

PUENTE DE AMIGOS PACKET

**FOR THOSE INTERESTED IN TRAVELING TO CUBA WITH A
RELIGIOUS VISA AS REPRESENTATIVES
OF NEW ENGLAND YEARLY MEETING**

Are you interested in getting to know Cuban Friends through spiritual sharing?

*This packet explains the process for discernment and gaining approval to
travel to Cuba as a representative of NEYM.*

*This handbook is a 'living document' and will be revised periodically to reflect
evolving situations and ongoing learning.*

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SECTION I: The Clearness Process

Basic considerations for potential travelers:

1. Read the materials for participants carefully.
2. Be sure that you have a passport that will be valid up to 6 months after your proposed trip. If you need to get a new passport, apply as soon as possible so you will have the proper information for your visa application.
3. Write a letter to the Puente Committee clerk about your interest in visiting with Cuban Friends. This is called your 'letter of interest.'
4. Ask your monthly meeting clerk to begin a clearness process for you and to expect a call from a representative of Puente to further explain the clerk's responsibilities. (Please provide your clerk and clearness committee with this packet prior to the clearness meeting.)
5. Begin learning more about Cuba and Cuban Friends by talking with those who have been to Cuba and the Cubans who visit us.
6. Visit a travel clinic and determine what shots you need (Hepatitis A is recommended, as is an up-to-date tetanus shot). A travel clinic might not be covered by your insurance. If that is the case, check with your primary care physician.
7. Consider whether you are healthy enough to take this trip.
8. Familiarize yourself with the disciplines and advices on material gifts, confidentiality and other matters (*see Section II*).
9. Brush up on your Spanish.
10. Involve your meeting in your leading as well as help in fundraising and gathering the supplies that Puente allows you to take.
11. Generally, visitors go in groups to visit their sister meetings. (Nine New England meetings are paired with Cuban meetings.) If you are part of a group, attend all your group's meetings if possible. Worship and plan together. Develop a friendly dynamic that will involve certain members stepping forward to take the roles of treasurer, interpreter, leader, trip planner, etc.
12. Most importantly, sit with yourself and think about what gifts of the spirit and other non-material gifts or abilities you might share with the Cubans you will visit.

See Appendix #1 for Queries for Potential Travelers.

Overview of the process to become a representative of NEYM in Cuba

The process to become a representative of NEYM in Cuba has three requirements, and usually takes about six months to complete:

- A) Monthly meeting clearness process
- B) Puente Committee discernment process;
- C) Permanent Board approval (from Puente Minute 2019-xx).

A. Monthly meeting clearness process: Puente Committee relies on the monthly meeting clearness process to establish that each person's motive for travel is spiritual in nature rather motivated by interests such as tourism, study, or politics; that the Friend has carefully and prayerfully considered the issues raised in the queries and orientation topics; and that the Friend is an appropriate person to represent NEYM.

Although we expect that all people we send will have a spiritual motive for their travel to Cuba, it is not necessary to carry a travel minute as a traveling minister; a letter of introduction from the monthly meeting is sufficient. As part of the clearness process, the monthly meeting should decide which is appropriate. Some Friends have expressed confusion about the difference between travel minutes and letters of introduction. We refer you to *Faith and Practice of New England Yearly Meeting of Friends (1985)*, and to a letter from Gordon Browne in our spring 1995 newsletter (see *Appendix #3A*).

Please note that a travel minute should be approved by the monthly meeting and endorsed by the quarterly meeting before presentation to the Permanent Board; this process generally requires more time than for a letter of introduction.

See Appendix #2A and #2B for Queries for Monthly Meeting Clearness.
See Appendix #3A for a Sample Letter of Introduction from Monthly Meeting.
See Appendix #3B for Gordon Browne's letter

B. Puente Committee discernment process: The Puente Committee's formal process will begin when we receive a written statement of your interest in visiting Cuban Friends. The Puente Committee will offer opportunities for discussion and orientation as frequently as possible, either at committee meetings or individually. We encourage prospective travelers to participate in all Puente activities and to meet with each other and with Friends who have visited Cuba in the past. Our responsibility includes discernment of which Friends will best represent New England Friends in Cuba, which people might fruitfully travel together, and how the travelers may be able to participate in Puente's work after their return. The final decision to recommend names to the Permanent Board will be made at a regular business meeting of the Puente Committee, upon the recommendation of the Orientation and Discernment Committee.

C. Permanent Board approval is required for all NEYM representatives to Cuban

Friends as a matter of the good order of Friends. The current understanding of this process is outlined in Permanent Board minute 2019-xx (*see Appendix #4*).

Friends are, of course, free to make their own arrangements to visit Cuba and to contact Cuban Friends, and Puente Committee will assist with information and advice, but such visitors are not representatives of New England Yearly Meeting. For example, a number of New England Friends have gone to Cuba with work teams organized by Friends United Meeting. Depending on current US policy, visitors from the US may be allowed to visit Cuba as tourists; alternatively, visitation may be allowed only under certain categories that are exempt from the US embargo. Seek information from Puente Committee on this if you are interested in traveling to Cuba on your own.

Additional considerations for planning:

Dates and Timeline: It is necessary to begin consideration at least six months before the projected visit so that all the preliminary processes can be finished in time for the Permanent Board. After Permanent Board approval of the delegation, NEYM asks Cuba Yearly Meeting to apply for Cuban visas for the visitors; this can take two to three months. Sometimes, visas are presented by our Cuban hosts to the authorities upon the visitors' arrival in Cuba. This is acceptable practice.

There is no fixed date when New Englanders should go to Cuba; the timing depends on when Friends are free to travel and on the convenience of Cuba Yearly Meeting (which has been most generous and flexible in arranging visits).

Cost: A visit to Cuban Friends costs between \$1400 and \$1600 per person. Travelers must take responsibility for raising as much as they can, either from personal resources, from their meetings, or from other Quaker sources. This is an important discussion to have early on when planning a delegation. Please think about how much you can raise, but don't let lack of funds be a barrier to you—a way will open.

We have been richly blessed by the variety of spiritual gifts of the traveling Friends who have participated in this ministry. Each person who travels carries a thread that becomes part of a beautiful tapestry of relationships our two yearly meetings are weaving together. As you consider what your part may be in this ministry, please keep in touch with us and don't hesitate to ask for information or assistance.

Section II: Disciplines and Other Advices

Puente de Amigos has adopted disciplines on material gifts and confidentiality. In addition, we have gathered advices regarding behavior. We ask all participants in our work to study these disciplines and advices seriously and to honor them. Groups may want to devote a meeting to this. These disciplines and advices have developed in the course of almost three decades in an evolving relationship, and in the middle of fast and radical changes in politics and culture, both for Cuba and the US. The re-framing and inevitable repetition of certain concerns reflects the changes

experienced and the time elapsed in the life of this document.

