

The North Carolina Cuba Partnership



Volunteer Orientation Manual

2024

Thank You!

Thank you for responding to the call for volunteers to help share the love of Christ with the people of Cuba. The task has been challenging and exciting. NC Baptists on Mission has been in Partnership with the Eastern Baptist Convention of Cuba to help with the construction of a home for retired pastors as well as other ministry projects. Our newest project will be to help construct a new seminary in Santa Clara, Cuba.

The information in this booklet is designed to provide basic orientation about the project, as well as information about Cuba and our fellow Baptists there. You will receive additional information, as needed, before your departure.

Please read each section carefully, **as this manual has been updated recently**. We feel this will better prepare you both physically and spiritually. For questions you may contact us from the information found below.

As you prepare to go, if you are a first time team to Cuba please contact Tom Beam to schedule an orientation session with your team.

Tom Beam – Disaster Response Coordinator

Cuba Partnership Consultant

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Cuba/Baptists on Mission Partnership Teams –2024

Purpose: The primary purpose of the partnership is to continue construction of the new seminary in Santa Clara, Cuba or maintenance/construction at the retirement home in Santiago. Teams will have an opportunity to visit with and get to know Cuban Baptists as well as worship in Cuban Baptist churches. Team members are encouraged to share their faith with people that they meet.

TRIP COST: The basic price of the trip is approx. **\$1,500 (for 2023 the cost per person was between \$1,250-\$1,600)**. This includes round-trip airfare to and from Santa Clara or Santiago, insurance (**supplemental health and cancellation**), orientation materials, T-shirt, lodging in Cuba, in-country transportation, meals on site and the cost of visas (**our office will handle the visa request to Cuba**). Once airlines confirm schedules and times, we will determine the exact cost per person, usually around 85 days before trip. **We prefer that every team member send any trip costs to the church and then the church will send Baptists on Mission one check for the trip. If a credit card is used a 3% processing fee will be added. If a team leader or member needs to make other arrangements please contact Tom Beam or Dollie Noa to discuss.**

MATERIALS COST: Each team must provide the cost of materials for all projects. The cost for building materials for each team is **\$3,000**. NC Baptists on Mission will add \$2,000 to this amount. The Eastern Baptist Convention already has your materials money. At this time Cuba is taking American dollars.

TEAMS: Teams should be comprised of no more than **12** (Twelve) members and no less than **5** (five) members. **TEAM MEMBERS must be at least 16 years of age.** There is a translator on site but having a Spanish translator on each team will be very helpful. (Be prepared to pay the translator(s) that assist you. We suggest a minimum of \$150 per week.)

PARTICIPATION: Those wishing to participate should do the following:

1. Contact the NC Baptists on Mission Office for an updated list of Cuba projects and dates. Tom Beam, tbeam@ncbaptist.org, 1.800.395.5102, ext. 5605.
2. Choose a project/week. Once you contact Baptists on Mission and have chosen your project/week, the team leader will need to complete an online profile (instructions sent by Baptists on Mission). Complete payment per person is due no later than **30 days** prior to the date of your departure. Once the team leader has completed their online profile, the team leader will receive information to send to the team members on completing their online profile. This will need to occur within 105 days prior to the trip. Once tickets are purchased, they are non-refundable and non-transferable.
3. Have a **valid passport. Please make sure your passport does not expire within six (6) months of your departure date. (ex.: if your passport expires April 1, 2024 and your departure date is on or after October 1, 2023 you will want to have your passport renewed).** If you do not have a valid passport you will need to get one immediately. It usually takes 3-4 weeks to process a new passport. **You must have a visa to enter Cuba and our office will handle this process. We need your online profile completed and a copy of ALL passports 105 days in advance in order to process the visa request with Cuba.**

HEALTH: Team members must be in good physical health. **Anyone with a chronic medical condition should not volunteer for these projects.** Many areas of work will be quite hot and dusty. Volunteers will need to make sure the following shots are up to date: **Typhoid, Hepatitis A, and Tetanus.** Tell whoever administers your shots that you will be traveling to Cuba. (They may suggest other shots. This is up to you.) Shots are not required but suggested.

TRAVEL: ALL travel will be arranged by the Baptists on Mission Office. All trips will be **8** days in duration, leaving on Friday and returning the next Friday. We may be able to have Saturday-Saturday trips if the trip does not conflict with another team being in Cuba. All volunteers must depart from Charlotte, Greensboro or Raleigh/Durham. (Travel *may* be possible from other cities, but *may* involve an additional cost). Tickets and orientation materials will be sent to the team leader. Once travel arrangements have been made and visas have been requested all costs for the trip will be due to NC Baptists on Mission, even when a team member needs to cancel. Because we purchase cancellation insurance for each team member, it is up to the team member to contact the insurance for any reimbursements. Teams who are traveling to Cuba for the first time will need to contact Tom Beam, tbeam@ncbaptist.org or 1.800.395.5102, ext. 5626 to schedule an orientation session.

Visas – A visa is required to travel to Cuba. It will be requested **100 days in advance. (This is a Cuban requirement and it's non-negotiable).** The visa request will be generated by the Baptists on Mission office. Once visas are requested and information submitted **no one** can be added to the trip. The visa information needed for each team member is a part of their online registration, sent to the team leader by Baptists on Mission after team leader has completed his/her online registration.

LIVING AND WORKING CONDITIONS: Those participating in this effort must be flexible and willing to work as a member of the team. Travel, living, and working conditions may be difficult at times. The work may be strenuous and the climate will be **HOT**.

OTHER: Smoking, chewing tobacco, and drinking alcoholic beverages is highly offensive to Cuban Christians. Team members **must** refrain from these activities while in Cuba.

Overview of trip due dates

105 days from trip departure – Online registration for team leader and members is due to Baptists on Mission office. Copies of Passports are also due in our office at this time.

30 days from trip departure – All travel costs and team cost of \$3,000 due to Baptists on Mission office.

State Dept. Security* Please register your travel plans with the US State Department. You can do this by going on the State Department Web Site and registering there. You need to do this before you leave the United States. This is for your own protection and security while overseas should the need arise. Register as an individual. The website is:

<https://travelregistration.state.gov/ibrs/ui/index.aspx>

IF YOU MUST...

