

April 2005, *Equipping*

A Moment for Celebration: A Mission Moment

We invite you to share the following story with your congregation. It should take no more than 2 minutes to read aloud. You might also wish to include the story in your church newsletter.

Cuba

Ramon's image flickers for a second before coming into clarity on the TV screen. The leader of a new denomination in Cuba, Ramon appeals to leaders of Mennonite Church Canada Witness to 'extend our tents' and offer the same series of courses for his pastors as Witness has done for the Evangelical Missionary Church in Cuba. "What we are offering, the way we are teaching," he says, "is what they need."



Alexander and Aisha are a young pastoral couple in Santiago de Cuba who are writing a letter to Cuban government officials advocating for the release of imprisoned Mennonite leaders in Vietnam.

In another city in Cuba, Alexander and Aisha¹ are collaborating with the Evangelical Missionary Church in Cuba in participating with Mennonite Church Canada's advocacy for imprisoned Mennonite leaders in Vietnam. They have already had the benefit of several Leadership Training instalments delivered by Witness. The young pastoral couple will write a letter to Cuban government officials. They felt compelled to act after they learned about Mennonite history and Mennonite martyrs who perished for their faith during the reformation.

Ramon's video taped message was sent back to Canada with an 18 member Canadian delegation on a Learning Tour in Cuba to meet, greet, and experience the relationship we have with the emerging Evangelical Missionary Church there – a church that has adopted as their own the Mennonite Confession of Faith. Far from being the usual tourist get-away, the group were moved by first hand stories of the life of the church and the people of Cuba – like Alexander and Aisha.

One Canadian participant shared that her faith in God and the church as God's instrument, had been restored as a result of the trip. Another told how her prior cynicism about the need for international mission had been transformed. Another noted how the experience has helped her make the shift from the mission work of the former Commission on Overseas Mission (COM) to Mennonite Church Canada Witness. Others felt compelled to think about meaningful, long term responses.

We rejoice with the Churches in Cuba and are inspired by their energy, vision and depth. And, to pass on their message to Mennonite Church Canada, they offer their sincere thanks for the ministry we have with them, their prayers for us, and request our prayer for them.

Church leaders also asked us to please offer a second series of courses for their pastors. The Anabaptist message is one that Cuba needs, they said. Should we go?

¹ Aisha is phonetically pronounced 'Eye-sa'