



August 1, 2021

Dear Ministry Partner,

Summer! Special times, beautiful memories. . . .

I pray you're enjoying the season—with the goodness of the Lord evident by His many mercies to you—but at the same time, *you are advancing the harvest, sharing the Gospel and the love of the Lord, reaching out to the peoples of the world in His name!*

As you read these words, here's just a bit of what your generosity and prayers are accomplishing:

- **MEXICO!** A team of 40 church planters are preparing for outreach in Mexico City.
- **SPAIN!** We're ready for the new school year and a new year of planting churches in the Canary Islands.
- **BRAZIL!** We're preparing to launch virtual courses—plus in-person classes in Macapá and Afuá.
- **SIERRA LEONE!** This African nation is facing its third wave of COVID, yet students are willing to risk arrest in order to continue learning the Scriptures.
- **PHILIPPINES!** This harvest field is coming into view, with great potential for a mega church-planting operation!

But at the moment, we can't help but focus on **CUBA**. *You may have seen the disturbing news. . . .*

COVID has advanced, and the government has responded in ways that many Cubans have found impossible to bear.

Lockdowns have been terribly difficult in many countries where people are accustomed to a certain degree of normalcy, free to pursue the meeting of many different needs. In Cuba the draconian regulations are not new—but they have intensified . . . and they have remained in place for a very long time.

Tourism once drove Cuba's economy. But the throngs of tourists bringing in the lion's share of the economy's revenues are long gone. So Cuba has not been able to buy the necessary staples from the U.S. that once fed its people. (Many here aren't aware: The U.S. embargo allows Cuba to buy essentials like rice, beans, chicken, medicines, and other necessary items—nearly a billion dollars' worth from 2000-2010. But today *Cuba can't afford to buy the basics.*)

On the streets the COVID lockdowns have been enforced with fines. Anything exceeding “reasonable personal use” would be taxed. Of course fines are serious among the impoverished of Cuba: Few families can afford even a few pesos for anything but the basics.

And the lack of movement due to lockdown restrictions severely curtailed the “hidden economy” which allowed people to make money privately, on their own, to meet their needs.



As the draconian laws reached a level the people couldn't bear any longer, they went into the streets demanding a chance to try life on their own.

In hopes of alleviating the crisis, the government relaxed some laws. Under new regulations, any food items, medicines, and other essentials can be acquired in whatever amount a person may be able to afford. Maybe this would alleviate people's ugly mood?

But no. It seems to be "too little too late." People feel it's mere appeasement. They're in a mood for real change.

Unfortunately, however, people demonstrating in the streets have brought out troops and police, as we've seen down through history. The people killed some policemen and even took control of three police precincts. But they couldn't retain possession of facilities when tanks and heavy caliber guns arrived on the scene to dislodge them.

Meanwhile, Cubans in Florida—wanting to be heard—blocked major freeways and highways. They demanded that the U.S. government come to the aid of the Cuban people. The plan was to grab the opportunity to make history by liberating the people of Cuba once and for all (making good on the failed attempt by the Kennedy administration in the 1960s).

**It has been a heart-wrenching situation to follow these events in the news and to know that profound pain and frustration remain. And yet, we can look for God even in tragedy.**

*Let me tell you a story that begins last Christmas. . . .*

Pedro, our field director, was on his way to distribute COVID help in the eastern end of Cuba. His driver reached his limit and wanted a break. Pedro took over.

They were making their way on the central highway—which at 1 a.m. is always desolate: no light, no markings on the highway, no reflectors that headlights can bring to life to frame the road, not even a dividing line to separate the lanes. Drive at night in Cuba, and you must be prepared for anything; literally out of nowhere, a pedestrian, a horse-drawn cart, or a bicyclist—anyone or anything—can materialize only feet in front of you.

It was one of those "out of nowhere" apparitions: a man walking in Pedro's lane—not merely on the shoulder. Pedro tried to wrench the car to the middle of the road, but the corner of the van caught the man whose head was struck by the windshield post. Pedro stopped immediately and ran to find the man unconscious and bleeding.

Pedro and his companion knew all too well that they would be charged for what just happened, but they called the authorities for help. An ambulance came to pick up the victim, a young man in his twenties.