*If you must have cooking like Mom's, **BE FLEXIBLE!***

The meals prepared for you by the people in the area are a way to express their gratitude and to share fellowship, often at a great personal sacrifice.

*If you must sleep in a bed like your own and have your own private room, **BE FLEXIBLE!***

What you are offered will be the best the host has. Accept it, endure it and say "thank you". Where they live for a lifetime, you can live for a week or two.

*If you must be transported in a private vehicle everywhere you go, **BE FLEXIBLE!***

Most folks don't have cars. You can walk like they do or take the bus. Cars in other countries sometimes cost more than their houses.

*If you must do it your way or not at all, **BE FLEXIBLE!***

"Not at all" is a good choice if the alternative is the destruction of the bridges other Christians have been building for many years. Your way may be best, but that is not the point. In fact, if you ask, you can probably get a pretty good explanation for why things should be done as they are.

*If you must bring your biases and prejudices, **BE FLEXIBLE!***

You may have grown up believing that some ways of living or even some people are better than others. They are not. **You are coming to serve and to do so humbly.** Any condescending attitudes or remarks will quickly and clearly be understood even if all of your attempts at communicating the gospel are not.

On the other hand

If you will allow yourself to:

- *Be taught as much as you seek to teach...*
- *Be emptied in order to be filled...*
- *Be open to new ways of seeing and doing...*
- *Let God's love be your only motivation and interest...*

PLEASE COME!

General Travel Information and Tips:

1. **Travel to CUBA will require a valid, current passport and a Visa. The visa will be delivered to you at the airport in Cuba by an airport official when you arrive. Visa form due to our office 105 days before travel.**
2. **You will receive a yellow Cuba T-shirt in which you will wear to Cuba. TEAM LEADERS, please email Tom Beam your t-shirt sizes – tbeam@ncbaptist.org**
3. Always keep a travel checklist. Record those things that you will need to take as well as flight schedules, airline information, etc.
4. Carry a list of important phone numbers with you. **(Do not put this information in your baggage. You will need to have it with you).**
5. A copy of the first two pages of your passport should be carried in a place different from the original in case it is lost. You should carry two passport-size photos with you.
6. **COMMERCIAL FLIGHTS are flying to Santiago and Santa Clara, Cuba. Baggage fees will typically be charged on the first leg of the trip to Cuba and then on the flight out of Cuba. At this time the maximum weight per checked luggage on commercial flights is 50 lbs. The cost for the first checked luggage is \$30 and the cost for the second checked luggage is \$200. We suggest that you pack in a carryon and plan to wash clothes while in Cuba. You can pay your hosts to wash your clothes a few dollars and that gives them some extra income. I would suggest packing in one checked bag tools, extra snacks, food, etc.**
7. Carry-on bag must be able to fit in the overhead compartment or under the seat of the airplane. **For easy travel, suitcases with wheels work best. Also, using a backpack for carryon luggage is helpful.**
8. Mark your luggage clearly, placing identification labels inside and outside your bags. This will allow your group to identify your luggage once you land overseas. You will also have a NC Baptist Men luggage handle tag.
9. Pack your carry-on with one change of clothes in case your bags are delayed. Also put other essentials, personal medicine, glasses, camera, etc., in your carry-on. **Remember that liquids/gels are not allowed on your carry-on luggage unless they fit the official travel size containers allowed by TSA. Below are the instructions on how to do it for your carry on:**



10. Always arrive at the airport early. At least **three** hours ahead of time **for the international flight to and from Cuba**. This **will** give plenty of time to check baggage, pass through security, meet your group and make sure everyone has the appropriate documentation.
11. Be sure to have your passport and ticket.
12. **When in Cuba, please carry your passport with you at all times, unless you are at your place of lodging. It is considered a crime not to have your passport with you when you are on the road or if stopped by a Cuban officer.**
13. Check your bags from your airport of origin to Cuba. Commercial flights will check bags all the way to your destination in Cuba.
14. When traveling with a group, check-in is easier if you check in as a group. Checking in together helps assure your bags will arrive at the same destination.

15. Upon arrival in Cuba either **Donis Hernandez, Pastor Roinelvis (Roy)** or someone else from the Eastern Baptist Convention will be at airport to meet you.
16. Credit cards **ARE NOT accepted in Cuba**. Cash is the best form of acceptable payment. **RIGHT NOW we can take US dollars but this can change at any moment**. It is also important to have a list of your credit card numbers and the number to call if your cards are lost or stolen. **You will not exchange any money at the airport or banks. Please consult with your contact in Cuba once you arrive for best practice of converting money.**
17. Don't take pictures in airports, of military people or communications.
18. If for some reason no one is at the airport to meet your team, you should wait. In case you need to make contact, phone numbers are provided **at the bottom of this page**.
19. In traveling to Cuba and In returning to USA you may be asked to fill out Customs and immigration forms. Most airports in the US now use digital kiosk for customs forms.
20. Make sure luggage is checked to final airport destination (Santiago de Cuba, Santa Clara or any other city you may be traveling to in Cuba) as you leave Miami.

Phone Numbers and Addresses:

The On-Site Coordinator and **Director of the Rest Home** in Cuba is **Donis Hernandez**. He will meet arriving teams at the airport in Santiago as they exit the baggage claim area. The On-Site Coordinator for the seminary construction is **Pastor Roinelvis (Roy)**. They will provide transportation to and from team lodgings and the worksite. In the event that the coordinator is not at the airport due to an unforeseen emergency, the team should wait in the airport and attempt to make contact. The name of the Convention is: La Convencion Bautista Oriental de Cuba.

Team leaders will be given the address where the team is staying once all travel logistics have been made. Important phone numbers will also be given at that time.

SPECIFIC TRAVEL AND TIPS

Phone Numbers and Addresses:

Phone Numbers and Addresses:

You will need this information as you enter the country. Please share this address with the team members.

You will need this info to fill the entrance form on the airplane/Customs

Teams working construction at the Retirement Home use the following address on Custom forms:

KM 13.5 Carretera Carmel – Rumo a El Cobre – Santiago de Cuba

Teams working on construction at the seminary in Santa Clara use the following address on Custom forms:

Carretera Central, KM 317, banda Placetras, Villa Clara

The Convention address is:

Convención Bautista del Oriente - CBCOr
Calle Jeronimo 467 e/ Carniceria y Calvario
Santiago de Cuba, CUBA C.P. 90100.

