


Stories from Cuba Contest Winners



CEO
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We are excited to have our “Christmas Wish List” return from last year where people from Cuba share their hopes! Participants are chaplains working with prisoners and their families. We opened the contest for 50 chaplains and each one that submitted their stories would receive \$10 to help them with their Christmas. The five winners picked by the team in Cuba would receive \$100 for their participation. These stories were overwhelming for my wife and I as we have been to many of these places. Sandra stopped reading at times as she wept; remembering the homes with dirt floors, crumbling wooden walls, and the labor it took just to live a simple life. Most of the stories were of humble, hard-working men asking for something they could bless their wives. These simple items included such as a small fridge or a blender to better preserve food. One item that appeared a couple times was a washing machine to save hours of cleaning clothes on a rock. These people are just like you and I, but in such different conditions. They have few possessions, with which they take great joy and thank God for His blessings. As you read these stories consider their situation and reflect on what it would be like to be in their situation. Let us be filled with gratitude for what God has given us this year focusing on what we have and not on what we do not have. Let’s ask ourselves, what does the Lord want us to see? We received 20 of the 50 stories submitted and here are a few that we can share with you. This picture is of Sandra, our Cuban puppy Bella and I. – Brian James



My name is Ricardo Santana Rodriguez, I live in Guantanamo, Cuba. I work with the district chaplain preparing the monthly reports to be sent to the national chaplaincy. We visit prisoners’ relatives, addicts, the elderly, and children from broken homes. I have been married for 12 years to Daimara. We work in a school where she teaches art, and I am a computer teacher. We have two girls; one who is seven and the other is three. We have lived with my in-laws’ for eight years without privacy. My seven-year-old sleeps with her grandmother and the three-year-old with me and my wife. My in-laws are divorced but share the home. They are not Christians, which makes it difficult to educate our daughters because their customs are not in line with the gospel. Our combined monthly salary is \$111. We have been saving for many years to afford the cheapest house with necessary conditions which costs \$3000 USD. We are only \$461 away but it continues to be a great challenge with how much we can save monthly. It will take us approximately another year to save enough. Probably more as prices keep

rising. However, the owners can’t wait that long. Our prayer is God grant us a house for Christmas or even a room to live. We could have some privacy as a marriage and freedom to protect and disciple our daughters as we prepare them for life. We trust in the scriptures and His promise that those who are faithful and trust, whoever believes in Him will not be ashamed. Glory to God! Thank you!



My name is Giovanni Vidal Ortiz. I serve God as a Presbyter in Santiago de Cuba working with “at risk children,” and with people that have disabilities, or addicts, and the elderly. I focus much of my time with inmates in prisons taking the Word of God, food, clothing, and other items collected among the chaplains. We visit inmates’ families of those we serve in prisons, some of whom God has helped us win to Christ. I can testify that this ministry was given to me by

the Lord when I was in prison in Guantanamo. That was the response to the prayer of an old lady who interceded for my life so God would reach me behind bars. Since then, I am a new creature. It happened by reading Ephesians where it says, "let him who stole steal no longer, but rather let him labor working with his hands what is good, that he may have something to give him who has need." I was there precisely for the crime of theft. I understood that the word says we are saved by the grace of Jesus Christ! In relation to what I long for this Christmas is a bicycle which I need to carry out God's work and to take my child to school. I thank the Lord I am married and have two children. The oldest is 14 and the youngest 12. The youngest has down syndrome. Both the inmates of the prisons that I assist and the military that take care of them, know my past and today when they see me transformed by the Lord and preaching the good news of salvation they are totally astonished. I wish I could share my testimony more broadly with each of you. My wife and all the local chaplains greet you. Merry Christmas! God bless you more!



My name is Blanca Leyva Cabrejas. I have served the Lord for 5 years as a chaplain. I work with the elderly abandoned by their children. I also work with addicts, with prisoner's families, and I feel full and satisfied when I do this work for God and for people in need. God has given me the ability to take care of my home and ministry at the same time. Like any person, I have desires for things I need. I have shared those with God and with my family. As the Lord says, "ask and you shall receive." Apart from my husband I also take care of my 83 year old mother who is confined to bed. I thank God for everything I have so far, but I would like to have a blender that would make it easier for me to make food for my mother. I prepare juice with whatever fruit is available that day, crushing the fruits with my hands. I thank God for my husband because he supports me a lot. I told him about the blender I was praying for and even he, who is not a christian, has told me that he has also asked God on many occasions when he sees me making food. I have a very humble kitchen but I feel happy when I am in it preparing food for my loved ones. I wish with all my heart that God would surprise me and answer that request for this Christmas. I am very thankful God is in my heart. Hallelujah!



My name is Yanitsy Nicot Sanchez. I lived with both my parents as a young child. It was a happy home as my father would always sing with me and tuck me in with bedtime stories. My parents divorced when I was three years old. After that was a lot of sadness, pain, and poverty. I feel it also took my childhood. I did not have anyone to sing with me any more or anyone who would tell me bedtime stories as my father used to do. My mother later married a witchdoctor and things got much worse. I never had a stable home and we moved frequently. I had nothing, I did not know my brothers, and I felt deeply alone. When I grew up God gave me three wonderful children. I have a humble home but I'm proud it is mine. The only dream I still keep from being a child is to have a refrigerator. My desire is to one day be able to surprise my children with an icecream when they come home from school and have it waiting in the fridge. Or to prepare juices we could bring to the beach on a hot day. Besides little surprises like this I would buy and keep pork to roast and seve my family. We could enjoy dinner always trusting we could keep the leftovers without fear it would spoil. I am a single mother and we have to eat the food I get all at once as I do not have a place to store it afterwards. This is very difficult to do considering I must get ingredients daily to prepare meals. I believe God answers prayers! Bless you very much.



