

Partnership Visit: 21-27 June 2009



**The Episcopal Church of Cuba (IEC)
Evangelical Seminary of Theology (SET)**

<http://www.anglican.ca/mission/about/news/cubaconf.htm>

Goals and Objectives:

1. To visit IEC for the first time as Global Relations Coordinator, to meet **Bishop Miquel and Marta Tamayo**, and other leaders of the Diocese.
2. To discuss the national partnership between the Anglican Church of Canada and the IEC, to identify ways in which our work together can be strengthened and enhanced.
3. To participate in the 80th Anniversary Celebration of the 1929 Havana Congress, to continue to learn about the historical, present and future mission of the Protestant church in Latin America.
4. To meet with **The Rev. Susana Lerena Lopez**, M.Th. student at Seminario Evangelico de Teologia (SET) Matanzas and PIM scholarship student.
5. To meet with **Dr. Clara Luz Ajo**, SET faculty whose stipend is covered by a PIM GR grant.

Highlights and Summary:

1. Opportunity to meet with Bishop Miquel and Marta Tamayo in person, in their home and with other diocesan leaders for conversation about current partnership strengths and areas for further, future development. Strengths include: long term friendship and material support for the life and witness of the Episcopal church in Cuba, especially in training young academics for scholarship within local theological education; clergy stipends; church-wide programs for youth and young adult leadership development; meaningful diocesan companionships; Metropolitan Council of Cuba; and assistance in supporting Seminario Evangelico de Teologia (SET), Matanzas.

For exploration and discussion: promotion of Episcopal churches among Canadian Anglican tourists seeking Sunday worship; Volunteer in Mission to train clergy and lay leaders in project development and program management; youth and young adult exchange and exposure visits; intercultural and inter-religious dialogue; ecology and environmental justice.

2. Opportunity to meet Dra. Clara Luz Ajo in person, in her home, to talk about her teaching and research areas, and to think how Clara could be invited to join a Canadian seminary/college for a term as scholar in residence.
3. Opportunity to meet again with Susana Lopez to discuss and clarify the progress of her studies and future plans for work as a deacon within the Diocese of Uruguay.
4. Gathering with many Protestants, and others, hearing many voices and stories from across Latin America, reflecting on the ecumenical movement within Cuba and region from Havana 1929 to the present, towards Edinburgh 2010. A regional paper contribution to Edinburgh 2010 will be circulated in autumn.
5. Opportunity to better know The Rev. Dr. Dorcas Gordon, Principal , Knox College, Toronto. Dorcas and I will prepare a report/reflection on the Havana 80th Anniversary event for Toronto's Edinburgh 2010 planning meeting, November.

Daily Review:

Sunday, June 21: Travel Toronto to Havana, welcomed into **Bishop Miquel and Marta Tamayo's** home. Havana a hot 33 degrees. Enjoyed informal conversation at lunch re:

- US blockade-based material poverty of Cuban people continues to be hard and more so of late within the world wide financial crisis;
- financial concern of the diocese is the lack of a pension fund for post-1969 clergy now retiring (the diocese became autonomous from ECUSA in 1969, which continues to provide pension support to Cuban clergy pre-1969. Pensions funds however are not provided in full because of US-Cuba relations. 25% of an individual's pension is sent via Global Relations, Partnerships, as according to the allowable limit. For follow up: IEC clergy pension fund as discussed at the February MCC meeting. Discuss with Michael Pollesel and the Primate for further action. Find TEC resolution to July General convention regarding this matter, for wording, intent and possible ACC solidarity. TEC Latin America contact continues to be Antoinette (Toni) Daniels, Global, Anglican and Ecumenical Relations.

Met with **The Rev. Susana Lopez** now residing in Havana with the Tamayos, having completed her M.Th. studies in May, and leaving lodging at SET in June. Susana needs to complete and defend the thesis component of her degree for graduation in June 2010. Her plans for the next year are somewhat unsettled. She seeks an opportunity to work as a volunteer deacon in Hispanic ministry in Canada this summer, to continue to strengthen her English and for further cross-cultural experience. As a Uruguayan national her visa process would likely be easy. I explained we have very few financial resources to assist and too little time to organize and implement before August. She will return to Uruguay with the Tamayos in August, to write her thesis and to find work. Note: Susana does not have

a personal computer. We will try to find the funds to provide her with a laptop. Contact information: episcopal@enet.cu; ismasu@hotmail.com

Met informally with The Rev. Andreas Diaz Dorta, deacon, who hopes to find a Canadian parish to twin with his own, for prayer and financial support. Bishop Miquel supports this visit and purpose. Andreas will visit Montreal in October for personal and clerical reasons, willing to meet parishes in the Diocese of Montreal. Action: Contacted Bishop Barry Clark and Ven. Janet Griffith Johnson who conveyed the inquiry and activity to The Rev. Mark Rogers, PIM Unit Chair, who has agreed to take on the task of meeting and introducing Andreas to Montreal parishes. Since this was agreed, Janet contacted me saying Andreas Dorta was thought to be a flight risk, and that the Diocese would have no official contact with him in the interests of their good relationship with the Episcopal Cuban Church.