Phone numbers to Cuba from USA.

If you are calling from Cuba you can drop the 011-53. You will need Spanish speaker:

Donis Hernandez Abella (cell) – 011-53-5289-6303

Pastor Roinelvis (Roy) (cell) – 011-53-5465-2588

Convention – CBCOr Reception – 011-53-5265-1144

For contacting The Baptist Men's Office in North Carolina:

Tom Beam - tbeam@ncbaptist.org - 1-800-395-5102, ext. 5626; Cell (919) 208-0478

Richard Brunson – rbrunson@ncbaptist.org -1800.395-5102 Ext. 5597

PREPARING FOR THE MISSION TRIP

Proper preparation for the mission trip will make the difference between a very positive experience for team members, and the possibility for disappointment.

It would be helpful to have at least one team member who has a good command of Spanish. In Cuba, Jose is usually the translator for NC teams traveling to the retirement home. His English is very good. Others will translate for seminary construction groups. On site folks have limited or no knowledge of English. Even if you take a translator with you on your team, you will still need to use one of our translators in Cuba. This is for because Cubans know the areas and can guide you if any problems arise. Please expect to pay a wage of \$150 per week for their work. Oftentimes this is the only salary they will receive when working for our groups.

Team Preparation:

Every mission trip requires flexibility on the part of participants. No matter how much planning is done, something will not follow the form. However, the better prepared team members are for the assignment, the smoother the whole process will go. It's important for your team to meet together at least once (several times is preferable) before the trip in order build unity and develop individuals' confidence in the team's mission. Consider these areas:

Spiritual Preparation – This is the most important preparation team members can undertake. We encourage each member to engage in personal prayer and Bible study time (quiet time). For some, this will already be a part of their lifestyles. For others, this will be a new undertaking. Do not assume each team member knows the importance of or the way to conduct a daily quiet time. Be willing to work on this. Do not be afraid to share with each other about spiritual matters. This will help unify your team for your ultimate purpose of being the light of Christ. However, you cannot be light without first being salt. Personal relationship and growth in Christ is part of being "salt" (Matthew 5:13-16). You may also want to provide age-appropriate evangelism training. Be sure you know the target group you will be ministering to (i.e. - preschoolers, 4-6 graders, youth, young adults, seniors, etc.) Opportunities to practice evangelism with a similar target in your area may be helpful as well.

Skills Preparation – Team members will feel more confident if they know their individual responsibilities. Those involved in construction should know the physical variables of each job (i.e. - height of the building, pitch of the roof, etc.), as well as what kind of tools is available, who will be responsible for materials, etc. Those doing VBS or games for children need to understand the safety factors involved, as well as have an idea of what the available play area is like. Bible story leaders should master the use of animated voices. Make sure the skills that are required match the skills of team members.

Cultural Preparation – Anywhere you go is not going to be like "home". Team members should be prepared to experience differences in climate, temperature, terrain, customs, **food** and language, just to name a few. Learn as much as you can about the area you are going to and the people with whom you will be working. Teams should also be aware of what socio-economic group they will be working with. Local church leaders should be able to assist you in understanding the mindset of the folks your team will be ministering to. Lonely Planet and Fodor's publish tourist guides are some resources that can teach something about the culture. Web searches are also helpful.

Physical Preparation – Team members should understand the physical requirements of each assignment. Some will be more physically demanding than others. However, a good diet, adequate rest, and proper conditioning are important in any mission situation. Team members should be made aware of this, as well as other physical factors such as projected temperature, precipitation, terrain, etc.

Mental and Attitude Preparation – After all other preparations are made, come back to this one. Encourage team members to focus on the purpose of the trip. Recall the goals of the local church and people you will be working with. It's important to meet their needs as opposed to imposing our desires upon them. Help team members understand that you are going to aid in an on-going ministry process that began before you arrived, and which will hopefully continue long after you are gone. Emphasize a servant/helper role as one aiding another in accomplishing their task. Finally, bathe everything you do in prayer.

AIRPORTS AND TRAVEL PROCEDURES

North Carolina to Miami

Travel will take place from NC airports (RDU, CLT, GSO). Most of our teams fly to Santiago or Santa Clara and travel by vehicle to the site. Team will want to check their luggage all the way to the destination in Cuba. Some teams flying to Santiago will overnight on the way home from Cuba in Miami.

Luggage Cost: Checked bags for Cuba are limited to 50 lbs. each. 1st checked bag is \$30 and second is \$200. Luggage costs should be generated at time of check in at the NC airport and not be added a second time in Miami or Ft. Lauderdale. Credit cards are accepted for luggage fees in NC.

Miami to Cuba

You will proceed to the commercial airline gate in which you are flying (Jet Blue, American). Once you are at the gate, the team leader will collect all passports and boarding passes for Cuba and proceed to the Cuba Ready Desk. Team leader will show the copies of the religious visas to the representative. The representative may make a phone call to our contact in Cuba. (Phone number on page 7). Once processed, all boarding passes will be stamped "Cuba Ready" and then team will be ready to board the flight when the time comes. It is always suggested that the team go directly to the gate to take care of this process before eating, checking phones, etc.

At Cuban Airport

The religious visa you received in USA are a copies of the original visas. The original visa will be given to you at the airport in Santiago or Santa Clara. A person will meet the team leader before any team members enter Passport control. This person will provide the original visa for all the team. Team leader should give these documents to each team members. One by one team should proceed to Passport control booths. You may be asked what you are doing and where are you going. **Team members should have the address of their lodging location and the name of their contact person.** Once through this area, travelers will have their carry-on bags checked, similar to security check in the US. Do not have exposed packets or bulges in pockets, as you will be asked about it. **This applies to money, too.** Obtain checked baggage, but have all team members wait at the baggage belt until you have all luggage. Proceed to doors to exit but you will pass by security staff who will take the small checked bag tag you received when checking your bag at the original airport. They may request that your bag to be searched. If a search is required, the person will place bag on a table and wait. Others will proceed through the checkpoint and then out the double doors to the left, you can't wait in this area for those whose bags are being checked. Your contact person and possibly other convention staff will be approaching you and will help you load luggage.

