

Cuba Visit, June 2026

Here are some reflections I wanted to share with you from this visit with our water partners and LWW staff. I am happy to go deeper on any questions or comments you have.

The visit was both beautiful and heartbreaking.

The contrasts on this visit were even more stark than previous visits. It was deeply joyful to see old friends, and incredibly hard to see how much they're carrying. Whenever we ask how they are, they smile and say, 'I'm fine...and that's half the story.' The other half is written on their faces and in everything around them. They're resilient beyond belief, but the suffering is real. I wish they didn't have to be so resilient.

The first church we visited was El Jordán Baptist Church in Guanabacoa, Havana. Here we saw the Gospel in action.

Not because of the water system (though that was part of the story).

What we witnessed was a church opening its doors to unhoused people.

Providing them with space at the table where they could eat a good meal and just talk to each other, visiting, sharing a laugh, sharing their reality.

Showers.

Fresh clothes while their clothes were washed.

Haircuts. A pastor who learned barbering from YouTube because his neighbors needed haircuts.

Church members who initially resisted...what would happen if we opened our doors.

...and then, their hearts were softened and they were...transformed.

One of the pastors gave us a tour and showed us a space behind the sanctuary. I saw an uneven dirt floor, concrete block walls in the making, and supporting beams. She saw a dining room for their neighbors and a space for them to gather. They just got solar power last month so they can keep the church ministries going despite regular blackouts.

Then we visited God's Mission Church in Marianao, Havana.

They used to meet in a house, then the pandemic forced them to meet under the canopy of a giant almendro tree on the edge of a nearby park. They requested and were granted some property by the local government to build a church on an abandoned space next to the park. Construction began. Then a hurricane slammed into the island and that giant almendro that had provided them with shade for their gatherings destroyed 75% of the structure they had built. They didn't let that devastation stop them. They began rebuilding. The new sanctuary was finished in four months.

I asked Pastor Eris how they were able to accomplish that. "With the help of the Lord and many friendly hands." He showed me a photograph on his phone—people working to rebuild the walls. "I took that picture at 1:15 in the morning."

With the help of the Lord and many friendly hands. Now, this church is holding up their hand to volunteer to be a water church, to serve their neighbors safe drinking water. They too serve people whose home is the pavement. They have a ministry to help families who have a loved one in prison and to help people who have recently been released. We are excited that Trinity Pres in Atlanta has visited with them and they are exploring being water partners.

I expected survival. I witnessed flourishing.

Despite shortages...

Despite blackouts...

Despite gasoline at extraordinary prices...

To these, the churches are saying, "Are we the shortages? Are we going to let isolation define us? No! We are so much more than that."

These churches aren't retreating.

They're expanding ministries.

They're dreaming.

They're welcoming neighbors.

They are producing astonishing amounts of clean water.

They're growing.

Solar has become a resurrection story.

Last year, we had 72 water partners. Zero with solar power. All of them struggling to different degrees with power outages—they have to have power for the pump and ozonator—no power means no clean water. Limited power means rushing to the church (even at 3 am) when the power comes back on so they can process a batch of purified water before electricity is cut off again. Solar powering 72 water partners? A bit daunting to say the least. Moraima encouraged us: This will be difficult, yes. But not impossible.

People showed up ready to lend a hand. An individual who had traveled to Cuba was inspired when they got to taste and see our partners' work firsthand, LWW water partner churches and Cuba Partner Network churches across the US, the Presbytery of East Tennessee, a Korean Church in Toronto, Presbyterian Women of Canada, an organization and a church in Germany, just to name a few.

Today, fifty-five of the seventy-five water partners have solar power. And we are still counting. In fact, that figure is probably already out-of-date—four systems have gone in just this past week, including one that was installed yesterday in a nursing home in Colón. Another is being installed today in Sancti Spiritus. A solar miracle.

Our church helped make that happen.

This matters. It's saving lives. Sometimes it's easy for us to forget the tangible impact of generosity, of paying the blessing forward. This is part of our why, part of our calling—coming alongside our partners so they can be a beacon of light and hope in the midst of all the struggles.

Visits matter. Far more than we realize.

Moraima said, "LWW and all of you and our partners have given me a reason for my life." She and Yosmel described partner visits as "spiritual gasoline for the months ahead." They know it's going to get harder before it gets better. Simply showing up becomes fuel to get them through what they know is going to be a challenging season.

A sermon on the harvest.

On Sunday, it was a joy to worship with El Redentor, a water partner in Matanzas. Pastor Anays was very under the weather so her husband, Gustavo, an elder of the church, brought the message. He gave me permission to share this. The sermon was on Matthew 9:35–10:8. The harvest is plentiful, but the laborers are few. I've heard this scripture preached many times in my life, but Gustavo helped me hear these words in a new way. He said that Christ wasn't looking for perfect people. He was looking for laborers - ordinary people. People like us. Jesus called His disciples to practice what Gustavo described as "*love moving*." Love that asks, how can I help? How can I show compassion? How can I care for my neighbor? Love that refuses to stay comfortable or idle. Love that becomes action.

This, he said, is our true purpose.

As I sat in that worship service, I thought of all of our Living Waters for the World family--the volunteers, our trainers, all the project leaders, the health educators, system installers, all of our partners around the world serving clean water, our church members who faithfully pray for us and help us in little and big ways. Partners who have answered Christ's call by helping bring clean water to God's people all over the world.

Embodying *love moving*. Walking alongside each other as partners. Faith becomes action. Reminding us that this is **all-of-us work**. None of us will solve these challenges alone. We are stronger together, and I am deeply grateful for the faithfulness. People willing to *just let love move*.

What does "love moving" look like to you?

Love that refuses to stay comfortable.

Love that becomes action.

As Gustavo preached, I wasn't just thinking about our sisters and brothers in Cuba. I was thinking about us. I was thinking about everyone in our church who packs filters, gives money, travels, prays, raises funds, writes notes, purchases and packs medicines, and welcomes partners. That's love moving. We don't solve Cuba's problems. We simply join God where God is already at work.

If I were going to try to leave you with one thing to hold onto, it would be this:

The greatest miracle I saw wasn't solar panels or water systems (though those are miracles for sure). It was churches refusing to let hardship determine how generously they love their neighbors. I came home convinced once again that we have much to learn from our sisters and brothers in Cuba.

The water systems almost faded into the background. Not because they aren't important—they are life-changing—but because they have become part of something larger. Clean water is creating the conditions for ministry. Solar isn't the story; it's what enables the story. The story is the Church: ordinary people embodying Christ's compassion under extraordinary pressure.

Our congregation isn't simply funding infrastructure. Through our partnership with Living Waters for the World and with our water partners in Cuba, it's strengthening local churches so they can keep being the church without walls in their own communities, a beacon of hope and light. That is "love moving" in the very best and most tangible form.

This visit was "spiritual gasoline" for me as well, for our joint calling. We have work to do. The harvest *is* plentiful. So many people are still waiting for clean water and we have partners in communities around the world who are ready to step up and serve. We're going to need more laborers. More people who hear the call and say yes to walking alongside them. I came home with renewed determination to do my part to share, invite, and make room at the table for new as well as seasoned laborers for the months and years ahead. May it be so.