Monday, 21 June: Met in conversation with 12 members of the Diocesan Council and Standing Committee and with Michael Pollesel, visiting Havana for the election of a Coadjutor Bishop, which was unsuccessful. Our purpose in meeting was to review and begin to identify ways in which the national partnership between our two churches can be strengthened. Bishop Miquel summarized the years of Anglican Church of Canada support for the IEC, including financial assistance with clergy stipends, with the diocese's contribution to Seminario Evangelico de Teologia (SET), a stipend for SET Episcopal Professor Clara Luz Ajo, youth exchanges, scholarships for graduate theological education, the publication of the Cuban Folk Mass (CD was given as a gift), and support of +Miquel and Marta's South to South Leadership which makes their work in both Cuba and Uruguay possible.

Bishop Miquel identified the 3 priorities of his episcopacy, for further consideration and support by Global Relations:

1. to improve clergy stipends,
2. develop a clergy pension program, and
3. provide/support retired clergy housing.

The scarcity of money and costs and scarcity of building materials makes it nearly impossible for IEC to meet these 3 priorities with internal resources. Regarding a clergy pension program, IEC urged the recent Metropolitan Council of Cuba Primate from Canada, West Indies and United States to assist. The Episcopal Church (TEC) is preparing a resolution for summer 2009 General Convention on the matter. TEC is holding USD100,000s in pensions for Cuban clergy but not able to send it either directly or through Partnerships because of the US blockade. +Miquel has asked +Fred to also send word of how the Anglican Church of Canada can assist.

IEC's Mission Plan 2008-2011 was received with thanks for further consideration. Michael Pollesel has a copy of this plan in English.

Issues of interest arising in group conversation included:

1. The involvement of the Cuban and Anglican churches in inter-cultural religious dialogue, especially between Indigenous and non-indigenous Anglicans, within Indigenous Anglican groups and between non-indigenous Christians and non-Christians: What is the place of popular and traditional Indigenous beliefs, traditions, icons in Christian life and worship? Reference made to the impressive involvement of the Anglican Church of Brazil in this dialogue work. For follow up: Might a more intentional conversation occur during the next MCC/Diocesan Council,

including Bishop Mark MacDonald, Donna Bomberry, and others involved in this work in Canada? Might they provide a lecture to seminarians at SET and Cathedral Institute students? Might there be printed resources to share with IEC? Might Dr. Clara Luz Ajo present her doctoral and other work on Episcopalianism and Santa Rita religions in Cuba, and/or visit a Canadian seminary as Visiting Scholar in Residence?

2. Providing Canadian Anglicans with the sites and contact emails of Episcopal parishes close to vacation areas and resorts. For follow up: Provide this information in a timely way in a feature article on meeting local churches in vacation destinations via national church website, an e-Journal article, diocesan websites and newspapers.
3. Request for a Volunteer in Mission to train church clergy and lay leaders to develop ideas into projects, with a particular interest in strengthening community development leadership skills, poverty reduction and other MDGs.
4. Continued youth mission groups for the purpose of meeting youth and young adults in the Cuban Episcopal Church, and of helping to build/restore/renovate needed and existing parish infrastructure, and of bringing much needed material supplies for education programs. In exchange, Cuban youth groups will also visit Canada for cross-cultural exposure and learning. For follow up: Post information on Partnership webpage about national IEC Youth Gathering in Havana this August 11-16th; Invite Mr. Noel Rodriguez Santos, national IEC Youth Program Coordinator and an bilingual Spanish-English Cuban delegate to a national youth gathering in Canada in 2010 eg. Ask and Imagine, ELCIC Youth Gathering, or Niagara Justice Camp.
5. Collaboration on issues of ecology and environment. For follow up: with The Rev. Emilio Martin Fumero, who among other things is the diocesan contact for this area of interest.