If you are going to Santiago, most likely you will be staying at the Retirement Home. Santa Clara teams will stay at My Camp. Donis and his family live at the Retirement Center. No smoking in convention buildings, president house, churches, retirement home or on the any other property. Team members should not leave the Retirement home, My Camp, or other lodging without one of the convention leaders or a team translator with them. If a team member is picked up for any reason by local authorities, it would be very difficult to deal with the situation especially if team is walking around by themselves. If the team is staying at the Retirement Center the team won't be needing transportation back and forth to the city. Otherwise, transportation to church and work will be by van or truck, depending on the number of members in a team. Bring clothes for a church service, **women need skirts, dresses or dress slacks, men need collar shirts and khaki pants (no tie required).** Laundry will be offered but donation is expected (about \$5 per person). You will be taken to some points of interests in Santiago or Santa Clara. Any costs for any sightseeing is the responsibility of the team. We also ask that you cover the costs of any Cubans that are with you, coordinator and/or translators.

Money Conversion

It is better to take US DOLLARS at this time and convert as needed. Team leader will pay majority of bills/donations during the first few days of arrival. Your contact person will collect funds and in Santiago Donis will take the team leader to the Convention's office. This will be done in **US Dollars**, (visas fee, room & board, construction materials). Request receipts. Take your Spanish translator with you, when you talk with convention contact.

If you want to convert personal money for shopping, etc. please communicate with your contact person in Cuba. They will help each team member do this. Please do not convert any money at the bank or at the airport.

Any money left over for team or personal can be donated to the project in which you are working.

Food

Be prepared for a surprise or two. Food is delicious. You'll need to ask for hot water for tea or for decaf coffee (If you need decaf coffee or tea you will need to provide your own.) You may want to pack snacks, especially if you have any food allergies or are a picky eater.

DEPARTURE from Cuba to Miami:

Stand in line for the appropriate flight. One by one approach counter with passport and ticket where name will be checked off flight roster.

Next proceed to Passport control where passport, visa and boarding pass will be checked. You may be asked what you thought of the country, people and whether you would return. Proceed from control booth to carry on screening. Don't have bulging pockets or you will be held up and items checked. Proceed to gate where you will remain until the plane comes. **Planes are many times late so you could be in this area 2 - 5 hours.** There is a small bar area which will make hot sandwiches. There are several small souvenir stores. Most stores will take US\$.

Arrival in Miami of Ft. Lauderdale: Upon arrival , you will proceed to Passport control; have passport ready. **Go to the US Citizen Line. Once you are cleared from Customs proceed to the "Exit" and follow the "Flight Connection" line to dispatch your luggage to North Carolina (or other destinations). Pass through security control and proceed to your gate. Be prepared to walk a little. There are a few stores and places to eat or shop at the terminal (s).**

SOUVENIRS AND GIFTS:

Read all information from Baptists on Mission carefully before leaving! At this time all US travelers are allowed to bring back no more than \$500 worth of souvenirs from Cuba. The new law also stipulates that no more than \$100 can be alcohol. (We do not condone any purchase of alcohol.) CIGARS ARE NOT PERMITTED into the US at this time.

Sometimes volunteers have been forced to check their intended carry-on luggage because it was too large or too heavy. Be sure and follow luggage limits carefully so as to avoid having to pay extra. (Be aware that these limits change from time to time without notice). There have been times when volunteers have had to allow their carry-on to be placed with checked baggage because there was no storage available on overcrowded planes. The point is – the smaller and more compact you can make your carry-on, the better experience you are likely to have. If you should be required to put your intended carry-on with checked luggage, make sure you take all essentials out and keep them with you: **Passport, tickets, baggage check claims, prescription medicines, etc.** If your luggage should be delayed, an on-site coordinator will help you fill out a missing luggage report with the airline. For permanent identification, leather or plastic tags with big letters help greatly. Also, remember to put identification inside the suitcase, near the zipper.

Money, cameras, passports and valuables should be in a carry-on when moving through and around airports. Special care needs to be taken against pickpockets and thieves. Compartments with money and tickets should be zipped or closed with a snap. Wallets are safer in a front pocket than a rear one.

Due to the uncertainty of medical supplies in Cuba, it is recommended that one who has a serious medical condition should consider other volunteer opportunities. It may be difficult to get prescription drugs from the US in case of loss or damage.

What to Bring: (A checklist)

- ❖ Bible
- ❖ Passport
- ❖ Airline Ticket copy
- ❖ Clothing. Bring clothes appropriate to work to which you have been assigned. If needed it's best to dress in layers. Short-legged pants (knee length) or capris are OK for the work site, but short shorts are not, especially for women. Most men in Cuba wear long pants even on the work site. For church, most women will be dressed in skirts or dresses. Kakis and shirts are OK for men to go to church services. Ask your contact person what is appropriate for Sunday's service.
- ❖ Bring something comfortable for wearing around the house, walking in the neighborhood or sightseeing. Most of the sightseeing trips will involve walking. There will be a place or two that involves hiking.
- ❖ Light rain jacket.
- ❖ Work gloves. You may want to wear them as well as dust mask when working on site.
- ❖ Toiletry items (toothbrush, toothpaste, shampoo, soap, etc.).
- ❖ Towel and washcloth. (Please consider leaving at your lodging in Cuba when you return to US)
- ❖ Pillow (provided for you but you may want your special pillow)
- ❖ Single sheets (provided but if you have a good set that you don't use anymore you may want to consider bringing and leaving in Cuba when you return to the states)
- ❖ Blanket – there is A/C in the bedrooms and it gets cool during the night.
- ❖ Shower shoes or flip-flops.
- ❖ Hat, cap and/or bandanas (Sun and wind protection).
- ❖ **Each team should have a basic medical kit containing bandages, peroxide, antibacterial creams, burn cream etc.**
- ❖ Insect repellent.
- ❖ Sunscreen and lip balm.
- ❖ Plastic shopping bags or trash bags (to pack dirty clothes or for return trip).
- ❖ Camera. Spare camera batteries.
- ❖ Flashlight and batteries.
- ❖ Watch.
- ❖ Personal mirror. There may or may not be a mirror.
- ❖ Personal medicines: Tylenol, laxatives, anti-diarrhea, eye drops, prescription medicines.
- ❖ Extra eye glasses (especially if you wear contacts).
- ❖ Toilet Tissue – lots of wipes.
- ❖ Antiseptic liquid soap.
- ❖ Snack food (zip lock bags).
- ❖ Personal journal.
- ❖ Leave any items possible for them but give them to the host for distribution.
- ❖ You may wish to take small gifts for some of the people you'll meet (NC items are nice).
- ❖ Power tools or advanced electronic equipment may delay at Cuba airport and some will be subject to taxation fees. This applies to DVDs, modem and other communication or recording devices (digital cameras are fine).