Material Gifts: Small personal gifts to individual Cuban Friends are a natural expression of friendship and are not discouraged. However, we request New England Friends not to give money, medicines, eyeglasses, or valuable personal gifts or favors (such as invitations to the United States, scholarship help, etc.) to individual Cuban Friends. These kinds of gifts, when appropriate, are given through the Yearly Meeting.

Confidentiality: We must be careful not to quote Cuban Friends on political matters nor to attribute political opinions to them, especially in writing or in public gatherings. Private or confidential information about Cuban Friends should never be publicly discussed nor published. When any Friend considers making public reference to Cuban Friends, we urge careful consideration of this query: In what way might this reference compromise, embarrass, or endanger individual Cuban Friends or loving relations and intervisitation between Friends in our two countries?

What follows makes the Disciplines and Advices more explicit and shares the nuances of acceptable behavior learned over the years by Puente representatives in Cuba. If there are questions, please ask your Puente contact to clarify as things are changing rapidly in Cuba.

1. Confidences and Private Discussions: Part of the experience of religious visitation is that sometimes people talk to visitors about things they may not be able to discuss freely with people in their own communities, such as political opinions, conflicts within the church, personal difficulties and appeals for special help. It is essential that visitors who receive such confidences be very careful to respect them. It is seldom appropriate for the visitor to try to intervene directly in the situation, except by praying for the situation and sometimes by offering counsel or sympathy to the person who brought up the subject. If a visitor feels a need for advice regarding a confidence, it should be sought only with people who can be trusted to keep it private; this is one of many reasons that a traveling companion or elder is helpful.

In considering confidentiality, Friends should be very aware that what makes a person vulnerable is different in each culture. What may be public and acceptable here might be embarrassing or even dangerous elsewhere. It is also important to remember that in small towns and small churches, individuals are often very identifiable even if their names are not used.

2. Political Statements: New England Friends are accustomed to speaking freely on political matters, and to criticizing or opposing our government's policies when we believe that they are wrong. In August 1993, New England Yearly Meeting minuted its opposition to the United States embargo:

In 1991 New England Yearly Meeting felt called by God to establish a relationship of love with the Cuba Yearly Meeting. Since that time, we have exchanged visitors and letters and feel that this relationship has been blessed.

Our members who recently visited Cuba have witnessed the deprivation and suffering of the Cuban people in their current economic crisis. We believe the United States embargo of Cuba is cruel and counter-productive and is contrary to the teachings of Jesus.

We ask our government to end the embargo and the travel and currency restrictions immediately and unconditionally.

Puente de Amigos Committee is aware that many Friends in Miami do not agree with this minute. We have minuted our concern and will listen to and understand their pain to get to know them and learn from them. Since the 1990s, Miami Friends churches include more Friends with different ways of thinking about these issues.

In a country where we are free to express these political differences openly, it is difficult for us to comprehend the complications and restrictions that other forms of government may impose. Even comments that seem apolitical to us may be causes for serious problems in other countries or might endanger our ability to obtain travel permits from either government.

3. Committee Discipline: Private or confidential information about Cuban Friends should never be publicly discussed nor published. Prayerful consideration and consultation are needed to address the tension between the urgency of speaking truth and the need for self-discipline and confidentiality.

Regarding political matters, we must respect the right of Cuban Friends themselves to be in control of deciding what they will say publicly. We must be careful not to quote Cuban Friends on political matters nor to attribute political opinions to them, especially in writing or in public gatherings. Comments we make publicly about conditions in Cuba could affect our Friends there even if we do not directly attribute anything to them, so such comments must be made with care. Committee members should inform Friends of this discipline whenever political questions arise in discussions about Cuban Friends and should speak frankly only in contexts where they are confident that this discipline will be respected.

Before publishing anything about Cuban Friends, we request Friends to seek advice and discernment from committee members and other experienced Friends who understand conditions in Cuba. Email and fax are forms of publication that require increased concern since a message written to one person may be copied and forwarded very broadly, sometimes out of context, with unexpected consequences.

For additional information, see Appendix #5 for the Minute on Economic Relationships and Visitation.

4. Press Inquiries: This is a religious visitation and is not intended as a public political action. We will not seek publicity nor media attention. Travelers who receive inquiries from the press should refer such inquiries to the clerk of the

Puente Committee. After the trip, written reports should be checked with the committee before publication.

5. Nonconfrontation: The purpose of intervisitation is to be with each other and learn to know each other and how each does God's will. Visitors will naturally discover many differences, some of which may be surprising or disturbing. It is perfectly appropriate to be silent about such matters or to discuss them only with other members of the traveling group. Visitors who feel strongly led to discuss sensitive matters with Cuban Friends should be wise in discerning the context and the person with whom such discussion might be appropriate.

6. Complaints, Gossip, and Special Appeals: In Quakers' historic experience of intervisitation, visitors may hear concerns, complaints and even gossip which local people may be reluctant to air in their communities but feel able to discuss with strangers. Visitors may listen prayerfully, but generally should neither repeat such talk nor try to intervene in the situation. Visitors should also avoid gossiping or complaining about their home meetings.

7. Theology: Cuba Yearly Meeting does not have as much theological diversity as New England Yearly Meeting. Many Cuban Friends have not encountered Quaker universalism, practice of other religious traditions (e.g. Judaism, Buddhism, Native American), or feminine terms referring to the Divine (e.g. Goddess), etc. and may find such aspects of New England Quakerism bewildering. Sensitivity is required in discussing such subjects among Cuban Friends. Some have recently become Quakers and bring ideas from other Christian denominations; others will not be aware of Friends' history or testimonies, Quaker process, and the diversity of Friends that are known by more seasoned Cuban Friends.

8. Sexuality: Sexual activity outside marriage is disapproved of by Cuban Friends. On subjects such as premarital sex, extramarital sex, unmarried couples living together, and remarriage of divorced persons, they are much stricter than New England Friends generally are. Unmarried couples should not expect to be housed together in Cuba.

9. Sexual Orientation and Gender Identity: We celebrate travel for all Friends. The experience of our visitors to Cuba confirms that there is resistance to gay and lesbian identity and expression among Cuban Friends, although there is less outward rejection, perhaps reflecting a shift relating to the new national law prohibiting discrimination on the basis of sexual orientation or gender identity. With regard to transgender and nonbinary gender identity, however, we should expect a lack of knowledge and acceptance. Great sensitivity and consultation are required in dealing with this subject even as it is becoming more openly discussed in Cuban society. We seek to support LGBTQ+ travelers to prepare and to exercise care.

10. Politics and Economics: In preparing to visit Cuba, Friends are urged to inform themselves about the current political and economic situation (including the current

and evolving US restrictions and policies) so that they will be more ready to understand the experience of Cuban Friends. Visitors are likely to encounter strong feelings about these subjects among Cuban Friends. Our discipline asks us not to quote them or refer to their disclosures in public or in written or electronically published form. Our discipline does not discourage discussing with them whatever they choose to say.

11. The Bible: Some Cuban Friends interpret the Bible quite literally. Some reject the theory of evolution, as part of their understanding of Biblical teaching, and partly because in the schools it has been taught as part of an atheist and materialist agenda. Loyalty to the creation story in Genesis is seen by some as part of their Christian witness.

