Correction: Read the Spring Issue of The Volunteer Online

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On March 26, 2011 Maranatha dedicated the new church on the campus of the Seventh-day Adventist Seminary in Havana, Cuba.

Ted Wilson, president of the worldwide Adventist Church, presented the dedication sermon.

Caridad Diego, Minister of Religion in Cuba, recognized the positive impact that the new building will have on the community.

The Seventh-day Adventist Seminary in Cuba trains most of the new pastors in the country and currently has students from 10 other countries as well.
Cuba Church Dedication

A PLACE TO GROW

BY KYLE FIESS

Vivian lives on the fourth floor of a boxy, concrete apartment block in Havana, Cuba. She shares the two-bedroom home with a son who has cancer, daughter, son-in-law and granddaughter.

Not long ago Vivian answered a knock at her door and found a young student from the Seventh-day Adventist Seminary. The Seminary, about a 20-minute walk from Vivian’s house, trains young people to be effective Adventist pastors.

The student asked Vivian if she would like to study the Bible. She did, and liked what she learned. Soon she was inviting her neighbors to join the Bible study. Every Wednesday, her friends would bring chairs to her apartment and join in singing, prayer and Bible lessons—all led by a team of Seminary students.

The group grew too large for Vivian’s house. But that didn’t stop her from inviting friends to join them. On a recent afternoon, the living room was packed. Music reverberated across the apartment complex as enthusiastic students shared the love of Jesus.

The knock that came on Vivian’s door was not a random accident. Students at the Seminary participate in an active program to be a positive influence in their community. Rather than retreating behind campus walls to study their lessons, these students practice in a real-world laboratory. But it’s more than a school assignment—the students’ real motive is to share the Gospel message.

Yenisely Castillo, the seminary outreach director, points to a map of the neighborhood that shows eight sections. “There are 15,000 people who live in this area. Teams are assigned to each section and are responsible for establishing and nurturing small groups. Right now there are many small groups meeting throughout the neighborhood.”

Pastor Castillo and his students had one big problem as they reached out to their friends and neighbors. There was no church at the Adventist Seminary. They met in the cafeteria, and there was no room to invite friends and neighbors.

When Maranatha built a new Adventist Seminary in Havana 10 years ago, there was not adequate space for a church. Over the years, church leadership acquired land and received permission to build.

Nearly three years after the groundbreaking ceremony, a new church stands at the Seminary, accommodating students and community members and serving as a location for pastoral training.

But very soon, their friends from the community will outnumber the students. Vivian will walk 20 minutes to attend church on Sabbath and many of her friends will come with her.

The students are putting into practice a challenge given them by Caridad Diego, the Minister of Religion in Cuba. “If these buildings are empty, it does not matter how beautiful they are. Use this church to show others how they can be better people.”

Back in Vivian’s apartment, the mood is joyous. The afternoon Bible study has just finished and she is passing out Guava juice. Vivian, her son and several friends are getting baptized in a month. Her life has a new purpose and meaning. She’s going to go knock on a few more doors.
120 Helpers, 48 Buildings, 100 PERCENT COMPLETE
BY CARRIE PURKEYPILE

Renita Turner has volunteered with Maranatha for years. But this January she stepped out on a whole new adventure to Zimbabwe. “It was surreal! I constantly had to remind myself, ‘you’re in Africa!’” she says. “I absolutely loved it! You have preconceived notions of Africa, but you get there and it’s really not so.”

Veteran volunteer Herb Dennison has a real passion for young people, and he puts his time and heart into building schools for Adventist families and other members of the community. “I really, truly believe in the youth of our church. They are our future.”

The community in Victoria Falls, Zimbabwe was very excited about the school project at Mkhosana. The large-scale project required more than 120 volunteers, and local people thanked them in the streets for their gift of service. The manager of the largest, most beautiful hotel in town proudly spread the news that her child was the first to be registered at the new school. Like her, many of the students registering were not Adventists.

The large Mkhosana campus includes preschool, elementary and secondary classrooms, each in their own areas. The volunteers built 34 total buildings on the campus, including bathrooms, classrooms, offices and a large church.

A highlight for volunteers was being part of the project from start to finish. This was the first project utilizing volunteers to build an entire campus of One-Day School structures. On the first day of the project, little more than concrete slabs awaited at the Mkohsana campus. But by the last day, they were ready for school to start.