- ❖ Electricity might go off for a little while. It may be cut off at any time, usually for an hour or so.
- ❖ Suitcases need to stay closed during day and at night. Scorpions may be found in some places. Their stings are painful but not fatal. If allergic to insect stings bring the appropriate medicine. So far there have been no scorpion's stings in any of the teams.
- ❖ Plan to leave any and all clothes, tools, linens, when possible.

Optional Items you may want to consider to Bring For Team Use:

- ➡ Energy/sport drinks mix.
- ➡ Sugar Substitutes.
- ➡ Peanut butter & jelly or one or the other. Tabasco and Mayo are rare and expensive luxuries there.
- ➡ Instant grits and oatmeal (they love this).
- ➡ Toilet paper (compact rolls). Take at least 2. If you use wipes please consider taking a roll anyway.
- ➡ Disinfectant wipes.
- ➡ Hand sanitizer.
- ➡ Crackers or favorite snacks.
- ➡ Tea bags and decaf coffee. Regular coffee filters
- ➡ Individual packages of creamer for coffee, if you like. **Sometimes** milk is available.

Items for Cubans:

- Pain relievers, salves and stomach medicine.
- Vitamins for adults and kids (due to shortage of food they all like and want vitamins).
- Magazines and/or Readers Digest in Spanish (for worksite crews).
- If you bring tools to work with, (gloves, boots, etc) don't give them up until last workday. Otherwise you may not have items to use. We suggest that you give the items to Donis or other contacts and they will make the distribution to whomever you designate it for;
- Consider bringing a 2 lb bag of rice and 1-2 lbs of beans per person to offset the food shortage in Cuba

Weather

For information about the weather in Santiago and surrounding areas:

<http://www.weather.com/weather/today/CUXX0010:1>

Safety

Safety is always an important issue when traveling abroad. Whereas medical care may not be readily available or up to the standards you are used to, it is always advisable to take extra precaution. Do not take even simple risks that you may be willing to take at home.

Health:

- ➡ Only drink bottled or filtered water. Bottle/Filtered water will be available once you arrive.
You do not need to bring your own.
- ➡ Do not eat food from a street vendor. Food prepared for the teams and most food at Restaurants are fine to eat. Food offered to you at someone's home is generally OK. If in doubt, ask your contact or a translator.
- ➡ Bring a small supply of personal medicines, such as aspirin, laxative, anti- diarrhea medicine, and personal prescription medicines etc.
- ➡ Make sure you are up to date on Hepatitis A, Tetanus, and Typhoid or any other shots suggested by your medical personnel.
- ➡ Use lots of insect repellent.
- ➡ Wear a hat and sunscreen to protect yourself from the sun.
- ➡ Again, only those in good physical health should attempt this trip. **It will be hot and the work more strenuous than you expect.**
- ➡ Make sure and shake your shoes out each morning before putting them on. Also, shake out clothes and keep bags zipped at night. Scorpions and spiders are not uncommon.

Team Leader's Responsibility:

Each team should have a team leader. In some cases your team leader is obvious - he or she enlisted you to go on this trip. If a team leader is not apparent (mixed team), the Partnership Office will ask a team member to serve as leader. His or her responsibilities are as follows:

- ☀ Facilitate the completion and return of all Partnership applications, deposits, balances, and materials costs on time to the Partnership Office.
- ☀ Communicate with all team members before the trip (by letter, e-mail, and/or phone) to share information. The Partnership Office and on-site coordinator will communicate primarily through the team leader only. Team leader may want to lead in a pre-trip orientation meeting (if logistics allow).
- ☀ Communicate all needs or concerns of the group to the Partnership Office before the trip, and to the On-Site Coordinator while in Cuba. This should only be done through the team leader.
- ☀ Communicate information from the On-Site Coordinator to the team once in Cuba.
- ☀ Take the lead in getting everyone through check-in at the airport. (See Travel Tips). If team members are flying out of the same airport, team leader should arrange for members to meet together at the airport at the check-in counter so the team can check-in at the same time.
- ☀ Serve as or designate a Devotions Coordinator, responsible for enlisting a devotional leader for each day. A different person should lead each day. It is highly desirable that the team meets 20-30 minutes before breakfast for a devotion/prayer time each

morning, and after supper each night for a time of reflection and sharing. The team leader should make sure this happens. This is also a good time to relay work related or other information to the team.

- If team will be participating in a construction project, the team leader should organize the team to complete tasks. He or she may want to designate a “construction leader” to supervise the actual work while on the work site.
- The team leader (or designee) should be prepared to lead in case of a dedication service on the last day of work at the site. This will likely involve folks from the community.

General Description of Construction:

Be aware that construction techniques in Cuba (as with many places around the world) are quite different from that in the US. Do not assume that anything will be perfectly square or level. There is no mortar mix. Portland cement is mixed with coarse sand to make a mortar that sets up quickly in the Cuban heat. All masonry walls are put up in small segments. Reinforcing columns of cement are formed and poured to connect these segments. Re-bar placement and the use of horizontal tie-wires also differ from that in the US. It is very important that the team be flexible and open to the Cuban way of building. Please do not criticize or “suggest” what you believe to be a “better” way of doing it.

We do not want children playing near where our volunteers are laying block because of the danger involved to the children. If children come around and a couple of your group would like to play games or conduct VBS with local children, it should be done in the vicinity, but at a good, safe distance.

Evangelism and Other Ministry Opportunities:

Every team will be encouraged to engage in evangelistic opportunities in the area they serve. Each team will have the opportunity to pray for the community, families, and the local church. You may have opportunity to share Spanish tracts or Spanish New Testaments to folks as the Holy Spirit leads.

It is possible to conduct some nightly worship services during your stay. We encourage your team to creatively utilize their talents such as preaching, music, drama, puppets, etc. during these services. If you are interested in this, let the on-site coordinator know.

