

The Ortegas Marching Orders

Our dear friends, it's time to spring into action for the LORD.

Since you are our faithful friends who read, pray and support our ministries at Maranatha Bible Church in McAllen and for the last 10 years in Cuba, we feel the need to share with you how things are going on down here and in the Pearl of the Caribbean.



January: 15-19, we were blessed in having Coy Hayes and Jerry Ledford, two great brothers from Fellowship Bible Church (Tulsa, OK). They represent Life-Steps Ministries, a very basic but dynamic discipleship material on knowing the very heart of Jesus on how He called and prepared disciples for ministry.



For 5 days (about two hours in the morning and 3 at night), they taught about 20 of us in a very plain but passionate manner on the character formation of Jesus' disciples. As you know we have about 7 Life Groups meeting in houses during the week. We are currently teaching this material and these groups are assimilating it well. We are hoping for more people coming to know Christ and being passionate to make Him known to others.

On January 22-31, I went to Cuba with Alberto Garza (from our Maranatha Church) and also with a former Bible teacher from the Rio Grande Bible Institute – Manny Gutierrez. As you know, my passion is to teach, encourage and equip as many pastors as I possibly can in Cuba, especially in the rural areas

where their chances for such opportunities are very few. This time, I visited **3 different** places and for different reasons. In **Dimas**, the most remote place of all (so remote in fact, that not many Cubans themselves dare to go), Alberto and I attended a very glorious church inauguration. Last October that I was there, I came back with a very burdened heart



Emilio and I get ready to celebrate the house/church inauguration.

about the need for a place for a new group of believers to start meeting. When I opened up my heart about the need, a single mother of two children who cleans houses for a living, walked up to me and said, "Pastor Franc, I



want to help." Feeling badly for her financial situation, I told her that she could pray, but she insisted that she wanted to help financially and asked me for the deadline. When I told her it would be in 10 days, she insisted that she would help. A few days later, another lady came to my wife and brought her some money for the project. While some others from our church helped, I must say that these two ladies came up with \$550.00 needed to purchase the property and an old house that would be turned into a church... and I had the joy of sharing God's Word with those wonderful and humble people. I joined them in this great celebration. How we worshipped and how we wept over God's amazing grace. This was one of my greatest highlights of my trip. Of course, I also enjoyed baptizing Maikel, a young believer, Lazarita and Yenedi. This last lady mentioned is the same one whom I led to the Lord last October. What a glorious time all those days were in Dimas. I was also quite busy in counseling, encouraging and praying for others. From there, we moved on to Las Martinas, a new place where I had never been before. I shared before several pastors and spoke in three different churches there. This was also a fantastic experience and I've been asked to join them later on this year for meetings with about 60 different pastors. Our last stop was San Juan y Martinez, with my beloved brother Brache. What a great pastor and friend he is. I was quite busy with the pastors' conference there, as well as counseling, in one particular case from 9 pm to 1:45 am of the following day. You sort of forget what your name is when you first wake up after those sessions, especially when you have to be up just a few hours after going to bed. Nevertheless, those are very short but exceedingly sweet days of ministry in Cuba.

February On our first Sunday we celebrated our 18th anniversary of our church dedication and our 29th year of continuous service to the Lord. We are so thankful for God's faithfulness in our marriage and in our ministries at Maranatha and in Cuba. What a mighty God we serve! On this month we also had a couples' dinner to celebrate God's love for us all and to encourage our married couples.

On March 5-8, my good friend Manny Gutierrez and I had a most fruitful visit with our beloved TBM superiors in Wyoming. The main subject revolved around what the Lord is doing in Cuba and how HE wants to use us for His Kingdom in that socialist country. There is such great urgency to be about the Lord's business there RIGHT NOW, before the window of opportunity shuts on us as it happened in Russia.



with people as we went door-to-door and then engaging people at the park. Several people came forward for prayer and salvation on these events. Amazing, absolutely amazing!

On March 10-13, for the second time in a row our friends from Hope in the City (Austin, Texas) came by and once again we had a bilingual service on Sunday morning, as well as evangelistic outreaches in two different parks on Monday and Tuesday. What a way to spend three days of our Spring Break (and theirs) sharing the gospel



On April 1, we will have our Easter Sunday celebration with about 4 people getting baptized. One of these men is José, who came to know Jesus as his Savior last year. We always have a number of good visitors in these services. Please pray that such visitors would come to know the Lord.

Family - We continue pressing on, with some ups and downs concerning our health. As I write, everything from a medical standpoint seems to indicate that Sarai has come down with Lupus. All of this is new for everybody. Please pray that we may be with her when she needs us the most. Sylvia is doing ok with her syndrome. Her next appointment is in June. Please also pray that her aorta will not continue to grow. Priscilla and Brad are doing well, living and Dallas. We are so happy they found a good church where to attend. In fact, we joined them on December 24. We really enjoyed worshipping and hearing God's Word there.

Future Plans Please pray for my plans to visit our beloved missionaries, Leonardo and Lourdes Calva in Loja, Ecuador in July. She is part of our McAllen church, but married and went off to his native country. On late October or early November, I will be making my second Cuba trip for this year. Please pray that God would properly orchestrate all things from this point on until I leave. Among many other activities, I am eagerly planning to visit Dimas, the most remote western part of the island. God is opening major doors for us to start a training center with Emilio, even while I try to help his own sending church with another training center in a more urban setting, that is Pastor Brache's congregation.

Dearest friends, Mary and I are doing the job in the pit, but know that you are the ones holding the rope from above ground level. Thanks so very much for your vital support. Although we have many more praises (which should be presented in photo format), I'd like to wrap this up leaving you a few prayer requests:

1. We missed out on going to Panama to visit Mary's aged mother. We'd like to try a second attempt this coming summer, if possible. Please help us in prayer for that. 2. Pray for God's wisdom as to our dual ministry roles at Maranatha and in Cuba. We are coming to the point of not being able to properly do both. We really need God's peace and discernment on this decision.



Listening to pastors' vision for future ministry opportunities in Las Martinas, Cuba.



Sharing God's Word on Sunday night at Pastor Brache's full church. Angelin was listening outside.



Angelin walks into a packed church, drunk and broken by his vice, crying out, "help me; help me! I need Jesus!" Moments later Angelin accepts the Lord as his Savior.

As I wrap things up, I'd like to thank those few of you who have faithfully supported our ministry through the years. This is not our time to quit. So I trust you don't either. As we have received TBM's blessing to pursue further ministry in Cuba, I'd like to kindly ask those who have not or are not supporting us yet, to seriously consider if this is the time to do so. Please do excuse my boldness, but I strongly sense the urge to take advantage of open doors while they are indeed open in that country. Let me know if you'd be willing to hear me out by email, phone or in person on what the Lord is doing in Cuba and how you can be involved. TBM has graciously opened up a special fund for our Cuba ministry. You may also contact them directly.

Eternally grateful,
Franc & Mary Ortega

Psalm 48:14

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