



FIRST PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH OF CHAMPAIGN

The Heart of Mission

June 30, 2020



On June 26, 2020 Rev. Daniel Izquierdo from [Iglesia Presbiteriana-Reformada en Luyanó, Habana](#), our sister church posted a sermon on Facebook called "Hold on to Hope," based on Romans 15:13, "May the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace that believe in him, that you may be filled with hope by the power of the Holy Spirit." June 26 is Cuba Presbyterianism Day. Daniel writes,

Remembering the beginnings of our Presbyterian church in Cuba, 130 years ago, the theme of hope highlights since its founding. Evaristo Collazo, the initiator of the work, begins it justly imbued with a hope, and so writes in letter addressed to the Board of Foreign Missions of the Southern United States Presbyterian Church in March 1890: "I feel inspired by the hope that this seed that the Lord, by his Spirit, has driven me to plant, will never disappear."

We live difficult times, it is a tangible and evident reality worldwide and in our own homeland. To our poor and inexperienced economies add damage caused by climate phenomena, plus the havoc of epidemics, especially that of Covid-19, and the possibilities for international

cooperation are reduced due to the greatest economic crisis experiencing the planet, for its multiple dimensions in the social, financial, energy and ecological. Harsh realities we face and with unforgettable forecasts! It seems like we have no visible short-term solutions and hopes often fade.

The history of the beginnings of the Presbyterian work in Cuba shows us Evaristo Collazo starting work without resources or proper preparation, only trusting by faith and hope. By faith he seeks help and asks for it, by faith he trusts to become a pastor, by faith he launches himself into distant missionary camps, amidst strong opposition then by the Catholic Church. By faith he leaves his home in Havana when he is ordered to move to Santa Clara to settle there and continue his evangelizing effort. We certainly can't help but exclaim what a man of faith!, what a man of God!, What a vigorous hope!

The Cuban Presbyterian church lived moments of hopelessness in the 1980's, due to the state of its facilities, the low membership, the exhaustion of its reduced pastoral body and the lay leadership, due to the external pressures of a society declared atheist. When his forces were over, when he did not glimpse much light on the horizon, the God of history created crisis situations that caused many to look back at Him, and came the growth experienced in the 90's, which is maintained still. And it's valid to wonder: what did the believers then keep their choice for a "decadent" church before human eyes, and persevere in their attempt? Can hope and a certainty of faith even if they lack the necessary answers?

If we don't see the way out to problems and obstacles that seem unbeatable to us, we usually surrender, we are prey to discouragement, pessimism and inaction. But the Church of the Lord, when horizons seem to collapse, must continue to seek guidance in the Word, a handle.

God calls us to live a life of faith and hope, in love and service. It's time to cry out to God, and humbly wait for the Lord to make us come out strengthened, it's time to sow hope for those who have totally lost it, it's time to be salt and light for this Cuban land. The always present God has called us to follow and serve Him, and hopes of our faithfulness, of a testimony that responds to our convictions, to continue celebrating many years of the presence of our Presbyterian church in our homeland. In these times, clinging to hope is vital. May God continue to bless us. Amen.

Friends, I am so grateful to our sisters and brothers in Cuba. Their hope gives me hope. So great a cloud of witnesses we have to help us grow in faith and walk the walk.

Peace,
Rachel Matthews,
Temporary Mission Coordinator

ANNOUNCEMENTS:

DREAAM and the Pentecost Offering – Prayers for Jessie Riley's fiancé, Ora Currie, who had cancer surgery June 24. Jessie is a saint who works for DREAAM House.

Praise to God for the generous givers to the Pentecost Offering which, to date, raised \$5,150. 40% of that is \$2,060 which goes to DREAAM. Earlier Heart of Mission newsletters have described how the other 60% is used by the PC(USA).

PUT JULY 8, 7PM ON YOUR CALENDAR - Our Wednesday Night zoom gathering will have a mission focus.

Presbyterian Mission – The Vital Congregations team hosts weekly Zoom conversations on Wednesdays at 3pm through July 20 on the Seven Marks of a Vital Congregation. Guests from around the denomination and globe will discuss how God is using the marks to transform congregational life – as they navigate COVID and post-COVID waters. Join via <https://zoom.us/j/95057957584>

Canteen Run Remember volunteers go out Monday, Tuesday, and Wednesday. They welcome The Phoenix back to their regular place, at 70 E. Washington in Champaign, beginning on June 26. Their current need is **Men’s underwear**. They thank their wonderful volunteers who do the Canteen Run, those who organize the shed where we take the ambulance, the people who donate sandwiches, and those who hand in items, such as: men’s and women’s underwear, socks, blankets, coats, gloves, hats, scarves. All of this is done through donations, people who makes the sandwiches, and volunteers and coordinator’s, and volunteer’s, without a salary. They can be reached at canteenrun@gmail.com. Follow them on facebook and twitter at Barb Davies@canteenrun.