We encourage team members to bring VBS (or other) materials to be used with the children. They have almost no Children’s material for Christian education. Of course, these materials must be in Spanish.

The team will have opportunity to worship in the community on Sundays and some week days. **Make sharing the love of Christ with the Cuban community a priority, whether it be in word or in deed. Many Cubans are searching for answers. Help them find *the* answer - Jesus Christ - any way you can.**

Sharing Your Testimony

The purpose of any mission trip is to share the good news of Jesus Christ. Even if you are going to do something other than evangelism, you should go prepared to share your testimony. Spend time in prayer before you go. Pray that God will give you opportunity to share. Pray for those with whom you will share.

Many of you will have the chance to give your testimony in a church service. It may be that God provides an opportunity for you to share your testimony at the local market, on the construction site, in a city street, or somewhere else where you may not have the use of written materials (tracts). Although these can be effective tools, it is important you learn to share your testimony “hands-free”. Perhaps this outline can help you prepare to share your faith.

1. **HOW I REALIZED I NEEDED CHRIST** (20% of your testimony):

Look back over your life. What was your life like without Christ? This should be the shortest part of your testimony. Don't dwell on all the bad things you did in your past.

2. **HOW I BECAME A CHRISTIAN** (20% of your testimony):

Share briefly the circumstances of how you came to realize you needed Christ in your life. What did you do? Be prepared to share "the basics" of how one can accept Christ.

3. **HOW CHRIST HELPS ME IN MY LIFE TODAY** (60% of your testimony)

How has your life changed? How has your thought processes changed? What has Christ in your life enabled you to do?

Write your testimony out. This will help you focus on important points you want to remember. **You should be able to give your testimony in no more than 2-3 minutes.** People will initially listen to something if it is 2-3 minutes. If they want to ask questions and develop further dialog, the conversation will continue. You should give them a chance to respond to what you have shared with them within the first two minutes of the conversation.

Remember, when you share your testimony you are sharing what Christ has done in your life. Don't feel that your story needs to be dramatic to be effective. Trust the Holy Spirit, not only to lead you to the person who needs to hear your testimony, but also to work in that person's life.

The following are some scripture passages you should try to know from memory:

John 3:16

Romans 3:23-25

Romans 6:23

Romans 10: 9-10

Romans 8: 38-39

Here are some helpful hints in sharing your testimony:

- | | |
|--------------------|------------------------------|
| Be positive | don't argue |
| Listen | Offer to pray for the person |
| Encourage feedback | Try not to be defensive |

Gift Guide for Cuba

Volunteers who spend **\$1,500** or more to go on a mission trip to Cuba are by nature generous and loving people. They like to give gifts to those with whom they work. Their churches often desire to send something to Cuba to bless the people there. Volunteers are not expected or required to take items to give away. If they wish to do so, great. If not, that's fine. Volunteers are already making a great sacrifice of time and money to go to Cuba.

If you want to give a gift (money, clothes, etc) to a Cuban Baptist, an interpreter or church, give it to Donis Hernandez, Pastor Roy, or to your contact and let them give it to that person or that church. This will help avoid many problems that come up as result of individual gift giving. (Note: most teams do leave tips for those who serve them during the week they are there: the coordinator, the cooks, the translator and the drivers. If you want to know more about this please call our office for more information). **However, there is no problem in giving a donation to a church by placing a gift in the offering plate at a church service. This can be CUC's or US\$.**

ALL GIVE-A-WAYS NEED TO BE CLEARED with Pastor Donis, Pastor Roy or your contact before being promised to any church or individual. In most instances, our contacts will collect items and distribute evenly. Be aware that problems sometimes arise when folks bring too many give-aways. For example, when Group A gives away toys and candy and bookmarks and pencils and notebooks, the children expect the next group to bring loads of the same. If it does not, the children go home disappointed. If your team has been blessed with an amount of school supplies (or some other helpful item), the Cuban coordinators are glad to discuss with you where it can accomplish the most good.

Here's some guidelines we have developed over the course of our Partnerships that can help us avoid these problems in the future. If you *do* choose to bring gifts:

1. Please bring practical gifts. Small toys are okay, but a small notebook or pencil lasts longer than a piece of chewing gum and is of more value than a plastic car. **Plan to give all gifts to our coordinators for them to distribute.**

Possible gifts for children:

pencils, small notebooks, crayons, coloring books, children's scissors, baseball

caps, short-sleeve button-up shirts, nice used tennis shoes, socks, soccer balls, hacky-sacks, baseballs, baseball bats, baseball gloves.

Possible gifts for construction co-workers:

sturdy trowels, a tape measure in inches and metric, a brick hammer, toolbox, saw, 2' or 3' level, gloves, nail apron, hack saw, baseball gloves.

Possible gifts for nationals (host pastor, host family, etc.):

T-shirts with the name of your church, baseball caps, bath or face towels, toothpaste, soap, candy, flashlights, watch, family photos to remember you by.

Possible gifts for churches:

Hymnals in Spanish (Himnario Bautista; word-only edition), discipleship materials, 1960 Reina-Valera Bibles or New Testaments, Spanish language choruses or Christian music cassettes, guitar strings, Sunday School story posters, craft materials (with instructions).

2. **Please do not give away items at the work site, except on the last day,** remembering to give all items to our contacts for their distribution.

3. There are real needs in Cuba. It is the responsibility of the Eastern Baptist Convention and the local associations to state what the needs are. Often, the volunteers see only the needs of the church or family with whom they are working. Just as in the case with individual workers, jealousy can naturally arise if a host church is continually receiving gifts, while others, who may not be able to be hosts, get nothing. Many needs exist in other churches or other parts of the country that may be greater than the ones you see. We ask volunteers, therefore, to talk to the coordinators before giving large sums of money to local churches. Any gift of \$25 or more is considered a large gift. If the team perceives a need, it may ask the on-site coordinator about meeting that need. **Be careful NOT to promise anything to local pastors without first speaking to the on-site coordinator. If Pastor Donis or any of our contacts indicate that the need is there, then follow their instructions on giving to the church or person. If our contacts indicate that the need is not as great as you or your team perceives, please respect them and do not give to church or person.** Remember that in this culture, even the *hint* of a promise may be taken as just that – a promise.

