



A Blessing

## Need to Know Cuba

- *Blocked by the Strait Wall*
- *Cuban Religious Visas still Frozen – Why?*
- *Tips for sister churches remember Cuba in worship.*

## Blocked by the Strait Wall

How do you relate through a wall? Remember the children's game "Can't go under it. Can't go over it. Can't go around it"? Our churches are in that predicament. Caravans to Cuba are blocked, for the time being.

We are accustomed to going there – taking gifts, seeing old friends, new babies, talking, singing together. What now?

Now we get creative. If you have

email access, set up e-prayer partners. Publish emails and media news from Cuba. Put up Cuba displays and post bulletin board prayers to Cuba to send in later. Put a short item on Cuba in your newsletter. Pray weekly in worship for them in these hard times. Privately pray the Lord's Prayer, substituting they and them for we and us. "Give *them* their daily bread..."

The door is closed right now, but there are still windows of opportunity.

## Cuban Religious Visas Still Frozen – Why?

In July, the Methodist Church in Cuba requested that the Florida Conference stop applying for Cuban religious visas until further notice. The Cuban government has denied visas to all caravans since April. So far 7 have been cancelled.

One problem is that each traveler's application costs the Cuban Methodist Church \$12 where \$15 - \$19 is a typical monthly wage. They must support those fees without expectation of success or our being able to reimburse them in the near future.

Speculation as to why there is a freeze on religious visas is only guesswork. Perhaps the new government is pausing to evaluate many programs

before endorsing them. Perhaps the Cuban tourist economy and renewed support from China reduce the need for the gifts churches bring in. Perhaps the influence of the Church is becoming too disruptive socially and politically. Perhaps leaders fear the Cuban Church will become controlled or unduly influenced by the US or the Florida Church. Perhaps Cuba is waiting to see how our fall elections impact Cuban-American relations.

Whatever the reasons, the Cuban government is silent.

**Tip for sister churches:** During this tense time of unexplained restrictions, pray in worship for God's help and sustenance.

**"God will open the door again and we'll all be ready."** – *On the cancelled July youth caravan*



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