We invite you to check out ceoministries.ca at our videos under "resources" and view the passionate video clip on Togo, Africa. Also, look at Dr. Lewis' Christian response to Covid under the title "Having a Bad Day", a sermon he gave at Pinefalls MB. You can also see the inner workings of CEO Ministries in the zoom meeting held with one of our teams in Cuba.

SPECIAL HAITI AND DOMINICAN REPUBLIC (DR) REPORT – ALIX JEAN PAUL



School Yard Fun



1st Day of School



Teachers and Leaders

HAITI: Ministry was difficult since physical contact was not possible this year. However; 2 Cor. 1:3-4: *Praise be to the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of compassion and the God of all comfort, who comforts us in all our troubles, so that we can comfort those in any trouble with the comfort we ourselves receive from God.* Through

technology, CEO was able to minister face to face with our missionaries. We heard report from Pastor Namphy about the new school and the joy of the children and the sense of community it brought. He shared the challenges imposed by the political, economic, and social conditions in which they are ministering daily. Kenson, the manager of the SAM I AM CENTER, shared with us the many activities at the Centre.



Economic activities such as gardening, raising livestock, and manufacturing cement blocks to create employment for the community. Highlights were the return of VBS in the Sam I Am Centre and our new school community of Dilaire. Our Haiti ministry has flourished and is having spiritual and educational impacts. These pictures show that your investments are bearing fruit. God is at work.



DR: Recent deportation of a mother in a DR hospital shortly after giving birth, forced to leave her baby behind in the hospital, was inhumane. The forced deportations of thousands of Haitians makes matters worse for many of our children. But again, in the midst of tragedy, God answers prayers. We were able to lease a building for our school that has a yard. After extensive repairs, our 50 students are enjoying a school where they feel valued and safe. Thanks again to our supporters. We were able



to equip the school with computers, printers, phones, basic school materials, and sport equipment. Breakfast in the morning and lunch at noon makes a huge difference in the lives of our students. Gertrude and I are very thankful for the support we received and for all of you praying for us. I am still waiting for back surgery and am living with serious back pain. Yet, your compassion shows us that we need not to focus on our circumstances but by prayers and petitions God will see us through. Editors note; Alix has recently been released from the hospital after suffering the affects of a fall. Please continue to pray for him and the work that he is doing in the DR and Haiti.



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FOCUS ON PRAYER AND GIVING AS THE LORD LEADS

CUBA – Out of the 50 participants we became aware of some basic needs. Here is a list of a few of them: We could use **6 Bicycles at \$300 each**; we could use **6 Blenders at \$50**; we could use **2 Motors to be applied to bicycles at \$150 each**; we could use **4 Washing Machines at \$300 a piece**; we could use **2 Fridges at \$400 each**; **don't forget the couple that need \$500 to buy a house.**

RWANDA/CONGO - Pastor Joseph Bagaza and Jake Friesen head to Rwanda from January 4th to 26th. All travel costs have been met and \$10,000 has been received for humanitarian support. Another \$20,000 is the goal. They travel with financial support and encouragement working with World for Jesus Mission Ministry (WJMM). Some of the work deals with helping individuals who have suffered sexual abuse, children who lost parents, and those injured by civil war. Working with families in Refugee Camps and those suffering from lack of food or medical help.

WINNIPEG - John Mark Wilderspin, a Winnipeg businessman raises funds with the Care Bear Volunteers filling backpacks with essential goods such as soap, socks, toothbrushes, gloves, and other needed items to be handed out to those on the streets. The goal is to hand out 300 backpacks valued at \$20 each.

CUBA - A faithful volunteer, John Bradley, leaves for Cuba December 14th to 28th bringing needed supplies to be distributed. We have teams waiting to distribute the resources. Covid is making travel and resources difficult and more expensive.

WINNIPEG - Brian James and Dakotah Charron with The Arete Project, a men's ministry, set out this Christmas to serve refugee families in Winnipeg by raising \$10,000 among businessmen. Working with Joseph Bagaza, proceeds from the funds will go to a care package for the families and aid for some essential needs in the following months. If possible, at the end of the three months, a dinner will be held for the families and donors where they will again hear a message of Jesus.

WINNIPEG - Pastor John Philips continues serving the poor and needy with Heart of the City. His latest report is there appears to be less people on the streets due to Covid restrictions. Other possibilities are a successful rehabilitation, and they are no longer on the corners, or a much worse scenario such as jail or death. Pray for John's health issues that he struggles with daily.

HONDURAS - Ernesto and Marina continue to serve children in need. They are currently overseeing the construction of a new feeding center in La Lima that will feed the poorest of the poor in that area. Many of these children come from abusive homes, whose parents are sometimes involved in drug trafficking. This center allows over 150 children to eat a hot meal and receive education every day that can potentially help them bypass following in their family members footsteps. Marina continues to hold womans conferences to encourage and equip the mothers.

PERU – Yudiel with his team prepare a Christmas meal for 1000 children to receive a traditional meal and a message of hope in Jesus Christ. If resources are available, we would also like to extend food to their families. The team also mobilizes to help those affected by the recent earthquake, registering at a 7.5 on the scale, affecting countless thousands of people already impoverished. Food is the immediate need in the country as refugees from Venezuela pour in for solace. We are attempting to construct a 904 square foot pole shelter to act as a place for ministry and a shelter for the homeless.

CALGARY – CEO is working with a group of professionals in Calgary to establish a counselling ministry to serve people with mental challenges that cannot afford the help they need. This will be led by Paul and Lisa Romaniuk to establish a board that will oversee the work. This is essential as the opioid use in Canada has increased 87% in the last year and the stresses that have been created by Covid and the lockdowns that have impacted businesses.