Many times, team members develop close relationships with Cuban nationals, whether in a church, working together on a project, or with an interpreter. In the process of developing those relationships, team members may sense a need. Any perceived need should be discussed with our coordinators. If our coordinators confirm that need, then the team member (or members) can make preparations to meet that need. Please do not make promises from a perceived need. Many times team members do not know circumstances in which an individual or church has found themselves in.

If an individual wants to try to send an item or items to Cuba for individuals or churches where a need has been verified, the person sending the item or items must pay for any extra luggage costs and extra weight costs. Most teams traveling to Cuba, already have their maximum weight allowance and taking items for others adds to the luggage and weight costs. The office at NC Baptist Men is always willing to answer any questions and to help facilitate.

Engaging your Congregation in the Mission Project

Prayer Support:

The support of your church for the mission project is very important. Key to this is prayer support. Of course, team members should be encouraged to pray daily for the trip and its preparation. But prayer support should extend to the whole congregation as well. Begin involving the church family early on in the mission's process, so that prayer support can undergird each phase of the process – development and planning, travel, ministry, and follow-up.

Here are some ideas how:

1. Choose a prayer coordinator.
2. Make a monthly prayer list/calendar available to the congregation.
3. Distribute a needs list.
4. Encourage prayer warriors to be in prayer for:
 - The spiritual maturing of the team members.
 - Those with whom ministry will be conducted.
 - Those who will hear the Gospel.
 - The working of the Holy Spirit throughout the project.
5. Seek personal prayer partners for each individual on the team.
6. Hold cottage prayer meetings two-three weeks prior to the trip.
7. Involve prayer partners in the Commissioning service.

8. Ask prayer partners to write notes of encouragement to team members to be distributed while at the ministry site.
9. Include a prayer partner testimony as part of your team's sharing/praise time with the congregation upon your return.

Financial Support:

Each church will deal with this issue differently. Some will ask team members to support themselves and the project completely. Some may be able to finance trip expenses (materials, supplies, etc.) and half of each team member's way. Others will support the entire project, including project costs and team members travel. There is no right or wrong way to do it. However, if the team will be seeking funding from the church, here are some suggestions:

1. Develop a complete, detailed, and realistic budget.
2. If possible, begin a year in advance and request inclusion in the church budget.
3. Take up special offerings – perhaps every 5th Sunday.
4. Determine the cost for each person to make the trip and ask for financial adoptions.
5. Develop a designated account for continual giving with regular announcements of progress toward the overall goal.
6. Hold fund-raising projects, such as dinners, banquets, etc.

Church Commissioning Service

Consider conducting a dedication service for the mission team on the Sunday prior to their departure. This allows the church to formally participate in the sending out the group as their missionaries. There should be time for participation of both team members and the congregation in the service. Team members should be challenged to focus on their role as "carriers of the Good News". The congregation should be challenged to be active participants through the ministry of prayer.

You may want team members to sit together in a designated area toward the front of the church. The theme of the service (including music) should be mission's service and commitment. Consider testimonies from one or two team members about how God has been working in their lives to prepare them for service. A responsive reading, led by the pastor, which includes challenges to the team members and the congregation, would be appropriate. Finally, the team may be asked to kneel at the front while church members come by to lay hands on each individual and offer a quick prayer or words of Christian encouragement.

Sample Commissioning Service

Congregational Hymn

Opening Prayer

Scripture Reading

Scripture Commitment and Group Confession (team may read together Psalm 51: 16-17; Psalm 139: 23-24 for example)

Congregational Hymn

Message (John 13 – Jesus' Servant Example; Luke 10 – Commissioned by Jesus; Isaiah 6 – Isaiah's Call)

Litany of Commitment

Congregation: We present these servants before you, Oh Lord, committing to pray consistently for them in their service to you.

Mission Team: We present ourselves to you, thankful for Your call to service, thankful for your provision for service, and thankful for your leadership in our service.

Congregation: We send these, your missionaries, out as an extension of ourselves, seeking your protection and wisdom for them.

Mission Team: We acknowledge we can do nothing without you, Oh Lord, and all that will be accomplished is because of you and through you, Mighty God, in your Son Jesus, and through the power of the Holy Spirit.

Congregation: Use them, Oh God. Use us, Oh God.

Mission Team: Use us all Oh God.

Prayer of Dedication

Laying on of Hands

Congregational Hymn

Closing Prayer

Insurance - Supplementary Coverage Information

We hope everyone will have a safe and enjoyable experience in Cuba. However, with so many people involved, it is possible there will be a medical need at some point. This will either be of an emergency or a non-emergency nature. Each team leader should be certain his/her team is knowledgeable of the procedure for each.

Your insurance coverage with **Gallagher Charitable International Insurance Services** through the NC Baptists on Mission is "Supplementary Coverage". It is necessary because it often covers expenses that might not be covered by your primary insurance. A Volunteer who encounters medical expenses overseas should first report to their primary insurance carrier. (We recommend you check with your carrier before leaving on your trip to see if they cover bills from overseas).

Please note: if there are medical needs in a foreign country, **the hospital and doctors usually require payment at the time of service**. You should have a credit card on hand for making payments to the hospital or care facility. You should send your receipts to your primary carrier and then, in case they don't cover your expenses, you should contact **Gallagher Charitable International Insurance Services**. Be sure to obtain documentation from all medical personnel and facilities rendering service for turning in to the insurance company.

An insurance card might be enclosed with this manual or it has been emailed to your team leader or to you. Please take it with you overseas. In case you need to contact **Gallagher Charitable International Insurance Services** please refer to the Policy Number provided on the card.

IN CASE OF AN EMERGENCY, PLEASE CONTACT YOUR TEAM LEADER AND/OR ON SITE COORDINATOR FIRST. He/she knows what steps to take for the fastest care available to you. Your team leader or the onsite coordinator will contact your family or church in the USA for you if there is a need to do so.

