

Love Invades Cuba

Retiree Discovers New Purpose

When EMI offered her a place on their first training team heading to Cuba in 1998, Nilda Fernandez Goheen knew what she was called to do. Work could not give her the time off, so she resigned.

The door to Cuba opened to EMI two years prior when Board member, Dr. Bob Lerer, returned to Cuba to revisit the Havana neighborhood he grew up in before his parents emigrated to the States when he was fourteen. A knock on his hotel room door just moments after praying, "OK Lord, what do you want me to do here?" began a long term relationship between Equipping Ministries International and Cuban Christians.



Nilda greets Cuban believers



Nilda, Bob and Scotti at EMI training in Cuba, 2004

Leaders from one denomination rejoiced that God had answered prayer for a way to train their pastors and lay leaders in healthy relationship and ministry skills. Donors sponsored bringing two young Cuban pastors to Cincinnati for training at LIFE Seminar. They, in turn, invited EMI to come to Cuba to train pastoral couples and leaders from all over the Island. Nilda, a volunteer trainer, came to mind for the team. Having been born and raised in Puerto Rico, her Spanish made her a huge asset to the team.

"When I shared the meal prepared for the gathering with my hispanic brothers and sisters, the confirmation of my call became real." Many shared what an encouragement it was to have Americans come who could share their language with them.

After this trip Nilda realized the need for EMI materials in Spanish; trainings had been limited to Cubans who could understand English. She and EMI volunteer trainer Bob Hammond, who learned Spanish as a missionary to Columbia, have since translated 12 EMI courses into Spanish.

As word traveled about EMI's trainings, other Cuban church denominations began to request the same courses for their leaders. It is a special privilege to leave behind resources they can use because they are already translated into their language!

Nilda, along with Bob and his wife Scotti, have gone back to Cuba seven times. The hunger for all of EMI's courses is strong as leaders have seen their lives and marriages changed through Listening for Heaven's Sake (Escuchando por Amor a Dios), Speaking the Truth in Love (Diciendo la Verdad con Amor) and Renewing the Mind (Renovando la Mente) skills. People report a new freedom from emotional wounds in their lives as they've experience healing through Embracing God's Grace (Abrazando la Gracia de Dios) and Breaking Free from the Past (Liberacion Interior del Pasado) .



Practicing EMI skills in a group

After seven trips to Cuba, Nilda is as excited as ever to hopefully go back with Bob and Scotti this October. You can sense the excitement in her voice to be able to take on a job that makes a difference for many believers in one nation.