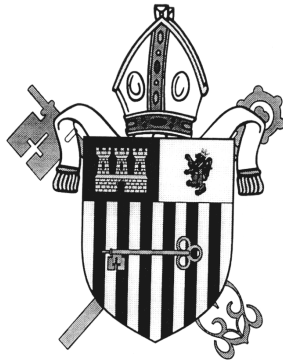


The Diocese of Cuba



Fully Cuban in character, there are currently forty congregations and missions throughout the four archdeaconries in the diocese of Cuba with a membership of over 3,500 and served by twenty-two priests.

Lay people take an active part in the life of the church and there are organisations within the diocese for women, for youth and for children. A missionary diocese at its outset, Cuba still regards itself in the same way. It is active in evangelising; an evangelising zeal that puts a lot of emphasis on social and humanitarian work in the community. It takes seriously the words of St. Francis who commissioned his friars to "preach the gospel, if necessary use words". It is a poor church in a country that is economically challenged but it still tries to respond, as best it can to some of the most pressing needs of people in a country that, with the continuing economic blockade imposed by the United States government, has seen a rise in poverty over the past decade.

Young people and young families are a significant proportion of this growing church. There is clearly a spiritual search among people born since the '59 revolution and Cuban Anglicanism, which presents the Christian faith as both reasonable and intelligent, has an appeal for many of them.



The Diocese of Cuba is an autonomous diocese of the Anglican Communion, under the metropolitan authority of the Metropolitan Council of Cuba. The Metropolitan Council of Cuba (MCC) was established in response. The MCC consists of two Archbishops (Canada and the West Indies) and one bishop (from Province IX, the Spanish speaking province of ECUSA). The purpose of the MCC to ensure that there is adequate

maintenance and support of the episcopate in Cuba and that the diocese operates within the principles of the Anglican Communion.

Canada's companionship with Cuba works at a number of levels. The Partnerships Program shares funds with the diocese to supplement the meagre wages of the clergy, to fund some of the diocesan programs and to the seminary in Matanzas in support of the Episcopal students and faculty. The total commitment of funds from the Anglican Church of Canada to our partners in Cuba is in excess of \$30,000 annually. In this way we have a part in the life and growth of the Church in Cuba. However, although the sharing of money is important our companionship is much more than this.

Asked what Canada's companionship meant to Anglicans in Cuba one of the older priests, one who has been a part of the church since before the revolution and who stayed with it at a time in Cuba's recent history where even belonging to the Church was viewed with some suspicion, said this:

"During the dark days, when it was difficult to be a member of the church, when there was a lot of poverty, when there were holes in my shoes and sufficient money only for the essentials, Canada's companionship was very important to us. Not just for the money we received but for the prayerful support we felt from our brothers and sisters in Christ in Canada. We will never forget that."

The Companion Relationship between our diocese and the diocese of Cuba has allowed for an interchange of people between the two dioceses. Church groups in Niagara have spent time in Cuba, sometimes working together with Cubans on a church project. Visitors from Cuba, including students, clergy and lay people have visited Niagara diocese and some were present at our General Synod in 2004. Churches in both dioceses have initiated a twinning program that sees parishes sharing prayer concerns and thanksgiving, and seeking to learn more about each others lives. The most recent development in this relationship is the development of the Coins for Cuba project (www.coinsforcuba.ca) which aims enhance the financial support our national church provides the diocese of Cuba by collecting spare change.

Compiled with files from Anglicans Online & the Anglican Church of Canada