A single policeman arrived to write up the incident. His testimony was circumstantial, but it was his testimony that the court used to charge Pastor Pedro with reckless driving. After months of lawyers and testimony and appeals, Pedro was charged with a crime. The sentence: five years.

I've talked with Pedro about the verdict—he has one last chance on appeal. Pedro is married to a sweet lady, Janet. They've been praying to finally have a baby. He might have been morose, but Pedro is serene about it. He knows exactly what happened on the road that night. He feels if God allows this, there can be only one reason:

**“He wants me to go preach the Gospel to people in jail,” he says, “who would not hear and be saved otherwise.”**

He has the spirit of Paul and Silas!

Ultimately, a supreme tribunal will review the evidence and decide the case. But a higher authority is observing these proceedings. “God causes all things to work together for good to those who love God, to those who are called according to His purpose” (Romans 8:28 NASB).

And here is the amazing twist: The parents of the young victim are believers—and church planters!

They met with Pedro and Andy Garcia, our director of operations. They acknowledged that their son had been drinking at a party, then decided to walk back to his house. He is reported to have been stumbling as he left. Their son had been away from any Christian counsel for the previous four months and living like a libertine, his parents reported. They placed no blame on Pedro and asked for absolutely no remuneration.

But what will the earthly court say? Please pray with us for this dear pastor as his case is deliberated!

At the same time, even during days of dreadful difficulty, the Gospel makes great progress. More than 9,000 miles from Cuba, as the nation of India continues to be severely afflicted by so many deaths and COVID infections, people are being impacted by the good news through your generous giving.

Of the multitudes who have received medications and medical care through our ministry together, only one individual has died—a 35-year-old pastor. *One is too many*—it's especially painful when it's a young man survived by a wife and two young children. But thank God for the many lives saved through your generosity. God bless you for your Christ-like compassion!

- I am forever grateful for the help that we have been able to share thanks to your giving. What a joy to see the reports: long lists of names with a face next to each—and adjacent to each photograph, a single word—a single, beautiful caption, **“RECOVERED.”**

*The pandemic has set even more “Romans 8:28” initiatives in motion. . . .*

Pastor Sam, our partner in a south central region of India, has worked with us to provide food for children and families in serious need. But Sam didn't stop with food.

- He saw that the school lockdowns had left many children neglected, roaming the streets. Sam began to dream of providing a Christian education for children in four villages—with training by degreed Christian teachers, a devotional, and a chapel service every day, and (the main attraction) an evening meal.

It will take pay for teachers and kitchen workers, but the cost will be worth it! More than 200 children across four villages will receive an education—and be introduced to the Lord Jesus Christ!

Evangelism through education is a great way to meet both needs. The food will be a great blessing for impoverished parents as their children finally get enough to eat. But the greater blessing will be the receiving of grace through faith in God by the children—and then their Christian witness to their families!

➤ In some villages, there is also a crying need for water. Friends like you have already been generous in funding wells—we're eager to drill 44 of them as soon as lockdowns are lifted!

But now we scan the horizon for God-appointed opportunities, and we see that our projects in four villages are only a start. **There are nearly 800,000 villages in India without the Gospel.** Let's get going!

God is not limited in any way. His arm is not too short. As you walk faithfully with him, doing whatever He places within your power to do, He blesses mightily! Every day brings new amazement as we see how God is using your generosity. We never foresaw a ministry this big or this productive! But God has been pleased to use us together for wonderful purposes . . . purposes that not only keep bearing fruit, but also keep bearing fruit in *newly discovered ways!*

So I thank you today from my heart for serving as the root of this vine. Thank you for your commitment to letting people hear and know the One who is our source for life abundant and life eternal!

**I urge you to give generously again today. We need you, because so many people need God! Thank you in advance for whatever you give today as the Holy Spirit speaks to you and you respond in obedience with joy. God bless you!**

Going wherever God leads,



Dr. Manny Fernandez

P.S. You can give today with confidence, seeing how the Lord uses every gift so beautifully! Let me invite you to pray about giving with extra generosity—and let's see what God will do through us together! Thank you again!