12. Alcohol and Tobacco: Many Friends in Cuba frown upon the use of alcohol and tobacco, and in some monthly meetings total abstention is a requirement of membership. Because of the usual social context of secular dancing, some Cuban Friends do not dance. These social prohibitions have been undergoing change. Sensitivity to Cuban Friends' mores and to the heightened visibility of US visitors among Cuban Friends in the community is encouraged.

13. Sister Meeting Sharing: Sister meeting relationships offer an opportunity for informal teaching and learning as well as sharing cultural practices. For example, at the request of the Pastor of the Havana Church, Hanover Friends Meeting has been able to share gifts of folk dancing, mural painting, discussions about important issues in our respective meetings, workshops in AVP, forgiveness, discernment, etc. Groups may want to open up the possibility with their host meeting of sharing their gifts with activities like these. Groups including young people offer another whole range of interests and activities. Individuals and NEYM meetings are welcome to share such activities with Cuban meetings outside the sister meeting paired relationship.

SECTION III: The Delegation: Before, During and After

Before

- Some delegations are structured to visit a sister meeting. Others are coordinated to attend Cuba Yearly Meeting (February) or Cuban Friends' anniversary of their founding (November). Other delegations have a focus on fellowship with young Cuban Quakers, intergenerational visits, presentation of a specific workshop idea or other topic. Be creative! It is also important that the Puente clerks be able to contact Cuban Friends early on as to whether a delegation idea is welcome to them.
- You or someone in your group should contact Puente and/or your sister meeting to determine when would be a good time for your visit. You should allow about six months for preparation for travel and receiving a Cuban visa.
- Check that your passport is current and will be in effect for six months after your

travel date. If it is not, apply for a new passport immediately.

- As described in Section I, initiate your clearness process with your monthly meeting with a letter of interest. Once your meeting has approved your travel, your clerk will write a letter of introduction (See Section I for description) noting that your meeting for business has approved your travel.
- Send your letter of interest to Puente and be sure that your clerk also sends your letter of introduction to Puente. These documents begin the documentation that you will travel under the aegis of a religious organization, one of the legal ways that Americans can travel to Cuba.
- The Puente clerk will contact you to arrange a date for your clearness meeting. At the same time you will send them the information needed for a Cuban visa. It takes two to three months to process a visa application. *See Appendix #6A for 'Cuban Religious Visa Data Requirements.'*
- You or someone in your group should look into flights. Ask your Puente contact when you should book your flights.
- You or someone in your group should prepare a budget. Items in your budget should include:
 - Cost of flights
 - Room and board in Cuba
 - Transportation in Cuba
 - Contribution to Cuba Yearly Meeting
 - Supplies you may take with you
 - Spending money

The Puente clerks can assist you with estimating the costs in Cuba. (Each delegation may also be asked to transport funds in cash from other groups, since there is no financial institution connections between the US and Cuba.)

- Decide whether you need to have a fundraiser to cover travel expenses or to raise money for a work project or for Cuba Yearly Meeting. Travelers also make requests for funds from their monthly meeting, quarterly meeting and/or other Quaker funding sources. Again, Puente clerks can offer information about financial resources.
- **Your group structure:**
 - It is best for your group to be no larger than 12 due to logistics and transportation in Cuba.
 - Include a good Spanish speaker for every 3 people.
 - At least half should be over 21.
 - One member of each delegation should be the main contact person with a member of the Puente Committee, and should communicate at least monthly by phone or email. The task list (see Appendix #7) is very helpful

- to keep the delegation and Puente Committee focused on the tasks to be accomplished prior to the trip.
- Someone else should call, plan and lead group meetings.
- **Group process:** You should have meetings for
 - Shared worship
 - Getting to know each other better and check ins
 - Shared reflection about the disciplines
 - Communicating with hosts about
 - material aid you might bring to the Yearly Meeting
 - spiritual and non-material gifts you can bring (art project, songs, folk dance, workshops, faith and play demonstration, discussions of issues in each other's meetings, etc.)
 - schedule
 - Logistics of getting airplane tickets, fundraising, paperwork deadlines.
 - Filling out medical information form (see *Appendix #6B for Medical Information*)
 - Creating a group keepsake such as a card or picture signed by group members to hand out.
 - Practicing personal/spiritual introductions in Spanish
 - Deciding how you will manage in Cuba
 - Who will keep track of funds in Cuba (usually the group's funds are co-mingled), and for working out the payment to our hosts, usually best done towards the end of the trip? This requires a careful eye and a good head for numbers.
 - Who will interpret and how will that person be supported?
 - Who will discuss logistics with the hosts?
 - Who will correspond with families at home, and write a report for NEYM Friends (up to 2 pages) upon return?
 - Who will convene a daily group meeting for worship, reflection and problem-solving?
 - Communication with your meeting to share your excitement and to involve the meeting
 - Deciding whether you want or need to have a fundraiser.
- **Documents:** These are the documents you need to keep for this travel.
 - Your monthly meeting clerk's letter of introduction for you. The clerk of Permanent Board will sign it before you go. Have the pastor of any church you visit sign and date it as well.
 - Letter of invitation from Cuba Yearly Meeting. Again, this documents that you are part of a religious delegation. If you are asked why you went to Cuba as you re-enter the US, these documents show that your travel is legal.
 - Cuban visa. You need this to enter the country. You will apply before your trip, and it takes two to three months for the Cubans to process the request.
 - A letter from the clerk of NEYM authorizing you or someone in your group to carry a stated amount of money for Cuba Yearly Meeting.
 - A letter from the clerk of NEYM authorizing you or someone in the group to carry specific supplies (construction materials, art supplies, paper, tools, etc.).

- Your passport. It is possible that your host will take your passport and hold it in a secure place.

See Appendix #8 for 'What to Bring to Cuba.'

See Appendix #9 for 'Guidance from a Seasoned Traveler.'

During

- Soon after you arrive, the treasurer of Cuba Yearly Meeting or her representative will meet with you or someone from your group to receive the funds that you have transported. She will also convert some of your money into CUC's (the currency that tourists use) for you to have spending money while you are there.
- Water in Cuba is not safe for you to drink, and your hosts know this, but they will have difficulty providing enough bottled water for you. Use some of your spending money for this.
- The Cubans are very hospitable. You do them honor by receiving this graciously.
- Join in the activities at church, both work and play. Interact with as many people as you can.
- Share pictures of your home, neighborhood and especially your family.
- Before you leave, the treasurer of Cuba Yearly Meeting will meet again with you or someone from your group to determine what the costs of your trip have actually been and reconcile this with the funds you brought.
- Have the pastor or pastors sign and date your letter of introduction, and bring it back with you.

After

- Return copies of your signed letter of introduction to your monthly meeting clerk and to Puente.
- You or someone in your group will submit a written report of your trip to Puente within two weeks of your return.
- Share news of your experience with your meeting.