Summary Reflection:

1. A much needed and overdue meeting with Bishop Miquel and other leaders of the IEC, to re-establish closer relationship between Partnerships and the IEC, regarding priorities currently supported by Global Relations' grants, and possible new areas of companionship and solidarity in mission and ecojustice.
2. A recurring theme in peoples' comments pertained to the deepening and very difficult poverty of Cuban people, and of the IEC in its many local communities and rural areas. Our partnership with the IEC must continue to include prayer, people, advocacy **and money**. IEC should continue to be a priority partner in the Latin American region, for the reasons noted and for strengthening Anglican identity and interdependence in the Americas within the wider Communion family.
3. I need to know what PWRDF and Kairos are doing with which Cuban partners, particularly pertaining to the blockade and to the imprisonment of 5 Cubans serving life sentences in US jail for espionage. Their imprisonment is in stark contrast to the recent treatment of 3 Israelis who confessed legitimate acts of espionage, never arrested and released by President Obama's signature (April 2009) It is very clear to Cubans that Obama's conciliatory remarks in Cairo, about not imposing American democracy or knowing what is best for others, are not intended for Cuba.
4. There are a number of new possibilities for deepening our relationship with IEC, which can be better narrated within Canadian Anglican media and networks. Review the Costa Rica Anglican gathering earlier this year for more information about ways of working in partnership and issues of priority as peoples of the Americas.

Tuesday June 22-Friday June 26th: 80th Commemoration of Havana 1929: Congreso Evangelico Hispano-Americano de la Habana (Havana 1929), 22-26 June, SET, Matanzas.

Commemoration began with worship which was, without exception throughout the week, a wonderful collage of theological reflection, music, singing, and colour. A disc of video and still photo footage is available in the Global Relations office.

The overall purpose of the commemorative gathering was to reflect critically on the reality of the Latin American context today, and the history of the evangelical Protestant ecumenical movement over the past 80 years, towards discussing the future of the ecumenical movement in Latin America and to contribute a written reflection on mission and evangelism to Edinburgh 2010 next June.

Information-sharing and discussion took place through paper presentations by panels of invited resource people, representing church, Communist Party, and university sectors from throughout Latin America, including men and women from Cuba, Costa Rica, Puerto Rico, Mexico, El Salvador, Guatemala, Peru, Brazil, and Argentina. Non-Latin American participants represented church organisations from Canada and the United States. Two WCC staff also took part. Papers presented throughout are available in Spanish in digital format with Global Relations. Further deliberation and writing will occur over the summer and fall towards identifying clearly for regional churches, council, agencies the situation, challenges, resources for ecumenical mission. A similar paper will be submitted for presentation and discussion at Edinburgh 2010. To date, no further documents have been received regarding the region's ecumenical mission.

As a concrete act of regional ecumenical solidarity with Protestant Cuban churches, the gathering wrote a letter to President Obama concerning the continuing imprisonment of 5 Cuban men accused of espionage and terrorism in the USA.

As presented and discussed in brief:

1. The historical significance of Havana 1929 celebrated:
 - a. Latin American Protestant and Evangelical churches as "players" in Christian mission of the region.
 - b. region-inclusive reflection and analysis of struggles with and against founding foreign churches for autonomy in theology, liturgy and mission. Within this struggle emerged the recognition of a new social evangelical context in Latin American countries, and a new critical understanding of the growth of American empire through evangelism. Protestantism was becoming less a "foreign [largely American] religion" as national and indigenous church leaders articulated previously missing protest components, correcting the naive liberalism of the early 20th century. The seeds for a liberation theology were sown and the Latinisation of the Protestant church began.
 - c. Envisioning a Council of Churches of Latin America (CLAI) and World Council of Churches (1948)
 - d. Women church workers and leading intellectuals, including Gabriela Mistral, a leader of the Chilean women's movement.

