

Continuing Education

A key element of each of our Minister's call is a provision for continuing education. This is a provision that benefits both the Congregation and staff by facilitating a lifelong learning approach which helps Staff to gain greater insight and capability to deliver their Ministry in a changing world. There are specified time and budget allotments to support this activity. These allotments are fixed on an annual basis and the Ministry and Personnel Committee (M&P) is responsible to review and approve staff requests. Continuing education activities can take place locally or require travel, but in all cases must fit within the prescribed annual time and budget allotments.

In keeping with its responsibilities, and commitments to staff, M&P has reviewed and approved one week continuing education leaves for Rev. Valerie, Rev. Phillip, and Shannon as well as one week vacation leave. These leaves will take place February 11th-25th and Brian Moors and his committee will arrange for leadership to Sunday services and pastoral care. Costs for these leaves are capped as per terms of our employment agreements with staff.

Approved areas of study include:

- Reflecting with Cubans on politics, ideology and faith in practice.
- Exploring Santaria- a blend of Christianity with local culture and beliefs and the life of Jose Marti- an educator and non-violent hero of the people.
- Looking at how pastoral care is extended to the Cuban people
- Exploring programing for youth
- Understanding how partnerships work to empower and determine the best way to initiate a partnership.

The United Church of Canada has had a long history of work and partnership with the church in Cuba. Since 1982, the United Church has worked in solidarity with partners in Cuba who focus on grassroots social change, theological education, ecological justice, and congregational support. This continuing education experience will involve a week in Cuba exploring different models for being Global Christians in partnership.

This leave activity would involve the following experiences:

1. In Varadero, there is a Presbyterian church that partners with the United Church of Canada. Our staff will experience worship and bible study with them and reflect on the differences. The goal is to bring home some ideas that might be of interest to Woodlawn possibly leading to an exposure trip for the congregation to this church in Varadero (as well as partnership).
2. Visit the seminary in Matanzas, talk to the professors and students and engage in theological

reflection.

3. In Havana, the Martin Luther King center (and Ebenezer Baptist church) conducts tours and reflects on the way forward for justice and peace. It has a view of Cuban history that is different from a dominant American viewpoint.

We wish them safe travels and look forward to sharing in their experiences when they return.