SECTION IV: Appendices

Appendix #1: Queries for Potential Travelers (revised January 2019)

1. Do I have a strong interest (leading) in spending time with Cuban Friends, to feel and understand their life, and to share with them in the life of the Spirit?
2. Does my monthly meeting confirm my sense of leading, after a clearness process?
3. Do I understand the Puente de Amigos disciplines on confidentiality, and on economic relationships and visitation? Have I seriously considered how those disciplines may affect my behavior, and am I prepared to honor them?
4. Am I committed to the Society of Friends and to New England Yearly Meeting? Am I familiar or can I make myself familiar with New England Friends and with the Advices and Queries of New England Yearly Meeting, so that I can represent New England Friends?
5. Am I ready to experience programmed worship and Bible-based, Christ-centered Quakerism in Cuba? Have I attended both programmed and unprogrammed worship? Am I familiar with the Bible, at least the Gospels?
6. Am I interested in participating in Puente de Amigos' work in some way after returning from Cuba?
7. Am I actively trying to learn some Spanish?
8. Am I prepared to respect the conservatism of Cuban Friends on questions of lifestyle and sexuality, including refraining from the use of alcohol, tobacco and illegal drugs, and from sexual activity outside legal marriage?
9. Am I able to attend committee meetings or other gatherings in preparation for the trip?
10. Are there any personal or family issues that might affect my decision to visit Cuban Friends? Can I be released from work, school, and family responsibilities to enable me to go on this trip?
11. Do I have any health conditions that might cause problems during the trip?
12. Am I willing to raise all or part of my own expenses (estimated at \$1,400-\$1,600 per person)?

Questions 4, 5, and 7 may present opportunities for study and conversations with other Friends.

Appendix #2A: Queries for Monthly Meeting Clearness Committee Meeting with People Planning to Go to Cuba with NEYM Approval (revised January 2019)

The term "clearness process" may be ambiguous. When a Friend asks for a clearness committee on a personal issue such as a career change, the committee's focus is on whether the individual is clear to proceed. On the other hand, for matters which require monthly meeting action (for example, membership or marriage under the care of the meeting), the committee necessarily has a dual focus: Is the individual clear, and is the meeting in unity with that choice and clear to endorse or recommend it as a corporate decision? The process for travelers to Cuba should be of the latter type. Both Permanent Board and Puente de Amigos Committee rely on the discernment of monthly meetings that a particular Friend is an appropriate person to represent New England Yearly Meeting among Cuban Friends.

1. Does the Friend have an interest in sharing with Cuban Friends in that which is eternal? Does the Friend have a spiritual motive, rather than one of self-interest, including political or professional interest in Cuba?
2. Does the Friend display the spiritual and emotional maturity that will enable him or her to be attentive, with an open heart, to the needs and conditions of Cuban Friends?
3. Will this Friend respond with sensitivity and wisdom to differences in culture, lifestyle, theology, or form of worship that he or she may find disturbing?
4. When unexpected difficulties arise, for example in the logistics of travel or in interpersonal relationships, will the Friend respond with discernment, flexibility, and good judgment?
5. Will this Friend honor the decisions and disciplines of Cuba Yearly Meeting and the Puente Committee?
6. Is this Friend an appropriate representative of your meeting and of New England Yearly Meeting, one whose visit among Cuban Friends will enrich and strengthen the relationship between our two yearly meetings?
7. Is the meeting prepared to offer the personal and spiritual support this Friend needs before and after the trip?
8. Is there any question about this Friend's health or family situation of which his or her group or Puente needs to be aware?

When approval is found in the clearness process, the committee will need to bring its recommendation to the meeting for worship for business for its approval and minuting.

The clerk of the meeting will then write a letter recommending the candidate to the Permanent Board that references the minute approved by the meeting. This can be emailed to the Puente clerk or representative helping with the individual's or group's process.

Appendix #2B: Alternative Set of Questions for Monthly Meeting Clearness

Revised Questions for MM Clerks and/or M&C Committees preparing to meet with candidates going in a group about their clearness to represent NEYM in Cuba (required for a religious visa)

[It has been the practice in Hanover to give the Puente packet to prospective candidates and copies of the questions to their clearness committees. Over time we've revised the questions for the clearness session as follows:]

Begin your session with a gathering silence ended by candidate speaking about their reasons for wanting to go to Cuba and be among Cuban Friends.

1. Are there questions from the Puente packet that gave you pause or that you would like to talk with us about?
2. Does your interest in going to Cuba include one of sharing spiritually with Cuban Friends?
 - How might this look?
 - How fluent are you in Spanish?
 - How might you prepare to share spiritually? (Spanish study, reading the Bible, articles in Friends Journal, Pendle Hill pamphlets, prepare a talk about issues facing NE Friends, your meeting)
3. Will you make time to work with the group to prepare for your trip
 - by finding ways to involve the meeting?
 - by planning ways to share your interests and spirituality with Cuban Friends?
 - by becoming comfortable as a member of a group and being willing to work through differences of opinion together?
 - by reporting back to the meeting and to Puente about your trip?
 - by helping to raise money, if necessary, so everyone in the group can afford to go?
4. Are you prepared to study and follow the Puente disciplines on confidentiality and material gifts? Please reread these before your Puente clearness orientation and be

prepared to ask questions about them. Do you have any questions at this time?

The Puente de Amigos Committee of New England Yearly Meeting will want a letter of introduction signed by the clerk after the monthly meeting accepts the recommendation of your clearness committee and a personal statement about your leading/interest in going and grounding as a Friend before they meet with you.

When you meet with Puente representatives for the Puente clearness/orientation process, they may involve you in a discussion of the disciplines, as well as answer your questions and share experiences helpful to your orientation.

Appendix #3A: Sample Letter of Introduction from Monthly Meeting

*Please make copies for the clerk of the meeting and everyone on the clearness committee.

November 17, 2014

Greetings to Friends,

Please welcome our member Leonard Cadwallader into your worship and fellowship.

Leonard has followed leadings over many years to make connections with Spanish-speaking Friends in various parts of Latin America. Most recently this has been expressed with Friends in Cuba, having become involved with the activities of New England Yearly Meeting's Puente de Amigos Committee. Leonard, and his wife, Mary Ann, hosted the two Cuban representatives to the sessions of New England Yearly Meeting in 2011.

The Cadwalladers then joined a delegation from Wellesley Friends Meeting traveling to Cuba in 2012. That trip was conducted under the guidance and with the prayerful support of the Puente de Amigos Committee of New England Yearly Meeting. Leonard has continued to participate in Puente de Amigos activities and in 2014 was appointed the committee's clerk. Over this same period of time, our monthly meeting was formalizing a sister meeting relationship with a Cuban church and in February 2014, Leonard co-led a delegation to visit its sister meeting and attend the sessions of Cuba Yearly Meeting.

Leonard wishes to travel among, worship with, and listen to the stories of Friends whose roots grow from the diverse cultures of the Caribbean, Central and South America. We can learn much from Latin American Friends about gospel-centered ministry, outreach, and new ways to create a church family. We look forward to the openings, known and unknown, that will grow from this travel.

