



INSTITUTO DE  
**ESTUDIOS BÍBLICOS**  
**INTERNACIONALES**  
 EN LINEA • ON LINE

**FEBRUARY NEWSLETTER 2024**

Welcome to our January 2024 Newsletter, last year ended in a whirlwind of activity and we are already starting to see exciting things unfold for 2024.

**CUBAN LEADERSHIP STRIKES AGAIN** If you remember back in the December 2023 Newsletter, I spoke about Rolando (one of our main Cuban preachers) had started a special leadership class for members that want to be teachers, preachers, future elders and deacons using EBI materials, lessons and equipment. At that time there were 15 people attending from 3 congregations. I am proud to announce that that number has grown to 33 people in just the past couple of months and now there are 5 Cuban congregations represented in each class.



Due to the travel distances, they meet every two weeks for a full morning. It is amazing how the Cuban people have the fire to serve God in both servant and leadership roles.



**LUIS' CUBA TRIP** Luis is back from Cuba and his trip was a great success in many ways. He met with our students, preachers and teachers, with the different congregations and especially the newest congregations that EBI and the other Cuban congregations have started evangelizing. Read on a little further down and I will share with you some of the fruits that are being produced by Las Tunas and Jarajueca.



One other exciting accomplishment was that Luis was able to successfully purchase the farmland for the proposed preacher school. I will attach Luis' Mission Report at the end of this newsletter so that you can better see all that was accomplished.

**QUITO SCHOOL OF BIBLICAL STUDIES, ECUADOR** I had mentioned this before in the last newsletter, but I wanted to share again. Once we started the classes, working with EBEQ, we had even more students sign up to get school credit though the EQEB Bible study program I am looking forward to our future classes and involving more students into this campaign. For more information, you can visit [www.eqeb.org](http://www.eqeb.org) (there is an "ENGLISH" button on the upper left hand corner that will translate it to English)



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Another exciting thing that has stemmed from our collaboration with EBEQ is that both Carlos and Juan Carlos (EBI staff) have done an incredible job bringing the entire program up to the university level and polishing our existing curriculum.

## **CHURCH PLANT x 3** Yes, x 3!

»**Rohrmesor/Pavas** The church that was planted in Rohrmesor/Pavas that I have been discussing in past newsletters is slowly growing. I think I mentioned one of the baptisms in the last newsletter, but I am happy to announce that we had 2 baptisms during the month of January.

Also, we had an all-day “dinner on the grounds” last Sunday in addition to regular services at a members property in the mountains and in April, we are going to have a “campana” (like a Gospel meeting) coming up. It will be 3 nights, and we plan on Marvin, Marco and me preaching one night each.

Ok, so x 3 on the church plants? We have 2 more here in Costa Rica.

»**Santa Cecilia** – Jorge Cambronero, one of our students that graduated last December has started a church plant. They have started meeting in a garage near his home on the other side of San Jose from us. Please pray for Jorge and this young church!

»**Barranca, Puntarenas** – Carlos Zuniga is another graduate from our program!!! Carlos recently moved a couple of hours north of San Jose. He is in the process of planting a church in his area since there are no churches near him. He has told me he was struggling and facing some obstacles but he is determined to get it done.

**WEEKLY ROMANS BIBLE STUDY** – Our informal weekly Bible study continues to grow in popularity. It is a short 1 hour lesson and discussion period that is not part of the EBI “official” curriculum. It is a 34-week series where we have a 25 minute lesson, and then the rest of the time is spent in discussion and our students answering “thought” questions that we have prepared in advance. We are having over 40-50 attendees from Cuba, Venezuela, Colombia and Costa Rica. (actually probably more than that, we can’t see all in attendance as many share a phone).

What is interesting is that our YouTube views continues to climb. Our last class had nearly 70 views. If you couple that with the 40-50+ attendees, we are reaching out to over 100 students. In addition to this, I have prepared flyers for each lesson that will be made into a book for our students at the end of the lesson series.



