

IF THE POPE & JIMMY CARTER CAN GO TO CUBA, WHY CAN'T WE ALL?

PLEASE SUPPORT MILWAUKEE'S 'METHODIST THREE'

Three members of Milwaukee's Central United Methodist Church (CUMC) are facing large fines for traveling to Cuba. In 1994 CUMC established an on-going sister church relationship with a Methodist Church in Havana, Cuba, called La Trinidad (the Trinity). La Trinidad sent a formal invitation to CUMC for us to send members to join in celebrating its 100th anniversary in January, 1999. CUMC commissioned six of our members to go, and they traveled to Cuba. They had a very positive and moving experience in Havana. On their return to the US, via Toronto, the fact that they had visited Cuba was made known to US customs & immigration agents, who told them this was illegal, asked questions and copied some of their identification and other papers. Now, over three years later, three of the six are targets of a "crackdown" by our own government: \$7,500 fines have been "proposed" against each of the two African-American CUMC members who went to represent our church; \$5,000 has been assessed against one other member, a white woman. No fines have been asserted against the other three, based on identical conduct (this includes the two white men who were part of our group, and a white woman), and no explanation has been given for this discrepancy.

In 2000, during former President Clinton's last year in office, 188 persons were notified of fines for traveling to Cuba. President Bush then called for a crackdown on "excessive travel" to Cuba; during his first year, the number of fines jumped to 766, and is still increasing. Compare that to over 200,000 US nationals who visit Cuba annually, and the US Treasury Department estimate that some 60,000 did so last year in defiance of US restrictions. When Jimmy Carter was President, he lifted the US ban on travel to Cuba, but it was re-imposed under President Reagan. Our government now issues "licenses" to allow some people to travel there, generally to elites such as journalists and academics, but this is not available to many others. CUMC does not have such a "license," which may be issued when the US government chooses to approve proposed religious activity – a procedure which also troubles us.

Cuba is one of the safest places in the world for US tourists and officials to visit. For example, after the September 11 attacks in NY and on the Pentagon, most US embassies and missions were closed around the world, but the US mission stayed open for business in Havana. Although our government's 40-year economic blockade against Cuba contributes to the daily hardships of our friends and neighbors there, our members who visited Cuba a number of times in recent years have been warmly received by the Cuban people on all levels.

Our members do not believe any fine is justified, and they want to help defend the right of all of us in this country to travel as free people.

WE ASK FOR YOUR SUPPORT:

1. Contact us for more information. Ask for a speaker for your congregation or organization.
2. Attend the July 7th event supporting Freedom to Travel & the Pastors for Peace Friendship caravan challenging the travel ban to Cuba: 6pm potluck, 7pm program, at CUMC, 639 N. 25th St.
3. Send the enclosed letter to the Treasury Dept., asking it to drop all actions against these US travelers. Consider contacting your Representative & Senators, to ask them to end these restrictions; to send a free fax letter to them, you can click on <http://www.aclu.org/action/cuba107.html>

For more info, contact: **Central United Methodist Church of Milwaukee**
639 N. 25th St., Milwaukee, WI 53233 (414) 344-1600; Rev. Earl Kammerud, Pastor, efk0937@aol.com
Atty. Sandra Edhlund, sedhlund@aol.com, (414) 273-1040; also www.cubawifriends.org

Date: _____

By mail or FAX # 202-622-1657

R. Richard Newcomb, Director
Office of Foreign Assets Control
Civil Penalties Program
U.S. Department of the Treasury
1500 Pennsylvania Avenue, N.W.
Washington, D.C. 20220

Re: Dollora R. Greene-Evans, FAC No. CU-180305
Theron E. Mills, FAC No. CU-179426
William Ferguson, Jr., FAC No. CU-180295

Dear Mr. Newcomb:

I respectfully urge you to drop all charges and claims against the members of Milwaukee's Central United Methodist Church (CUMC) based on their visiting Cuba to join and work with CUMC's sister church in Havana. I do not believe that threatening or prosecuting them is a reasonable use of taxpayer money, and such actions infringe upon the right of U.S. citizens to travel as free people. In addition, the enforcement actions by your office appear to be arbitrary and discriminatory.

Very truly yours,

Name

Address

(Optional) I am a member of
(as applicable, please list your congregation or organization if you wish)

cc: Central United Methodist Church
639 North 25th St.
Milwaukee, WI 53233

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