Leonard has met with a clearness committee of our meeting which found unity with

him on the clarity of his spiritual leading to attend the Friends World Committee for Consultation – Section of the Americas gathering in Mexico in March 2015. The Committee’s recommendation for Leonard’s travel was approved by Hanover Friends Meeting at its meeting for business on November 9, 2014. With God’s guidance, Leonard’s aspirations to return to Guatemala and Cuba in 2015 may also be realized.

We rejoice in this opportunity to send you our love, and strengthen our connections with the wider Quaker community. When Leonard returns, we will be eager to learn from him of your activities and concerns. We look forward to welcoming any of you to worship with us.

*Yours in peace,
Craig Putnam, clerk, Hanover Friends Meeting*

*Approved with Love and Blessings for safe travel on December 7, 2014
Constance Kincaid-Brown, clerk, Northwest Quarterly Meeting
Sarah Gant, clerk of Permanent Board of NEYM*

Appendix #3B: Gordon Browne letter, “Friends Tradition of Travel”

Reprinted from Spring, 1995 Puente de Amigos Newsletter

An excerpt from a letter to the committee:

I have tried to clarify some strands of Quaker tradition with regard to visitations. I believe that that was the issue before the Permanent Board recently, not the appropriateness of Puente's process of selection of recommended visitors. There is full agreement, I believe, that these exchanges are religious visits, not tourist trips, and that those sent by New England Yearly Meeting should have that motivation.

Intervisitation has been crucial in preserving Friends' identity as a religious community, and the simple wish to be among other Friends, to learn their experience of God, to share one's own experience, and to strengthen in that way the bonds of love among us is motive enough for Friends to travel to other meetings. Sometimes a Friend is traveling under concern, as Woolman did on the slavery issue or, more recently, Larry Scott did on nuclear disarmament. They may feel the need to speak on the issue or, often, they may need to listen to the Truth others have arrived at. Travel in the ministry has customarily meant travel by recognized and/or recorded ministers whose spiritual understandings and gifts are to be shared with those they travel among. Though the distinctions among these three kinds of visitation are easily blurred in practice, there is justification, I believe, for preserving them and respecting them.

In most instances, a letter of introduction from a meeting or worship group is appropriate for a visitor of the first category I mentioned, noting his/her particular interest in visiting among Cuban Friends. If someone is traveling under concern, as

in the second category I mentioned, the letter should indicate that and indicate the sending group's support for the Friend's carrying the concern. The letter may be a letter of introduction or a travel minute from the meeting. In the latter case, the Friend would be speaking not only for herself/himself on that concern but also for the sending meeting. My guess is that the missionaries who first carried Quakerism to Cuba most clearly represent the third category I have spoken of. There are few among us today who could live and speak such an evangelical message, and most liberal Friends, fearing that clarity of conviction and experience might quickly become oppressive when offered to others, would not wish to be represented by them anyway. However, there are those among us, including some who have already represented NEYM in Cuba, who can interpret well the diversity among New England Friends and the unity that transcends it.

My own experience traveling among Friends in Latin America leads me to believe they are likely to be puzzled when we send as representatives of NEYM persons who have not made the commitment of membership. With Young Friends, that will be less of an issue than among adult Friends. In the predominantly Catholic culture of Latin America and in Cuba particularly where all religious people faced governmental hostility for a time, commitment to membership in the Religious Society of Friends represents not only a total religious commitment but in many instances a sacrificial commitment made at considerable personal cost. We should not inadvertently mock the meaning of that commitment by our own relaxed standards about what it means to be a Friend.

I am delighted with the sensitive way the Puente Committee has considered the implications of the religious relationship we have sought to develop with our brothers and sisters in Cuba.

-- Gordon Browne, Plainfield Meeting

Appendix #4: New England Yearly Meeting Permanent Board Minute 2019-xx

Permanent Board approves delegations in concept during Puente Committee review, and the Permanent Board clerk or presiding NEYM clerk approves the final list of travelers before final travel documents are drawn up.

APPENDIX #5: Minute on Economic Relationships and Visitation (approved 8/94, revised 8/96)

Puente de Amigos Committee was established in 1991 to foster a relationship between New England Yearly Meeting and Cuba Yearly Meeting. Our primary task is to build a spiritual relationship through intervisitation. We consider Cuban

Quakers our sisters and brothers, despite the enmity between our governments and differences in culture, language, political and economic systems. We believe that New England Friends have much to learn from the spirituality of Cuban Friends, who have persevered under difficult conditions. And they have also expressed interest in learning how we live the life of the Spirit.

In the first three years of our work, we learned a great deal about Cuban Friends. We have been deeply touched by their Christian witness, and we are very grateful for their love and friendship. We have also begun to learn about the practical and material difficulties involved in a relationship between people who live under two such different political and economic systems. The challenge which faces us both is to develop and maintain a relationship of respect and equality in the face of great material differences.

Cuba Yearly Meeting has governed itself independently since 1927, and for most of that period has been financially independent. Cuba Yearly Meeting has sustained itself through political and economic upheaval and through periods of isolation from the world community of Friends. Cuban Friends have a history of dignity, self-sufficiency, and independence. We deeply respect and honor this.

The severe economic crisis through which Cuban Friends are now passing makes us wish to offer material support to individual Friends whom we have come to know and love, and to other Friends whose extreme needs we become aware of. We also would like to be able to invite Friends to visit with us freely. This is a natural response to the contrast between our situation and theirs. However, as we have wrestled with the implications of this relationship, we have become aware of several complicating factors. First, it is difficult for Friends in New England to comprehend the impact of a material gift, or of a visit to this country, and we do not want to cause problems among Cuban Friends. Second, we do not want to jeopardize our ability to obtain travel permits from both governments. Third and most important, we do not want the material contrasts in our situations to undermine our spiritual relationships with Cuban Friends. For these reasons, we have become convinced that our committee must set strict guidelines in these matters. These guidelines evolved in consultation with the leadership of Cuban Friends.

Visitation: The selection of visitors for travel between our two yearly meetings is a yearly meeting responsibility. When we send people to Cuba, they must have the approval of our Permanent Board, which is our regular process for traveling in the ministry outside our yearly meeting. When we invite Cuban Friends to visit us, they should be chosen by Cuba Yearly Meeting according to CYM's regular process. We cannot invite any Cuban Friends who may wish to visit us outside the Cuba Yearly Meeting process, unless they are already in the US on other business. In obtaining travel permits, Cuba Yearly Meeting and New England Yearly Meeting must guarantee to both governments that Cuban visitors will return to Cuba at the time specified. We cannot help people to leave Cuba and come to the United States illegally, or to remain here without legal permission, nor can we permit our members to do so as individuals. Such activity would seriously compromise our ministry of

intervisitation.