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**MISSION WITHIN THE MISSION - AGAIN** The work continues. As discussed, Luis met with the new congregations that are being evangelized by our Cuban students and he took them each a projector and supplies to help them teach and study within the congregations.

»**Jarajueca** – You have heard this name before. Our EBI students in Dos Palmas and Palmas Soriano started working with this congregation a couple of months ago and there have already been 5 baptisms in just the last 2 months. We barely got started with this congregation and God is already multiplying the fruit!!!

Here is another blessing that is starting to unfold in Jarajueca. Many years ago, the congregation was divided in that small community. This week, our EBI students have start reached out to both sides. Conversations have been started and we are hoping for restoration. I will keep you posted.

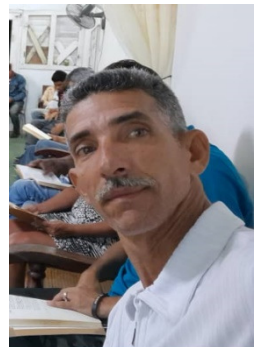
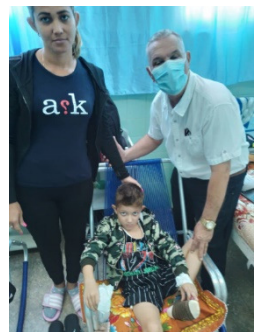
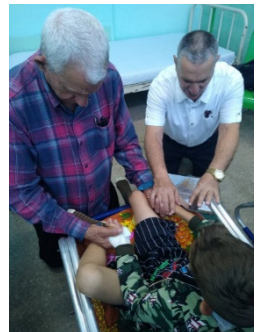
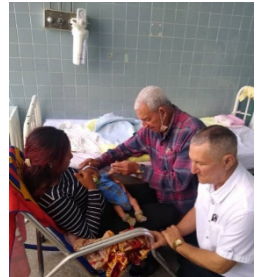
»**Las Tunas** – Las Tunas is a city with a population of over 200,000 people. Back in the 1990's, there were over 27 congregations established. Since then, many congregations have simply gone to the wayside and the efforts of this work 30 years ago had almost vanished. Our EBI students reached out to some of the previous leaders and a restoration has already begun. Luis had two good friends and co-workers from that area named Felito and Norge.

When he arrived, he wanted to surprise them with his visit. But when he tracked them down, they were in the middle of a campaign!!!! (like a Gospel Meeting from the old days). With the inspiration and help of our EBI students, people in Las Tunas are being inspired to rekindle the fire in the churches of the Las Tunas area.

Not only are they holding campaigns, but they have started a center to start training Elders and are integrating the EBI resources from our other congregations. They have started campaigns to help and visit orphans and they have started campaigns to visit, study with and pray for cancer patients.

It is incredible how the Gospel "wildfire" continues to spread through and from our dedicated EBI students and preachers. We have only just begun, so wait and watch as this latest chapter unfolds.

Ok, I normally wait until the end of the newsletter to discuss support, etc., but in Las Tunas we have a *wonderful* problem with a relatively *easy* fix. The congregation



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where Felito is concentrating is growing so fast, that their little building can't hold all of the members.

Felito is in need of \$400 to buy a small property adjacent to his, where the congregations can build a larger building to accommodate this overwhelming growth. If the spirit moves you to help with this, please let us know and we will make sure that it gets to the right place for the right reason. Just a one-time donation will do wonders in Las Tunas.

»**Santiago de Cuba** – Our students keep reaching out! We have a student living in Santiago de Cuba which is south of the areas where we have been working. He has already reached out to 2 congregations and they are ready to start evangelizing with EBI, like Las Tunas and Jarajueca. I just received the request and I will be working on a curriculum of classes for them next month.

**It just keeps growing.** We are now working in congregations to the north, the south, the east and the west of where we originally touched down in Cuba. Please keep praying for the efforts and works of our students in these areas.

