



July 1, 2022

Dear Ministry Partner,

I pray you're enjoying your summer! May it be a fruitful season filled with the blessings of the Lord and leaving you with wonderful family memories!

As I write, summer is officially only a few days old. But our summer ministry season is already well under way—launched more than a week ago in Cuba. It's a harsh season of difficulty for the people there, with an extreme scarcity of goods and fuel.

The general public can no longer purchase diesel—a serious problem for multitudes who have depended on their diesel engines for decades, because diesel was always cheaper and the engines more durable. In the current shortage, only government vehicles and carpools can use diesel legally. Many are now scrambling to acquire non-diesel engines, but with such high demand, there's not enough supply.

In this crisis, many fear that an uprising of some kind, even violence, may be inevitable. On the other hand, I'm praying that tourism will come back in a strong way to revive the economy and make products available to the general public. (It was good news for our ministry when American Airlines restarted flights into Cuba. During Covid, charter flights were the only way in, at nearly \$2,000 per passenger!)

Cubans were so short of many products that relatives were flying in with four or five suitcases full of necessities. The excess baggage fees were eagerly paid because the need was so extreme. Unfortunately, at the height of the rush, the airline lost or delayed more than 3,000 bags—including most of those from our own group. A kindly travel agent tracked down the bags; they finally arrived a day before our scheduled departure.

Yet in all this chaos, members of our group maintained an attitude of maturity and grace—no complaining, no long faces. As one day without luggage led to another, they began sharing what they had with each other so that everyone would have a change of clothing.

This problem-plagued week turned out to be a time of tremendous blessing. There were challenges to overcome, there were setbacks to get beyond, and the group handled them beautifully! We leaders were proud of them.

And, of course, physical and logistical issues were not our main focus while in the island nation. From the very beginning, we kept our eye on the mission—even when a storm forced our connecting flight to land in Fort Myers, we finally arrived in Miami just as our flight to Cuba was taking off.



After a night in a hotel (without luggage), the airline split our group and booked us into Cuba on separate flights. Those of us who flew midmorning hit the road immediately, traveling four hours east to the middle of the island to make our first church service on time. (The second group landed in Havana later that evening, arriving at our hotel at three in the morning on the third day of travel!)

Yet our focus remained: *the mission, the mission, the mission!*
Despite all the detours and delays, we rejoiced in our very first engagement with 35 decisions for Christ and nine baptisms! As far as we were concerned, we had already fulfilled the grand purpose of the trip!

But God had even bigger ideas. There was so much more to come!

Even as we celebrated what God was doing in the spiritual realm, it was sobering to confront what was happening in the physical realm. In a hotel in a central province, tour guides told us we were lucky to have chosen our hotel—since it’s the only one with sufficient food for its guests. We stopped at a couple of rest areas hoping to get a drink or a snack, but none were available.

Members of our team had hoped to buy some basic articles of clothing to help them get by for the week. But there were very few stores and very few clothing items. Where clothes were available, they were drastically expensive because of the low supply and high demand. Our team members settled for washing their own clothing each night!

In Havana things were less difficult, with decent hotel accommodations and better-supplied restaurants. We were able to procure transportation and food to turn the baptism service into a wonderful family beach day. Thirty-six were baptized, and many others made decisions for Christ. *The mission, the mission, the mission!*

It was there, in the swirl of that extraordinary beach-baptism celebration, that an older couple approached me. “Manny, do you remember us?” they asked. “I know I met you a very long time ago,” I replied, “I just don’t remember where.”

The answer astounded me:

“We have been planting churches with you for the last 22 years.
We have moved over those years to three different provinces.
We are now pastoring the largest church we have ever had.
We are members of the first team of church planters you started with 22 years ago!”

I was thrilled to renew our acquaintance—and to realize, once again, that I am not the person doing all this wonderful work around the world. Yes, I play a part. But the ministry in each country has a life of its own guided by the Lord Jesus Christ. He is the one charged with the mission: “I will build my church,” He declares. The rest of us are just “commissioned.”

We are not leading the work—He is! But what a joy it is to know that *we are exactly where God wants us to be . . .* and to realize that we are part of an enterprise that will not fail. God continues to weave a glorious tapestry wherever He has called us and we are willing to follow.