Material Gifts: As a committee, Puente de Amigos will from time to time make gifts to Cuba Yearly Meeting or Cuban Monthly Meetings. However, our committee will not consider material assistance to any individuals except at the request of Cuba Yearly Meeting.

Small personal gifts to individual Cuban Friends are a natural expression of friendship and are not discouraged. However, we request New England Friends not to give money, medicines, eyeglasses, or valuable personal gifts or favors (such as invitations to the United States, scholarship help, etc.) to individual Cuban Friends. Such gifts present a danger of distorting our relationship with Cuban Friends and of causing problems among them. With great pain, approve these restrictions on our desire to express in material ways our love for Cuban Friends.

Cuba Yearly Meeting has established a fund for pastoral assistance to individuals, and is willing to accept donations for this purpose. This ensures that the discernment of personal needs and equitable distribution of resources will remain in the hands of Cuban Friends. New England Friends are reminded that such donations may be violations of United States law or currency regulations.

We recognize that this policy may be difficult for some Friends to understand and invite them to discuss it with members of this committee.

Appendix #6A Cuban religious visa data requirements

(To be sent to Maria Yi at least 2 months prior to departure: mariayi@enet.cu)

Name as it appears in passport:

Gender:

Telephone No:

Address:

Passport #:

Date issued, and by whom (US State Department):

Expiration date:

Country of birth:

Citizen:

Country of Residence:

Date of birth:

Father:

Mother:

Occupation:

Appendix #6B: Medical information form

Name: _____
Date of Birth: _____
Address: _____
Email address: _____
Home phone: _____
Work phone: _____
Cell phone: _____
Passport # _____

Medical Insurance Company _____ tel: _____
Group # _____ ID # _____
Policy in name of _____

In case of emergency, please notify: _____
Relationship: _____
Email: _____
Phone: _____
Other contact info (if needed):

Personal Physician: _____
Phone: _____

Do you regularly take any medication (including antibiotics, birth control pills, etc.)?
Please bring sufficient medicine with you for your entire trip. Medicines are in very short supply in Cuba and you can't be sure of getting what you need there.
No ___ Yes ___ (describe)

Are you currently under medical care for any illness or condition?
No ___ Yes ___ (explain)

Do you have any history of heart trouble, blackouts, asthma, or bronchitis, diabetes, or other chronic condition? No ___ Yes ___ (explain)

Do you have any allergies to bee stings, penicillin or other drugs or substances?
No ___ Yes ___ (explain)

Is there anything else that a doctor treating you should know?
No ___ Yes ___ (explain)

I grant permission for _____ to make medical decisions for me in an emergency situation if I am unable to make decisions for myself.

Signature: _____ Date: _____

Appendix #7: Task list for intervisitation

INDIVIDUAL TRAVELER NAMES:			
Statement of intent			
MM approval			
Puente Committee approval			
MM Letter of introduction (multiple signed copies)			
Visa Data list			
PB approval/letter			
Funds raised			
Tickets purchased			
Keepsakes to share			
Contact with hosts (plans, schedule etc)			
Spiritual intro of self in Spanish (written or practiced)			
Medical info form (give a copy to your buddy)			
List of material aid to be brought			
Delegation leader ONLY:			
YM funding letter			
Treasury Dept approval letter			

Appendix #8: What to Bring to Cuba (February 2019)

Documents to be carried by:

Individuals -

- Passport and copy of Cuban visa.
- A copy of the face page of your passport carried separately from your passport. *(Also, leave a copy of this page with someone Stateside.)*
- Address and phone for Cuban Quaker contact to present at Cuban immigration upon arrival. *(As of Dec. 2016: Pastor Maria Yi at Iglesia Los Amigos Calle Libertad #114. Tel: 53-24-463352 in Holguin; in Havana as of Aug. 2018, Havana Friends Church, Calle 43 #8518 e/88 y 90, Marianao, La Habana 11400, no phone; BandB we use—Grisel Ortega Diaz's Hospedaje Lodging, Calle 90 A No. 4109 e/41 y 43, Marianao, etc. Tel. 260-5057, cell: 05 263-8439 (She can help you contact Kirenia Criado, the pastor in Havana.)*
- Medical history form with contact information. Give this to your 'medical Buddy' on the trip with you to carry. You should also leave one copy with your group's Stateside contact person. *(Stateside person should have a phone tree as well.)*

Group Leader -

- Your monthly meeting clerk's Letter of Introduction*
- A copy of the invitation from Cuba Yearly Meeting.

(The 2 items above will need to be handy when you re-enter the US.)

- Two copies of the list of the material aid items that will be given as gifts to Cuba Yearly Meeting. *(One copy will be with them in the luggage; the second copy will be held by the group leader, available if needed at Cuban customs.)*

Group leader carries letters on NEYM stationery signed by NEYM clerk or secretary certifying that the money you're taking and material aid are going to Cuba Yearly Meeting. The letter authorizes members of the group as official representatives of NEYM to collectively transfer humanitarian aid (list following) to CYM. 'These items/money are intended for the church to use for support of religious and humanitarian activities.'

Group leader should ask for a receipt for the money paid CYM for room, board, and transportation to present with a copy of the MM clerk's letter with signatures to Puente when they return.

* Copied onto NEYM letterhead (available as a template from NEYM office) and signed by Permanent Board clerk (includes purpose of the visit, names of participants) and quarterly meeting clerk's signature if traveling in the ministry. It is carried by group leader to be signed and dated by leaders of Cuban churches visited. It verifies your purpose as being a 'religious', one of the US categories for legal travel to Cuba. Have it ready upon re-entry along with...invitation from CYM.

Personal Items -

- Journal/notebook (Puente asks for a report from each individual upon return.)
- Photo album of your family, neighborhood, monthly meeting, pets, etc.
- Cell phone. Internet access is increasingly available in Cuba, and many/most Friends have cell phones, so they are not items to be left at home anymore. Internet time can be purchased in major towns and wifi access is available in public squares as well as some of the monthly meeting offices.
- Set of used twin-sized sheets and towel/wash cloth (These will be left in Cuba).
- Bilingual Bible
- Small roll of toilet paper, tissues, sanitary hand cleaner or handi-wipes
- Toiletries in travel-size containers (shampoo, soap, shaving cream, razor, etc.)
- Any Rx meds you normally take
- A full course of a broad spectrum anti-biotic such as Cipro. (Ask your MD for a prescription. If you end up not using it, leave in Cuba.) When taking Cipro, one should limit exercise. Plan to bring all the prescription medications you ordinarily might need.
- Over-the-counter meds you might use (headache, muscle ache, anti-diarrheal [suggest: Imodium], antihistamines, cold tablets, band-aids, etc.)
- Sunscreen (SPF 30 or higher)
- Insect repellent
- Small flashlight
- Sunglasses
- 3-prong adapter
- Your openness and flexibility
- Spanish for spiritual sharing and information about yourself

Clothing if on visit to Cuba Yearly Meeting, the Peace Institute or a conference

- Summer-weight casual clothes
- One set of dress clothes for worship services (dressy but not showy)
- Sweater or hoodie
- Warm pajamas
- Rain gear
- Hat
- Swimsuit
- Shoes (sandals, walking shoes or sneakers, shower shoes or flip-flops)

Clothing if on a Service Team

- Work clothes--shirts with long sleeves, gloves and sturdy shoes or work boots

Appendix #9: Guidance from a seasoned traveler

The following are excerpts of a letter from Susan Furry (date?) which contain good guidance for travelers to Cuba.

