



# Suntree United Methodist Church

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## “THANK YOU, SUNTREE UNITED METHODIST CHURCH”

Medicine is always in short supply in Cuba, but has become significantly more so during and following the Covid pandemic. Over-the-counter (OTC) and prescription medications, are in very, very limited supply. Can you imagine, you (or worse yet, one of your children) sick, and a particular medication will make them well, but you can't get it? One of our friends at El Redentor recently had a medical emergency and needed a blood transfusion. Her family was told that the blood bank was empty, and they would have to find their own donor!

**WHAT WE DID...** Our Cuba mission team collected OTC medicines donated by Suntree UMC. Using a shipping service in Orlando, we were able to send medicines, including child vitamins and fever-reducing medications, to our sister churches. When people fell ill with Covid and were quarantined at home, they were able to ease some of their symptoms with the donated pain and fever meds sent by SUMC. Since they do not have enough to eat, the vitamins we sent helped to keep the children healthy. We also purchased medicine through a non-profit company, “Medical Services, Education, Training and Comprehensive Development, Inc. (METAD).” Due to misunderstandings about Cuban Government's complex requirements, the meds were delayed in Havana for several months before finally being released to the Cuban Methodist Bishop.

With all the challenges, the faith of our Cuban brothers and sisters endures. During the darkest days of the pandemic, we received a heartbreaking message from a friend who is a member of our one of our sister churches, here partially quoted. “You get to the clinic in your neighborhood, you see the front door, but you can't reach it. Inside and outside the sick people, most standing, with the most ill lying on the ground... In our house, we are all infected, except Granny who has to be treated, fed and assisted by sick people...medical assistance is delayed, medications are not available...but despite everything, the night ends, the sun appears. Thank you, my God, you were faithful to what you promised me in Psalm 91, you kept my ways so that my foot would not touch stone. I ask you Lord for my nation and its sick, forgive our trespasses. We have stoned you. May your immense mercy be upon us.”

**WHAT WE PLAN TO DO NEXT...** With the increasing need in Cuba for medications, we are now working with another charity, “Blessings International, Medicines for Missions” who have considerable experience in facilitating the process of obtaining prescription and OTC medications for Cuba. They report that their export packages of prescription drugs including anti-infectives, analgesics, cardiac and vascular, diabetic, gastrointestinal, respiratory medicines, and vitamins—provide enough to treat 2,064 patients for less than \$1,500. The Florida UMC Conference has used this company with confidence and success.

**WHAT AN EXTRA BLESSING WE RECEIVED...** Suntree provided \$2,500 and Etowah UMC in Etowah, North Carolina (our sister church in Cuba Missions) matched our \$2,500 so we now have \$5,000 toward medications that are being purchased through Blessings International. Etowah UMC also collected two large boxes of over-the-counter medications, which were shipped to Cuba last week!

**WHAT GREAT LEADERSHIP WE HAVE...** These medical missions would not be possible without support from Pastor Annette and her team; Jim Davidson, chair of the Cuba Committee; Marlene Couch, medical coordinator of the Cuba Committee; Pastor Yimmi Salomon, Holguin Central District Superintendent, who is also a medical doctor; and most of all, the generous congregations at Suntree UMC and Etowah UMC!



Pastor Alex Perez, El Redentor Methodist Church, Holguin, Cuba leads our largest sister church. He is shown receiving medications that were made possible by your gifts. Many men, women, and children were helped by your kindness.

It is easy to give to the Cuba Missions projects at Suntree and at Etowah. You can write a check and drop it in the plate or deliver it to the church. Write Cuba Missions in the Memo line. You can also set up online giving, which easily allows you to give to Cuba Missions as well as your General giving and/or other specialty giving.

Cuba Missions are very personal. We communicate every day with pastors and families in Cuba. They pray for us each day, and we are a part of each other's families.

We, as a church, have two sister churches (El Redentor and Ojo de Agua) in Holguin, and this past year, at a time of desperate need, we provided pastoral and church support for three additional churches as well.

We invite you to come to a Suntree Cuba Committee meeting to learn more about the work being done in the Methodist Churches of Cuba. We meet at 7:00 pm in room 108, the second Thursday of each month (except December 2022, when we will meet on Monday, December 19). You do not have to be a member of Suntree UMC to be a part of this Cuba committee. The requirements are that you have a love for Jesus and an interest in Cuba Missions.