2. The broad series of pre-2010 gatherings and meetings taking place globally will shape Edinburgh 2010 purpose, format and agenda. Tensions world wide between institutional churches and para-church agencies are increasing. The ways in which Christians 'do mission' in many parts of the world has lost genuine discipleship ; mission has become commercialized as a product. The Protestant church's understanding of mission has changed since Edinburgh 1910: mission starts with God, mission is a two-way street, mission is the responsibility of the whole church not just specialized agencies to which congregations give occasional dollars, bold witness to God's love in Christ can happen through dialogue and partnership with people of other faiths. Recognized that Edinburgh 2010 and Christian mission generally needs new terminology.
3. The failed neo-liberalism of globalisation for the minority world has led to aggressive efforts today to control the majority world, including Latin America through free trade and other agreements. The challenges for Latin America include:
 - a. Overcoming huge foreign debt accrued through objection by progressive regional governments and civil society to debt payment, bilateral and multilateral Free Trade agreements, especially based on military and US domination;
 - b. Food sovereignty and agrarian reform. Neo-liberalism is the last chapter of 500 years of colonisation.
 - c. Recovery and sovereignty of water supplies and claims for climatic repair of environments;
 - d. Rejecting regional governments' complicity with transnational companies and dependency of IMF/World Bank.
 - e. Human rights, social and cultural rights, including rights for free and inclusive public education inclusive of all peoples' traditions, workers', children's and women's rights;
 - f. Violence against women and children, disabled and indigenous peoples, people living in poverty.
 - g. Valuing women's experiences, issues, perspectives, wisdom;
 - h. Creation of a regional currency;
 - i. Strengthened democracy.
4. The new political leadership of the USA does not yet include Cuba in its expressed commitment to new relationships with other countries, choosing to continue the blockade in punishment for Cubans' different political aspirations, knowingly deprive Cubans of material and financial resources, and incarcerate 5 Cuban resisters serving life sentences for espionage; *'US imperialism continues to shape life in Latin America. The blockade must end and the 5 prisoners released to Cuba'. Global ecumenical solidarity is still needed'.*
5. The ecumenical context of Latin America is racially, ethnically, religiously diverse, including indigenous peoples, descendants of African peoples, descendants of Asia and European peoples, Pentecostals, historic Protestants, Roman Catholics, Orthodox believers and peoples of other faiths. The 'face' of the Latin American church has greatly changed since Havana 1929. The explosive growth of Pentecostalism, religious markets, wealth theologies, intolerance of religious differences has increasingly shaped regional Christian witness and ministry. The ecumenical challenge is to promote respect of diversity, church unity, contextual theology and ecumenical theological reflection and pastoral training, leadership of women, retrieval of ancestral cultures and traditions, and critical social analysis.

6. The ecclesiastical and ecumenical culture of Cuba today is weak, shaped by 5 centuries of predominantly Roman Catholic colonisation and the import of African religions, especially Yoruba and Abak'ua, by Spanish Spiritualism, pre-Columbian spiritism, Christian spiritism, Protestantism and Pentacostalism. There have been other lesser influences, including Judaism, Islam and Hinduism. Today there are 62 Christian denominations. The ecumenical context today is confusing and fragile: new fundamentalists are anti-ecumenical to the point of stigmatising, prohibiting, shunning adherents who participate; national unity is of far greater interest than Christian unity; ecumenism not profiled or encouraged in traditional ecumenical denominations, seen as hyper-politicized or not as important as denominationalism, bilateral relationships with the northern/western 'mother church'. Current ecumenical identity crisis can be best addressed through dialogue and ethical ecumenical commitment. There are however, places of hope including SET, Martin Luther King Centre, Cuban Council of Churches, Cuban Student Christian Movement, Centre for Dialogue and Reflection. Cubans also serve on national, regional, and global ecumenical church councils.
7. From a traditional Cuban Pentacostal: The new Pentacostalism in Cuba is of great concern to historic Roman Catholic and Protestant churches. There is almost no connection between these church groups whose goals, missiology and ways of being church are 'miles apart'. It is also of concern to traditional Pentacostals who seek to retrieve the authentic Cuban Pentacostal movement from what is happening today; disorder, hysteria, intolerance, non-national leadership, non-acceptance of authority -legal or church- subordinating all to their manipulation of scripture.
8. The identity, unity and mission of ecumenism in Latin America requires:
 - a. Liberation of ecumenism from colonisation which succeeded in controlling land, spirits, knowledge, subjectivity of the colonised. Black and Indigenous people, women could not become the 'other' so disappeared, which largely continues in the hierarchy and patriarchy of the church today;
 - b. Liberation of vision so to see the world, ourselves in new ways;
 - c. Liberation of God from the realm of what we know to include God's mysterious, mission-centred essence
 - d. Authentic inclusion of diversity as a treasured resource
 - e. Radical flexibility, adaptability to the rapid changes that occur in the region;
 - f. Understanding the gospel as colonised people, people living in poverty and misery resulting from an immoral blockade intended to starve, isolate all who do not agree with the colonial power
9. Other important considerations: new Pentacostalism is the fastest growing Christian church (though also experiencing stagnation), with emphases on individualistic theology, happiness and monetary wealth rather than the way of the cross, popular musicality, rejection of tradition for cultic hegemony, rejection of historic social justice work in favour of numerical growth per se.
10. The challenges for the ecumenical movement globally include rescuing: the wholistic, integrated mission of God, especially reconciling the division of mission and development found throughout the north/west; the liberating aspect of the gospel, best revealed to those living in difficulty; Christian witness from differentiation, denominationalism for unity and proclamation.