On Spiritual Matters

The first consideration for travelers is the spiritual impact of the visit to Cuban Friends. Be prepared to be deeply moved and changed by this trip. God is moving powerfully among Cuban Friends and will touch you through them in ways you don't expect.

You will be loved and blessed by Cuban Friends. You will be treated with every courtesy and consideration and will have to accept extra comforts and privileges which they can't afford for themselves. Be prepared to be embarrassed by all they give you and do for you, both materially and spiritually; but don't let your embarrassment lead you to hurt their feelings by rejecting their gifts. It is their joy and pride to give their guests the best of everything. Remember that one of the most important gifts you can give in return is your presence, which visibly reminds them of the love and concern of Friends around the world.

Occasionally visitors to Cuba have had uncomfortable experiences caused by their presence as rich visitors in a place where people are poor and lacking in many necessities such as food, clothing, and medicines. Given the economic realities, it is remarkable that such experiences have been so few. Let such experiences be a spiritual challenge to you. God may help you to love and honor even those who may sometimes make you uncomfortable.

Be prepared for culture shock when you return home, and for memories of Cuban Friends to haunt you. Be prepared to feel guilty about our material abundance, and to feel homesick for the spiritual abundance of Cuba Yearly Meeting.

Health concerns

At least a couple of months before your trip, check with a hospital travel clinic for the latest recommendations for travelers to Cuba. Hepatitis A vaccination is recommended for all of Latin America, and your tetanus vaccination should be up to date (within the past 10 years). Other immunizations may be recommended. Plan to bring all the prescription medications you ordinarily might need, and a broad-spectrum antibiotic in case of severe diarrhea or other illness.

When traveling, there are always concerns about the safety of food and drinking water. Local people develop immunities to the local strains of gastroenteritis, but visitors are vulnerable. Traveler's diarrhea sometimes seems to be due just to the change in water and diet without specific infection. It isn't only a problem for visitors to poor countries -- visitors to the United States get it too.

Tap water in Cuba is not generally drinkable, but people are aware of the importance of clean water. When in doubt about drinking water, ask your

Cuban hosts. Boiled or bottled water are safest. Try not to drink if you aren't sure of the source, or accept coffee, which is boiled. If you are nervous about water, bring purification tablets with you (available in camping stores). A water bottle filled by your host with boiled water is a good thing to carry with you during the day. Ask hosts if household water is plentiful or must be conserved.

Food you are offered in private homes is generally safe but be careful about buying from street vendors; let your Cuban hosts be your guide. Coffee may be safer to accept than cold drinks made with unboiled water. You may sometimes be in a situation where you have to eat or drink something to be polite, though you don't want it or are doubtful of its cleanliness. People who are poor may be very conscious that they have little to offer you, and humiliated if you don't accept. It's unlikely that you will pick up anything dangerous this way; unless you have special health problems, the worst would probably be a bout of diarrhea.

Practicalities

Money (Revised by CG 2007): A few years ago, the Cuban government decided not to allow US dollars or other foreign currency to circulate. Tourists must convert their currency into Convertible Cuban Pesos CUCs that only circulate in Cuba. It was originally set up to be 1 to 1 with the US dollar but it fluctuates. There is a 10% charge to convert US dollars into CUCs. The regular Cuban peso (CUP) has an international circulation with about \$1 to 26 pesos. For recent trips, Puente de Amigos travelers have been using US dollars. An official from Cuba YM will receive your funds for expenses in dollars. Cuban Friends will help you convert some dollars into CUCs which you can use for the offering at worship services and buying small items during your visit. You can't use credit cards or travelers checks in Cuba unless they're from a bank in Canada or England, etc.

Gifts: Cuba Yearly Meeting has a pastoral aid fund which is distributed to the monthly meetings for material needs in their communities. Puente can accept donations earmarked for this fund (now named humanitarian fund) and pass them on to Cuba YM under our current US license.

Plumbing: There may or may not be running water. In some places it's always available, in other places never, or only a few hours a day. Ask your host whether and how you should flush the toilet. The system may be to flush it by pouring a bucket of water into the bowl (only when really needed, to conserve water). Most Cuban toilets don't have seats. One never throws paper in them. There's usually a basket for the paper, but if not leave it on the floor. Sometimes there is no toilet paper; sometimes people use newspapers or even old books.

Most Cuban homes have some way to store water for times when the water supply stops. The houses are not plumbed for hot water, but often in the afternoon water which has been in roof storage tanks is warm from the sun for bathing. In winter, your host may heat a bucket of water for your bath (you use a cup to pour it over yourself while standing in the shower.) IF water isn't running, baths are a pail of water you scoop over yourself; toilets are flushed by pouring in a pail of water.

Sun, weather, clothing: The sun can be very hot and can burn you very quickly. Use sunscreen and bring a hat. In my August visit I found an umbrella very welcome when outdoors at midday and carried a small folding one. In February there were a few days when I wore a sweater in the morning or evening, once I wore it all day, but often it was comfortably warm. Clothing is informal during the day; the general custom is to bathe and change before the evening meal. Cuban Quaker women wear pants as well as skirts, the younger ones may wear pants even to church. Visitors should probably lean to the side of modesty and conservatism in their clothing; young women should wear bras and avoid provocative or revealing clothes. But you won't need really formal clothes; men rarely wear suits.

Security: Remember to bring on the trip a way of carrying passport & money under clothes (simplest is a homemade cloth pocket on an elastic to be worn around the waist), not only for air travel, but when you're on day trips in Cuba also.

Unfortunately, with the economic desperation of the people, crime and thievery have increased. Take good care of your things so as not to have a situation that would embarrass your hosts. For example, it's ok to hang clothes or towels on a line outdoors in the patio when people are around but don't leave them there overnight or when you leave to go to church. Don't leave your things near a window; some thieves "fish" for things through windows, using poles. Everyone in town will know there are foreign visitors and some people will be tempted. In some towns, you are safe walking on the streets, but your Cuban hosts may ask you not to go out without an escort, especially after dark. [Update: Our Cuban hosts offer to place our valuables (passport, visa, most bills) in their safe upon our arrival and this is recommended.]

Names: Cuban women don't change their names when they marry. A person has a given name plus two surnames, that of the father and that of the mother. The mother's surname is the second and is often dropped or simply given as an initial. Example: Heredio Santos Balmaseda and his wife Julieta Perez have a son, David Santos Perez (often written David Santos P. or just David Santos). Both David and Heredio would be called Senor Santos. The dual surnames can help you trace relationships: Ramon Gonzalez-Longoria Escalona is a nephew of Enelia Escalona.

