FPC members travel to Cuba, Feb.8–14, 2023

Faith, hope, love, and friendship shine at Juan G. Hall Church in Cárdenas, Cuba, amid extreme shortages and the high cost of necessities—including food. God speaks in this community.

Each day of our trip brought new encounters with stark reality and hope. Pastor Alison Infante Zamora guided us through Cardenas, Matanzas, and Varadero. At a beach, we prayed silently for the migrants who out of desperation leave in makeshift boats. We divided up and visited pastoral teams in three homes. We learned about each other's families and lives in sometimes halting Spanish and English. At the Evangelical Theological Seminary in Matanzas we met with Pastor Carlos Ham, who preached at FPC last May. On Saturday, we participated in church programs for senior citizens and children. That night a renowned jazz trio gave an extraordinary concert in the courtyard of the church. On Sunday we helped celebrate the 123rd anniversary of Juan G. Hall with a moving service and lunch afterward for the entire congregation. Your generous donations made the luncheon feast possible. After Cardenas, we spent two nights in Havana with our tour guide and translator, who is a church member.

Black beans, rice, and cabbage salad are standard—with the perfect amount of spices. A special meal might include chicken, which is costly and requires a search around town. Despite the grinding hardship, Cuba is alive with art and music. Havana is a showpiece compared to other places, but people create beauty everywhere.

Pastor Alison and his wife and pastoral partner, Sarahi Garcia Gomez, are true servants who make deep sacrifices in their personal lives, such as lack of sleep. They have two children, Ana Paula and Joel David. Life centers around the church for many people here and in other towns. The church gives spiritual and physical sustenance when finding and paying for food and simple OTC items make life extremely arduous. Our accommodations at the church were spartan—five women in bunk beds shared a bathroom, and water pressure was low to barely there. We covered our beds with nets and used repellent to ward off mosquitoes carrying dengue fever. Did anyone complain? Not one. The material goods and money we brought were greatly appreciated. The relationships we formed and hope and faith (and a few tears) are the are priceless gifts our friends gave us. Often, we hear God's voice more clearly when we have fewer earthly possessions.

More details will follow. We are looking forward to deepening our partner relationship in the years to come. Thank you all for your generous donations and moral support!