To be an ecumenical evangelist: Reclaim the spirituality of Jesus, to step not knowing the destination. Include the spirituality and leadership of women who continue to comprise the great majority of all churches/ movements. Be the church where life is threatened: tell the truth about what is going on, be the change you want to see, work for change for all. Challenge neo-liberal economic hegemony. 'We are not separate from the empire. We all have our place within it' (Foucault): go to the crisis, judge perceptively, act to transform unjust structures, listen to and learn from the majority world.(Luke 4: 16-20, Mttw 10: 7-8, Romans 13; 17-18).

11. To be effective, ecumenical evangelism requires: opportunity to read the Bible in one's own language; effective teaching; getting out of sanctuaries and into communities; liturgical renewal and revision; funding; theologies for life in context; gender equity and justice; overcoming that which divides Christians, such as lack of confidence in the gospel, many terms and definitions from mission and evangelisation; doctrinal statements and dogma; power; money, patriarchy, geography, regionalism, settlement patterns.
12. The mission of the Protestant church in Latin America: *God's mission has a church; God's mission is inclusive of all, especially the marginalized, towards decolonization of ideas, towards liberation; 5 marks of mission were affirmed in various ways (though very little mention made of marks 4 and 5); in mission we do not accompany anyone. Rather we are called to suffer with those who suffer, who are marginalized. It is only Jesus, Paraclete who accompanies. Companionship with the marginalized is not an act of solidarity unless there is sacrificial accompaniment.*

Dra. Clara Luz Ajo: Dra. Clara is one of the few full time Episcopalian faculty at SET. Clara's focus of research and teaching includes feminist theology and contextual spirituality. She has numerous peer reviewed publications to her credit in these and other areas. Clara thanked the Anglican Church of Canada for its ongoing support of her teaching stipend (through Partnerships' global Relations).

As she shared her current work on the inter-connectedness of Episcopal and traditional African spiritualities in Cuba, I thought the following might be fruitful and meaningful future activities:

- a. Clara meets with Primate Fred, Bishop Mark and Michael P. during a future meeting of the MCC, to speak about her research in contextual spirituality in Cuba towards possible conversation and collaboration with Anglican and other, indigenous and non-indigenous theologians in Canada.
- b. With our assistance, Clara has a time of study and teaching as a scholar in residence at a Canadian Anglican/ecumenical theological college.

The Rev. Dr. Reinerio Arce: Dr. Reinerio, Rector of SET, met briefly with partners to convey news of SET's financial situation, which is not good as a result of a decline in funds and the value of currencies from European and Canadian partners. Reinerio was hoping to visit Toronto in early September to discuss this further with Canadian partners but did not do so due to other work commitments. We will continue to consider support to the Maurice Lopez Chair for Social Justice at SET and other core support if at all possible in 2010.

Respectfully Submitted:
Andrea Mann

Global Relation Coordinator
July 15, 2009

Appendix 1

COMMEMORATIVE CONFERENCE OF THE 80TH ANNIVERSARY OF THE HISPANO-AMERICAN EVANGELICAL CONGRESS OF HAVANA

“Towards a transformative mission and evangelization of the Latin American Protestant churches at the beginning of the 21st Century”

For, behold, I will create new heavens and a new earth: and the former things shall not be remembered,
nor come into mind.
(Isaiah 65:17)

Dear Brothers and Sisters of the Cuban churches:

Greetings of peace and joy in our Lord, Jesus Christ.

We, the representatives of churches and ecumenical organizations from 19 Latin American and Caribbean countries, invited by the Cuban Council of Churches (CIC), the Martin Luther King, Jr. Memorial Centre, the Latin American Council of Churches (CLAI), the World Council of Churches (WCC) and the Evangelical Theological Seminary (SET) are meeting here, in Matanzas, Cuba, from 22 to 26 June, in order to commemorate the 80th anniversary of the Havana Hispano-American Evangelical Congress (1929). We have arrived in Cuba at a historical moment when the unfair blockade imposed by the Government of the United States against the Cuban revolution and the Cuban people remains and the situation deteriorates with the global economic crises. Furthermore, to this has been added, in recent years, the imprisonment of our five Cuban brothers, who have been deprived of the most elemental human rights, suffering from unfair treatment and cruelty against their personal integrity, as well as ignoring the judicial procedures contemplated by international law and the Constitution of the United States itself.