**NEW BROTHERS AND SISTERS IN CHRIST!**

It wouldn't be a good newsletter if I didn't tell you about our new brothers and sisters. Our students baptized 5 more people in January in Cuba and we had 2 baptisms in the church plant in Pavas/Rohrmesor. That puts us at 7 total for January, 2024.

**CUBA SCHOOL OF PREACHING** The work continues on the development of this project. We have acquired the farm property and are currently looking for a suitable house that will be closer to the church in Palmas Soriano. This will be a lot easier for the church to oversee the work and for our guest teachers and preachers to teach in the school. We are just getting started but the staff is starting to shape up. We have a school administrator and Director of Education in place. This trip, Luis found a young Christian man that is a music teacher and musician. We now have a music teacher who is willing to teach our students in basic music and song leading for our future preachers!!! Please continue to pray for this project and pray that all be done for His will and Glory.

**WHERE WE WANT TO GO**

Right now, we are ramping up to 10 full-time preachers in Cuba. We gained support for the additional 3 preachers. Now I am focusing on keeping EBI running smoothly

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and also in the development of the Cuban Preacher School. I can guarantee you that many souls will be saved through the works of our students, not only in Cuba but throughout the other countries where we have a presence.

Because of your continued support, souls are being added monthly. Thank you so much for giving and praying.

If you want to join in, below is how you can help. (Also, remember Felito just needs \$400 to expand the church he is working with!!!!)

**How You Can Help Estudios Bíblicos Internacionales & Cuba Predica/Preach Cuba**

First: Remember, we are a privately funded program. Here is how you can help:

The First Street Church of Christ has graciously agreed to handle our donations in the U.S.

TO GIVE, simply go to [www.givelify.com](http://www.givelify.com) , search First Street Church of Christ, enter the amount and then choose either “EBI - Estudios Bíblicos Internacionales” or “Cuban Preacher Program” or you can mail a check to:

First Street Church of Christ, 201 W 1<sup>st</sup> Street, Lampasas, TX 76550 – be sure and put “EBI - Estudios Bíblicos Internacionales” or “Cuban Preacher Program” in the memo.

Secondly: You can help with Prayers, Prayers, Prayers!!!

Please keep this program in your prayers and pray that God can effectively use our students, teachers and everyone involved to carry the Good News throughout Latin America and the world.

May God bless each and every one of you for your support of this program,

Rocky Castleberry

**LUIS PEDRAZA - MISSION TRIP, CUBA JANUARY 2024.**

I was honored to go on a mission trip to Cuba. My journey started in Omaha and included stops in Dallas, Miami, and Santa Clara. Despite some long drives on rough roads, I made it safely to Palma Soriano in Santiago de Cuba province. There, I met with Rolando, Yamirelis and all of our team in Cuba, providing support and encouragements for their work in the vineyard.

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I made sure to give Yamirelis our funds in small bills to be fair to everyone. We had a great conversation, and I even treated Rolando's team to lunch and dinner every day, to make them feel as a family at home.

I made it clear that Rolando and Yamirelis would lead the project, with me just helping out. I spent time getting to know all the students and their families, treating them like my own. I also brought them the medications they needed and some personal items. Overall, it was a rewarding experience spent with my extended family in the Lord.

Now I bought for them a few smart phones, to improve our classes on line.

Yamirelis will receive one to help her monitor and check the WhatsApp messages from the students who are connected.

Marbelis, from La Curia congregation, will also receive one. Here we have 2 more students, one of them is a pro musician, our team is almost completed.

Leo from Rolando's congregation, we are assisting him but getting him and his wife to do all of the work in town and out of town.

Felito from Las Tunas province will also get another one.

Additionally, I brought an iPad for Norge, which will assist him both as a future professor and as a means of communication. He is doing a wonderful job together with Felito. He and Felito were my first students back in 1997.

Furthermore, I brought an agriculture set for the future agriculture professor, specifically designed for "growing special seeds." This set will aid them in cultivating various types of produce they wish to plant and transplant. We have a dream, to recover all kind of exotic fruits which are disappearing from the Cuban field, and will be a super business for the church, to provide for themselves and to assist the community's home of the elders and orphans.