Sangla Hill, our PEB school in Pakistan - Mrs. R. Kashif, Principal, PEB School System, CG Higher Secondary Branch, Sangla Hill, wrote us a note:



Dear Friends of Sangla Hill,

Hoping you all will be under His hand and safe. No doubt we all are facing a very tough time due to this COVID-19.

Our school remains closed and most of our parents are not in a position to pay the school fee as many have lost jobs or are unable to find daily wage jobs in the current situation.

But this is the grace of our Lord that we are blessed with great leadership and generous people like you who are supporting us a lot and we are still getting salaries, despite the schools having been closed for the last 3 months.

Thank God, with your kind prayers, we all at Sangla Hill are safe and sound and we are doing our level best to facilitate our students academically online. All teachers are working hard and have prepared notes for the students and we are providing them the hard-copies of notes. A few teachers were not able to work and help the students online, so they willingly refused to take salaries in order to reduce the financial burden on PEB. They will rejoin us when the schools will reopen.

Although we are working hard to continue the study of our students, we are all missing our school and students very much.

May our Lord Jesus Christ forgive our sins and restore our World! Amen.

Regards,

Mrs. R. Kashif

Principal, PEB School System, CG Higher Secondary Branch, Sangla Hill

Community Mission Deacons – Using Matthew 25 as a guideline at the June 23 CMD meeting the community mission deacons voted to donate above budgeted quarterly amounts of local mission money to the following agencies **Salt and Light \$1000, Jesus is the Way \$1000, RUM (Restoration Urban Ministries) \$1000, Faith in Action \$100.**

CU at Home thanks us for joining them in prayer and reminds everyone that each Thursday is a special day of prayer for their ministry. They ask, "Would you consider fasting in some way (from food, television, or the computer) and praying during that time for C-U at Home? ***The work that we do is founded on prayer!***"

As a reminder, the services CU at Homes provides to our friends without an address are deemed "essential services" and we remain committed to serving those in need during this COVID-19 situation. **Our Phoenix Drop-In Center hours have EXPANDED AGAIN and we are now open Mon-Fri 9am-5pm and Sat/Sun 9am-4pm.**

Recently, they also announced both the men's and women's emergency shelters would remain OPEN for year-round services! The season was set to end April 15th but due to the needs of those they serve, and because of AMAZING community support, both shelter will remain open for the summer, fall, and beyond!

Their prayers and praise are as follows:

- ***Would you join us in prayer for a friend without an address who recently had a little baby boy? As she seeks treatment for her substance abuse issues, we pray that she would find sobriety and healthy living so that she may be in her son's life for years to come!***
- ***Please pray for all our friends without an address as businesses and the places they used to hang out open back up this week. We pray that they would be welcomed and not shunned as they integrate back into the community.***
- ***Would you also pray for a friend who is having knee surgery next week? We ask God to be present with the doctors and nurses and that this young lady will be up and around in no time!***
- ***Thank you God for the men's and women's shelter being fully staffed and ready to take on the summer, fall, and the rest of 2020!***
- ***Praise the Lord for a friend who is getting a second chance! As we lead with grace, we thank God for the second (and sometimes third and fourth) chances He gives us!***
- ***Praise to Jesus for one of our friends who stayed at the men's shelter for 90 nights this season but last week, he moved into his own apartment! Praise God that hard work and perseverance pays off!***

Let us keep all our mission partners in our prayers, those who are waiting to go back to their place of ministry and those who are able to work where they are. Listen for God's call to you in their ministry.

Our PC(USA) Mission CoWorkers:

Mark Adams and Miriam Maidonado Escobar (Mexico)
Farsijanna Adeney-Risakotta (Indonesia)
Jeff and Christi Boyd (Central Africa)
Jo Ella Holman (Carribbean and Cuba)
Bob and Kristi Rice (South Sudan)

Our regional and global mission partners:

Kemmerer Village (and Camp Carew)
Lifeline Pilots
Marion Medical Mission
Mission Aviation Fellowship
Opportunity International
Friends of Presbyterian Education Board in Pakistan Presbyterian Cuba Partnership
Special Offerings of the PC(USA)
Theological Education Fund
Young Adult Volunteers

Here in Champaign – Urbana:

CU Better Together
CU at Home
CANAAN S.A.F.E. HOUSE
CANTEEN RUN
COURAGE CONNECTION
DREAAM
eEMPTY TOMB, INC
FAITH IN ACTION
JESUS IS THE WAY PRISON MINISTRY
THE REFUGEE CENTER
RESTORATION URBAN MINISTRY
SALT & LIGHT

Here at First Presbyterian Church

FPCC Amateur Preachers
FPCC Environmental Committee working with Faith in Place
FPCC Presbyterian Women
FPCC ESL
FPCC Children, Youth and Families
FPCC Mission Possible/Go and Serve



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