a Bible himself," he says, "I really believe that God will use His Word to reach people."