**INSURANCE BENEFITS FOR Baptist State Convention of North Carolina****SUMMARY OF COVERAGES**

| | |
|--|-------------------|
| Accidental Death and Dismemberment Principal Sum <i>(reduced to \$10,000 for those under age 12 and over 70)</i> | \$100,000 |
| Medical Expense, \$100 deductible <i>\$2500 of this limit is available to pay US providers: no pre-existing condition exclusion</i> | \$10,000 |
| Emergency Medical Evacuation <i>Coordinated by SAS: will bring insured back to USA: no pre-existing condition exclusion.</i> | \$100,000 |
| Family Coordination & Repatriation of Mortal Remains <i>Combined limit for both benefits Includes \$2,500 sublimit for extra expenses incurred during an approved medical evacuation</i> | \$25,000 |
| Assistance Service <i>Available 24/7/365 for assistance with worldwide medical emergencies: provided by SAS</i> | \$100,000 |
| Crisis Management Service <i>Available 24/7/365 for assistance with worldwide non-medical emergencies: provided by SAS</i> | \$100,000 |
| General Liability <i>Worldwide jurisdiction: covers volunteer and sending organization; includes coverage for injury to a volunteer</i> | \$1,000,000 |
| Property Property <i>Replacement cost coverage: includes checked baggage: "door to door" coverage</i> | \$2,500 |
| Disability Income | |
| <i>First 100 months - Accident</i> | \$1,000 / per mo. |
| <i>Months 101-200 - Accident</i> | \$500 / per mo. |
| <i>50 months - Sickness (after 3 month waiting period)</i> | \$250 / per mo. |

This brief summary is not an insurance policy; rather, it outlines some of the features of this coverage. For specific details, please consult the Master Policy. This is not a major medical policy. Major Medical Coverage is available for individuals and groups on Short-Term and Long-Term Volunteer missionary assignments.

Gallagher Charitable International Insurance Services - Missionary Insurance Services is our Specialty

Telephone: (803) 758-1400 | **Toll Free Client Services Line:** (800) 922-8438 | **Fax:** (803) 252-1988

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INCIDENT REPORT FORM

(This is for use by the team leader in case of accident, injury, or other incident)

PLEASE PRINT

DATE OF REPORT _____ INJURY ___ ILLNESS ___ OTHER _____

DATE INCIDENT OCCURRED _____ TIME _____ AM/PM

LOCATION INCIDENT OCCURRED _____

CITY _____ STATE _____ ZIP _____

DISCRIPTION OF WHAT HAPPENED _____

NAME(S) OF THOSE HURT / ILL / OR OTHER:

_____ ADDRESS

CITY _____ STATE _____ ZIP _____

TELEPHONE _____ AGE _____ MALE ___ FEMALE ___

DESCRIBE WHAT ACTION WAS TAKEN:

WITNESS _____ ADDRESS _____

CITY _____ STATE _____ ZIP _____

TELEPHONE _____

ADDITIONAL INFORMATION: _____

YOUR NAME (PRINT) _____ TITLE _____

ADDRESS _____

CITY _____ STATE _____ ZIP _____ TELEPHONE _____

YOUR SIGNATURE _____

CUBA / NORTH CAROLINA BAPTIST PARTNERSHIP

GENERAL MEDICAL INFORMATION & RELEASE FORM

(To be filled out by applicant and kept by team leader for medical reference in case of incident during the trip)

Name: _____ Birthday: ___/___/___ Age: _____ Sex _____
(last) (first)

Address: _____ City _____ State: _____ Zip: _____

Telephone: () _____

Marital Status: _____ Weight: _____ Height: _____

Emergency Contact Person: _____ Telephone: () _____

Medical History:

a. General Health: _____

b. Limitations: _____

c. Any history of the following (circle): trick knee weak ankles bad back other _____

d. Are you subject to (circle): diabetes epilepsy heart disease hypertension other _____

e. Appendix removed? _____ f. Tetanus shot updated? _____

g. Medicines taken: _____

Reason: _____

Reason: _____

h. Allergies(food, drugs, other): _____

Medications used to treat allergies: _____

i. Medical treatment received in the past year: _____

j. Have you had or been exposed to any contagious disease in the past six months? _____.

If so, what? _____

Physician's Name: _____ Office Phone: _____

Address: _____ City: _____

CONSENT

I hereby give permission for my son / daughter / self (if over 18 years of age) to receive emergency medical attention from a physician in the event of illness or injury.

Signed: _____ Date: _____

HEALTH INSURANCE

Insurance issued in the name of: _____

Address of insured: _____

Name of insurance company: _____

Address of insurance company: _____

Policy number: _____

PHYSICIAN (optional)

I have examined the applicant and find that he/she is in fit health for participation in the Cuba/NC Partnership.

Physician's Signature _____ Date: _____

Comments: _____

Provide this signed form to your team leader before departing for your trip. If an individual (not member of a team), make sure you fill it in and take it with you.

IRS Deductions for Volunteer Mission Projects:

In consultation with the auditors and the Business Management Department, the following information may be helpful to you in obtaining an IRS charitable contribution deduction relating to your expenses for volunteer mission project.

Generally, you can claim a charitable contribution deduction for travel expenses necessarily incurred while you are away from home performing services for a charitable organization only if there is no significant element of personal pleasure, recreation, or vacation in the travel. This applies whether you pay the expenses directly or indirectly. You are paying the expenses indirectly if you make a payment to the charitable organization and the organization pays for your travel expenses.

The deduction for travel expenses will not be denied simply because you enjoy providing services to the charitable organization. Even if you enjoy the trip, you can take a charitable contribution deduction for your travel expenses if you are on duty in a genuine and substantial sense throughout the trip. However, if you have only nominal duties, or if for significant parts of the trip you do not have any duties, you cannot deduct your travel expenses.

Deductible travel expenses include air, rail, and bus transportation; out-of-pocket expenses for your car; taxi fare or other costs of transportation between the airport or station and your hotel; lodging costs; and the cost of meals.

(Information from Publication 526, 2011 ed. of the IRS, p. 5-6)

To secure such deduction, all payments should be made through your local church or directly to NC Baptist Men.

⁹ During the night Paul had a vision of a man of Macedonia standing and begging him, "Come over to Macedonia (CUBA) and help us." -

Acts 16:9 (New International Version ©2011)

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Orientation manual compiled by Archie Jones, Richard Brunson, Executive Director/Treasurer NC BAPTISTS ON MISSION, David Alabaster (Cuba Volunteer from Snyder Memorial B C in Fayetteville), Tom Beam and Fatima Roma.

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NC Baptists on Mission