Food: In recent years visitors can only be housed at the churches and pastor's homes - not at local homes. Visitors eat at the church. While you are there Friends may eat better than they ordinarily do, because of extra food the church buys in preparation for your visit, but it will probably be very simple. Friends may bring gifts of food, fruit, etc. for you. Breakfast is often bread and "cafe con leche" made by adding a cup of hot milk to a small amount of very strong, sweet coffee.

Whatever produce is in season will be served very frequently. Vegetarians or others with special dietary needs should let the Cuba Yearly Meeting know in advance. Vegetarianism should be no problem, as meat is scarce and people are accustomed to eating mostly vegetable foods (through necessity, not principle; most Cubans find vegetarianism very hard to understand). Wheat

bread is scarce, but the diet is full of other carbohydrates -- rice, corn meal, plantains, yucca, etc. Coffee is served very strong and sweet in small cups which people drink rather quickly. Decaf coffee is unheard-of. Your host may offer you coffee as soon as you get up in the morning. If you can't drink coffee, you could bring black tea or Chamomile tea, a package for each host, as a gift and so they'll have something to offer you in the morning. Chamomile is called *manzanilla* in Spanish and it's familiar to Cubans.

Transportation, electricity etc.: Cuba Yearly Meeting will arrange for a vehicle to transport you from town to town, depending on the size of the group. Sometimes the local church will hire a truck to take you and local Friends to the beach. Within the towns, most people get around by walking, though sometimes you may be offered a ride in a horse-drawn buggy or on a "bici-taxi" (a bicycle taxi)

Often the electricity goes off for hours (less frequently now); sometimes people are warned in advance and sometimes not. Some people have lamps or candles, others just wait in the dark. Bring a small flashlight -- useful during blackouts and also for finding the bathroom at night.

Advice to young women: Although Cuban Quakers believe in equality, generally young women are somewhat more restricted than in this country.... Spending time with an individual young man may lead to misunderstandings, on his part or in the community. When in doubt, stay with other women.

Special needs: If anything bothers you, or you need anything, let someone know and Friends will make every effort to make you comfortable. If you're not comfortable to tell your host, tell the pastor or one of the church leaders.

Weight restrictions: The airline limits for weight vary with the airline. The most recent advice is to pack medicines and gifts for the church in ordinary suitcases, not in special boxes.

There are so many things Cuba Yearly Meeting has trouble obtaining which are cheap and plentiful here, it seems a waste for anyone to travel with less than the full baggage allowance. If your bags are under weight, bring paper; it's cheap and easy to get at the last minute, and weighs a lot, and will be very welcome in Cuba.

Correspondence: Letters mailed from Cuba seem to be getting here pretty regularly. Letters mailed to Cuba from the U.S. are less dependable. Postcards and air letters seem to reach Cuba more reliably than regular letters. A letter with any kind of enclosure is a temptation and may not reach its destination. Sometimes the mail goes through in a few weeks, but sometimes it takes months. It's probably best to explain to people who want to correspond that you will try to send letters to them with people who are traveling. Photos must also be hand carried. So must books or any other gifts (and except for very small light things, it is an imposition to ask travelers to carry personal gifts.)

What to Bring

Since giving special gifts to certain individuals can cause other Friends to have hard feelings, it is recommended that a group bring gifts to be shared by the

whole meeting. Giving your gifts to the pastor for distributing to the meeting community is also a good idea. A group could bring small gifts for the children of a monthly meeting.

Business cards or address labels with name and address are very helpful, and you can give them to many people, a few of whom will actually write to you. (Bring plenty, you may find yourself surrounded by a crowd of children each wanting one!) Bring an album of pictures of your family, meeting, etc. to show to people. These are particularly helpful when language is limited.

Those who bring cameras should...plan to take pictures of people and family groups, and to share your photos with Cuban Friends. This is very important to people, and they may have no other way of getting pictures of themselves.

For children: gum (they expect gum from visitors, the only time they get any), balloons, candy, little trinkets. It is best to give things to the meeting to distribute among the children rather than trying to distribute things fairly yourself.

Ideas for adults: soap, shampoo, toothpaste, ballpoint pens, band-aids, towels, almost any clothing. Spices: garlic powder, cumin, oregano, black pepper, chamomile tea. Vitamins. Powdered detergent, chlorine bleach for disinfectant. (Herbs should be in sealed containers so as not to raise suspicion about them.) For women: scarves, sewing supplies, crochet thread, embroidery thread, sanitary napkins (not tampons). For men, razor blades, wallets, caps.

Medicines: Aspirin, ibuprofen, acetaminophen, antifungal creams, anti-diarrheal medications, antacids, laxatives, antibiotic creams, band-aids.

For monthly meetings: Packages of any of the above, for them to distribute. Any Spanish language Christian material you can get. For First Day Schools, large boxes of crayons (they last longer than markers), pencils, ball points, Bible pictures, children's scissors, glue, thumbtacks, paints and brushes, stickers, reams of paper.

For Cuba Yearly Meeting: Kitchen matches, typewriter ribbons, envelopes, typing and writing paper, carbon paper, pencils and ball point pens, typewriter cleaner (best in multiples of five). Children's activity supplies for family camp - (see list above) Books and spiral notebooks for the Seminary. Paper is heavy to bring, but much needed. Fill out your weight allowance with paper.

Bring for your own use and perhaps leave behind: Towels, Pepto Bismol, Tylenol or aspirin, sunscreen, sunglasses, soap & toilet paper, sanitary napkins, mosquito repellent, mosquito net and string to hang it with, shampoo, zip-lock plastic bags, flashlight, batteries, small alarm clock, handkerchief (usually no table napkins), writing paper and notebook. Some of these things can be purchased at the "tourist stores" but supplies are unreliable. Bring a bathing suit (yes, even in February!), a light coat or sweater, a hat, clothes for hiking or working (just in case) or beach trips, more "conservative" clothes for evening meetings. Depending on your personal style, you might bring clothes you plan to give away near the end of your trip. Make sure you bring any medicines you are likely to need.

Prescription medicines you bring for possible illness (anti-diarrheal, general antibiotic) can be left behind with one of the CYM doctors or pastors if you don't use them. Whether or not you're a journaler bring a notebook to write down addresses, words of songs, etc.

When I was there in 1990, no one asked me for anything, except a little child who wanted chewing gum. But as things have become more desperate in Cuba, some people's need will overcome their dignity and they may ask. Most Cuban Friends disapprove strongly of such requests, and if they find out they may be sharply critical of the person who asked. Think in advance about what you will do if someone asks for things, remembering our disciplines. A donation to Cuba Yearly Meeting's pastoral aid fund is one good way around this, as it leaves the discernment of need to the local church.

I hope this will help you in preparation for your trip. I would be glad to talk with you if you have questions. I am sure that God is blessing this endeavor richly and pray that God will use you to bring blessings to Cuban Friends and to your meetings at home.

=====

en Cristo Jesus,

Susan Furry