It's His! It cannot fail! *Every one of us* has a role to play. It seems that **the more we are willing to do, the more our role grows**—and the more God accomplishes through us.

- We have the privilege of defining and deciding how big a role we play.
- God does not limit us to small responsibilities. We are free to attempt great things.
- He welcomes our faith effort—rewards it on the spot—and seals it for eternity!

And now, we turn our attention from Cuba to needy Venezuela. By the time you read this letter, our two-week ministry there will be set to begin—launching our first 300 church plants!

God used your support of our work in Cuba to lay the foundation for the work in Venezuela. Over the past 22 years we have seen armies of Venezuelan military in Cuba engaged in joint exercises. We heard of visits by Venezuelan president Hugo Chavez.

So when Venezuela's church leaders asked us to come help them, it seemed clear that the ground had already been prepared—the Lord had already prepared the various ingredients for a wonderful harvest. He has been writing the script . . . and now we are walking in the “good works which he prepared beforehand that we might walk in them,” as Ephesians 2:10 puts it.

Seeing the end from the beginning, God prepares the way. When I started planting a church at age 23, God was bringing the “building blocks” into my life which He would then use to multiply and internationalize the ministry. When He called me to Spain and North Africa, they seemed like enormous “mountains”—but God wasn't worried. It was a picture of the prophecy of Zechariah 4:7, the mountains being topped “with shouts of ‘Grace to it! Grace to it!’”

Then came Cuba—a powerful explosion defining the “accelerated church-planting” model He led us to discover. We never looked back! *The mission, the mission, the mission!*

Then the Lord took us to Ukraine. That place was so remote, and so different from anything we had known or experienced—yet it bloomed just like the other countries. **From that moment, we realized that God had taught us a way to enter any nation.** Making disciples of that nation, empowering men and women who knew their own culture, we could effectively reach the nation from the inside out!

We soon discovered that once multiplication gets under way, it develops a life of its own. National leaders, empowered to launch a movement, are happy for our partnership; but if something disrupts the relationship—war, pandemic, anything—the leaders look to the Lord and keep going strong!

It is a powerful feeling of fulfillment to be part of what the Lord is doing. It's tremendous to be used in multiple contexts and to know that we share in the WHOLE, just by doing OUR part. It feels great to know He is conducting the whole orchestra, with the many parts synchronized by His skillful hands.

He has a part for you! Ephesians 2:10 is your promise: He prepared your good works before the foundation of the world that you may walk in them!

And God does not have mediocrity in mind. He is not planning insignificance for you. God cannot think in inferior ways. He is unlimited. If there is any limiting factor in His work, it's only us. **If we open our hearts to Him and ask Him to do all that He wants to accomplish with us, look out!**

Five loaves and a couple of fish can be the source for thousands! God is still in the ministry of multiplying our apparently insignificant resources.

In 2 Kings 4:1-7, we meet a widow so severely in debt that the creditor came to take her children away as slaves. Elisha, discovering a bit of oil in her home, advised her to borrow as many containers as she could find and fill them with the little oil in her jar. The oil flowed out of the small jar to fill many vessels, bigger vessels than the jar itself! The widow sold the oil and not only paid her debt but then lived on the surplus!

God is able to produce something out of nothing. This is His powerful claim since the beginning of the universe. He created the heavens and the earth out of nothing! Jesus made wine, the fruit of the vine, out of nothing. The water had no properties that would turn into wine. The fruit of the vine came to existence as He willed it into existence.

And today, He can still multiply our resources. He can still use our steps of faith and obedience and make miracles happen.

Let Him work through you again today. We know that He has a script for the whole of our lives. He fulfills it as we show up into His presence every day. So I invite you to give generously. Keep your focus: *the mission, the mission, the mission!* And I thank you for putting your faith to work.

Rejoicing in His service.



Dr. Manny Fernandez

P.S. God never will run out of meaningful participation for us in the work of the harvest. The fruit borne of your gift today will remain for eternity. Your labor in the Lord is not in vain! He is the Rewarder of those who diligently seek Him! Give generously as we see how God will use you in the days ahead!