The next day, we visited La Curia, where two of our students are located, along with the small farm for our school of preaching. With the money we took, we were able to make the purchase of the farm. There's a couple leading the church at that location, and we're currently in the process of legalizing the property. We're also negotiating with this preacher who lives by side to make

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a donation to our cause within a year. We're navigating these legal matters carefully, especially considering the complexities of operating in Cuba.

The current exchange rate, with the American dollar being much stronger than the Cuban peso, has led many to give up their properties. The value of the dollar has increased significantly, now at 1 to 280.

One exciting discovery was finding a professional musician among the workers at the small congregation. This means we've found our music/song leader teacher for the school, which feels like a blessing from the Lord.

We currently have a house by the farm, but the owner is asking for an excessive amount of money. We've noticed that we can get a house in a larger city with all the amenities for less than our original budget, so we're exploring our options carefully.

After much discussion and prayer, Rolando and Yamirelis agree that acquiring a property for the school in Palma Soriano, with its population of over 120,000, would be beneficial and easier to manage. With a budget of \$10,000, we can secure an excellent location for the school in town, where Rolando and Yamirelis can lead effectively.

They are currently working on a proposal for this plan, which would provide a better training environment and reduce the need for transportation. Students would only have to travel to the farm for specific farming studies on designated days.

The enthusiasm from everyone involved is palpable, and we're hopeful that this dream will come to fruition with continued prayers and effort.

Meeting with Emigdio and his wife Barbara, where they are working in the city of Santiago de Cuba, now they are assisting in two congregations and they have been with us since the very beginning, so we are requesting some kind of assistance for this brother, who is also highly qualified and among one of my first students from 1997.

Having a final dinner with all of our students and their families was one of the most beautiful experiences of my entire life. Meeting and greeting them all,

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getting to know their families firsthand. It is so exciting to see how we can help them in some areas where not one would imagine.

Moving on to Las Tunas, where I met with Felito and Norge, who were in the midst of a campaign. This campaign aimed to address issues caused by the national leadership which has created problems for the churches in the past and now we have almost all of these brethren drifting around knowing not where to go. We are recovering these brethren and both of them, Felito and Norge will take care of, including some others to the leadership.

Felito and Norge, along with some of our old students who remained faithful, are making remarkable progress in recovering and working with those who had been abandoned. Their dedication and success in this endeavor are truly impressive.

Reflecting on the journey, I realized that even when I'm away, the work continues, thanks to the dedication of laborers like Felito and Norge. It's gratifying to see the fruits of our labor, and despite the challenges, the progress of EBI-CUBA is exceeding expectations. We're now nearing the nine-month mark and are eagerly anticipating its further development.

Felito is asking for \$400 to purchase a piece of land adjacent to his property, where he plans to build a simple gathering place for the church. Their congregation has grown significantly, and their current space isn't sufficient to accommodate all the members and visitors.

Returning to Villaclara, my hometown, I was touched to witness the continued spiritual growth of Yenisey and Isaias, despite both facing challenges with AIDS. Yenisey, in particular, was facing physical struggles but remained strong in spirit. Johnetta Morton Wilde, a dear sister who had been instrumental in my own journey, is now supporting this couple.

While there is interest from others in joining our project, I believe it's best to proceed cautiously and avoid drawing undue attention from the government, which could potentially interfere with our mission. The school of preaching is our priority right now.

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Continuing my travels, I visited some old friends who showed interest in our project. However, I believe it's premature to expand into more provinces at this time.

Starting Monday, I underwent various medical examinations at the Province Hospital and Cardiocenter in Villaclara. I underwent thorough checks because I've been experiencing health issues that need to be addressed. Several scans for prostate, heart and kidneys were performed, some of them very painful, but necessary. Fortunately, I received treatment from top-notch medical professionals, and I'm awaiting the conclusions and prescribed medications next week. They've advised me to return for a follow-up in six months to monitor my condition.

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