

Baptist in Eastern Cuba

EASTERN BAPTIST CONVENTION

Cuba is divided into two Baptist Convention's (Eastern and Western). The two conventions plus one municipal convention make up the Cuban National Baptist Convention.

Santiago is the convention headquarters for the Eastern Convention. The Eastern Convention is comprised of 8 provinces. Each province is a separate mission district and is structured similar to the National Convention. Each has a President who serves as a Vice President of the National Convention. The convention is 104 years old.

Pastor Donis Hernandez, Chairman of Stewardship for the Convention (volunteer position), former pastor of Maquina Baptist Church in Maisi, and now the Director of the Rest Home shared the following information in 2004:

The Eastern Convention has the following:

- o 278 organized churches
- o 1 seminary on 2 sites with 62 students
- o 8 summer camps (4 official, 4 unofficial)
- o 1 Pastor's Retirement Home (in medium stage of construction)
- o 686 house churches and missions (this is in addition to the 278 organized churches)
- o 1977 prayer cells that meet regularly (serve as embryos for house churches)
- o 170,871 worshippers "convention family". 57 churches did not send in their number of worshippers
 - o 4 million people live in the Eastern Convention area
 - o Churches have adult men, adult women and children's departments
 - o In 2003 20,408 professions of faith
 - o In 2003 2,490 baptisms. (Some churches baptize as soon as 4 months after conversion and some wait a year. Churches have classes for new converts and each church decides when someone is ready to become a church member
 - o 206 Men's Departments (Same as our Baptist Men) Baptist Men of Cuba have as their primary purpose the financial support of retired pastors and their families;
 - o Baptist women are involved primarily in missionary outreach
 - o Youth groups (171 groups with over 8,000 members) try to help build homes for retired pastors so they will have a permanent home when they retire. (If there are homes on church property they are to be used by active pastors and must be vacated when a pastor retires)
 - o Eighty percent (80%) of the churches have less than 36 members
 - o Largest church has about 1300 members
 - o Sunday morning worship attendance last year was 170,871
 - o 851 congregations are led by lay people
 - o 13 Bible Centers that train lay people in church leadership

The Convention Goals for 2010 are as follows:

- 300,000 professions of faith
- 100 new churches
- 50,000 baptisms

The Convention budget for 2004 was 609,000 Cuban pesos (about \$22,550.00) 27pesos=\$1.00 US