We admire these courageous people who, with integrity and determination, seek to defend the achievements reached through the Cuban revolution in the fields of education, health, culture and standard of living, among others. We are grateful for the solidarity that Cuba has shown consistently with the countries of Latin America and the Caribbean, and other regions of the world, through sending doctors to humanitarian missions and other disasters caused by natural phenomena, as well as offering free education to Medicine students and sharing the programme called “Yes, I can” in order to eradicate illiteracy in several countries.

We have brought, from our own contexts, the heavy burden of neoliberal politics, which exclude and marginalize the majority of our population. Although democracy has gained ground, the system is still not responding to the needs of the less favoured social classes – especially the indigenous peoples, the afro-descendant cultures, women, children, youth, people with disabilities and the elderly population – and it continues practicing economic exploitation, violence and destruction of their culture. This injustice prevents peace based on economic justice and full human development in most of the continent. Living the mission in this context is breaking the wall of indifference and developing solidarity together. The faces of these historical individuals are evangelizing us and make the face of God visible, because...”The truth reveals itself more clearly to the poor and to those who suffer” (José Martí).

There are other challenges threatening our people. An economic system that, through violence, causes the destruction of the Earth and makes the whole creation groan as in the pains of childbirth (Romans 8:22).

The European and North American churches, with which we have a relationship that we express and live in our mutual partnership in mission, have joined their efforts to those the Latin American and Caribbean churches. With these churches, we continue trying to raise awareness among the European, North American and Canadian governments, so that they start meaningful changes in their power structures. The purpose is to achieve greater equity, balance and fair treatment in trade, economic, financial and market-pricing relations. The external debt, an unfair burden for our people, is a reflect of the unfairness of the current international financial system. In many occasions, this cause acquires a prophetic dimension which is also aimed at denouncing the corruption and complicity of these unfair practices, favoured and concealed by the governments of our countries.

These are times of turbulence and confusion: critical times

There are religious movements that impose themselves from the imperial power centres, exporting oppressive and manipulative religious domination models. They are presented in a tempting way and they are idols intended to replace the true God. Some of its manifestations are the theology of prosperity, the theology of spiritual war, the apostolic networks with their hierarchies and authoritarianism, which confuse the concept of ministry while promoting schemes and codes of conduct for economic power, privileges and distortion of the true meaning of the evangelizing power as service in the kingdom of God. (Mark, 10:35-45).

These are times of reaffirmation and hope

We reaffirm our commitment with the constant search of our own protestant, Caribbean and Latin American identity within the daily reality of our people. With humility, we take up God's challenge to get involved in the struggle for God's kingdom in the midst of the conflicts of history. The unity in diversity that we wish to promote is in itself an announcement of the kingdom by the Grace of God. We must bear witness of this unity, overcoming the barriers of hatred, prejudice and all forms of oppression for the accomplishment of the holistic mission of the church (Isaiah 58:2 – 8, Mathew 25:31-46)

There are cumulative experiences of resistance, from a spirituality that embraces and emphasizes the true values of the kingdom of God (Galatians 5:22 – 25). The evangelization becomes an announcement, a testimony and a liberating practice that heals, restores, reconciles and transforms life. These values invigorate hope. We are certain that, in spite of it all, the Spirit is calling us for life, It gives us the strength to participate actively in the new things that God is creating in history (Romans 8:26-27). It is our opportunity to become the collaborators of God in what God is blessing. As the song written by Bishop Federico Pagura says:

So we today have hope and expectation.
So we today can struggle with conviction.
So we today can trust we have a future,
so we have hope.

During the opening liturgical ceremony of this commemoration, a group of elderly women of the Project 'Weavers of Hope' of the Evangelical Theological Seminary (SET), gave each participant of the event small butterflies woven in different colours as a gift. We take this gift with us with the promise to continue praying for the Cuban people and churches, so that this hope becomes a reality in this society which is becoming increasingly fair and which, as every other society, can be improved. We promise to continue invigorating hope in our daily struggle.

José Martí, the apostle of Cuba and all America, emphasized with righteous conviction "It is the time of mobilization, of marching together, and we must go forward in close ranks, like silver in the roots of the Andes."

With our dreams and hopes, we will continue walking with faith, knowing that the Resurrected Christ is walking ahead of us.