“Those were decorated when we left!” says Marilyn Dennison, who was lucky enough to be on the decorating committee. As a final touch, “We hung banners that said, ‘Jesus Loves You,’ as well as the Zimbabwe flag at the front of each classroom over the chalkboard.” While many were busy helping on the construction sites, others were meeting different needs farther...
out in the bush. A contingent of dedicated leaders trekked through a muddy slog to and from one village to hold Vacation Bible School for the children. Their truck refused to navigate the bog and they were covered in mud, but the smiles of eager children were worth the effort.

Besides the large campus, volunteers partially built another school campus in Baobab, as well as eight additional One-Day Churches within traveling distance. Each Sabbath the group split up to visit area congregations.

“Oh, the music!” exclaims Renita. “It may be a small church, but there is always a choir, and I could listen to them all day! Just beautiful music.”

One Sabbath Renita and the group visited the “Airport Church,” which is close to the local airport. Right in front of them sat the congregation’s three stages of development. First they met under the tree, then under a thatch roof shanty, with no walls, and finally in a completed One-Day Church. The group of Africans and foreigners crowded into the low-roofed hut to begin the service, planning to ceremoniously march to the new structure for the ribbon cutting later in the program.

Suddenly the sky broke open and rain poured down on the shanty, instantly drenching everyone in and around it. “It was a deluge!” laughs Renita. “We said, ‘Forget the ribbon cutting!’ And everyone ran over to the new church!”

Back at the Mkhosana school, the group prepared for a special event the final week. Evangelist Mark Finley conducted meetings for more than 3,000 attendees. They filled every seat, and still people were standing. “I sat there watching the teenagers and the kids,” says Renita. “They were so engrossed in the message. I couldn’t get over that, how they were just glued to all the presentations including the special music, health presentations and sermons. They were just hungry for anything.”

While the school was still under construction, more than 700 children preregistered for classes beginning in April. Marilyn is convinced. “These One-Day Schools are going to be a real blessing for Africa.” Thanks to our outstanding donors and volunteers, they already are.
A very determined group of people in Honduras had a dream that is now being fulfilled through the hard work of Maranatha volunteers.

Of the 770 children at the school, only about 120 come from Adventist families. The school is highly regarded around the city, and parents send their kids from every neighborhood in the area.

School principal Norma Garcia de Corrales is excited about the possibilities that will come with a new facility. “Adventist education is a symbol of prestige,” she says of the reputation for excellence. Some children join because they want to be part of the band that performs at public events, others because of the English classes.

“Everyone would like to have their children in this school. Many don’t have the money for a private school. Others who do have money don’t like it because the school is small, uncomfortable. With this new building we will be able to reach them. It is a huge blessing that God has brought us through Maranatha,” says Norma.

The first team of blessings were volunteers on the Christmas Family Project. People of all ages pitched in and built fast. Art and Carol Moffit have been on many family projects and love them. “The people who go with us are very congenial,” he says of the volunteers who have become lifelong friends. “It’s like family!” Art kept busy supervising...
construction at the school, which is one of the biggest projects he’s ever worked on with Maranatha, and Carol took a team of volunteers to connect with local children and their parents.

“I had a busload of volunteers!” exclaims Carol. “This school is so important. At the old school they have been losing students. They want those original 900 students back, not just 700. They’ve been given a grant and will have computers soon. They are going to fill that school—no question!”

Principal Norma is overjoyed at the reality of God’s blessing. “I have been there watching every block they lay! I have been there all the time ever since Maranatha arrived, every day!”

The huge campus will house 1,200 students. Nine volunteer groups will work on the campus before its completion later this year. Carl Crawford came on the Honduras Open Team project in February, and his group started the process of building the One-Day School structures. “They are amazing buildings!” he says. “It is very simple—just a cordless drill, two sizes of self-tapping screws, and an anchoring device that goes into the concrete.”

Three more teams joined forces over the spring break push in March to make a big difference on the campus. They built numerous One-Day classrooms, and churches, did block work and held community outreach.

More opportunities are available to help at the Choluteca campus. Join the Summer Family Project June 16-26, or the Young Adult Project July 28-Aug. 8, 2011.

Principal Norma can hardly contain her excitement. “We are praying that this project will end just like it began because this is a miracle from God.”

Come be part of the miracle!