

Interfaith Charities of South Lee—Filling Bare Shelves

Did you know that [Interfaith Charities of South Lee](#) (ICSL) started at Estero Church? In 1992, the San Carlos Park/Estero Ministerial Association was looking for a more effective way to provide assistance to community members in need. Estero Church was the driving force that made it happen. The founding staff and director of ICSL were members of Estero Church. They first operated out of a small building on our property that was removed when US 41 was widened. They bounced over to the Baptist Church for a while, and then back to our Highlands Avenue house. In 2008, ICSL moved to their current location in San Carlos Park, where they continue with their mission to feed the hungry and provide help and hope for those in need.



The food pantry is their main program. Last year they served 3,224 individuals and distributed 827,977 pounds of food, including produce from the Estero Church garden ministry. Dry goods and perishables are usually donated by local merchants, communities, churches, and individuals. However, Covid has impacted the ability of organizations to do food drives, causing shelves to be sparser than usual.



Missions is partnering with the energetic Estero Church Youth group to help!

In addition to a monetary donation directly to the ICSL, Missions provided funding for the Youth Group to go shopping and purchase \$500 of food items for the pantry. They will also be holding a **fun food drive** the **October 23-24** weekend before Halloween, so watch for instructions on where and when to drop off food items directly to our costumed youth (please do NOT take food items to the church office). Finally, you may personally donate unopened food items at the food pantry itself ([17592 Rockefeller Circle, Fort Myers](#)).

Estero Church also supports ICSL with its time and talents. Several of our volunteers currently help with client intake, food pickup, processing and distribution. If you wish to be part of the ICSL crew, they make it easy to volunteer. They have flexible Monday through Saturday opportunities to serve, one time or regularly, for all or part of an 8 am-1 pm shift. Find times that fit with your schedule using their [online calendar sign-up](#).

We invite you to put your faith in action and join other volunteers in this ministry with its roots in our church!



Share Joy—Keeping the Tradition Alive



Estero Church has a well-loved reputation for sharing joy within our community during the holidays through our Thanksgiving Food Build and Angel Tree programs. Typically we are blessed by a generous congregation to provide 300+ Thanksgiving meals and unique Christmas gifts of wish-list toys, baby items, gift bags, and gift cards. When it gets closer to the holidays, we will be letting you know how you can participate in the joy of sharing again.

But right now, we are looking for people to help lead!

Both the Food Build and Angel Tree have been run for several years by the same, few, experienced volunteers. They are looking for apprentices to work alongside them this year, to learn the ropes, so the torch can be passed and our tradition of caring can continue in future years. If God has given you a love for feeding people, gift-giving, or just plain organizing (yes, some people love organizing!), one of these might be the leadership opportunity for you. Co-leader partners are welcome, and you don't have to do it on your own—you will have plenty of support from the Missions Team and this year's leaders. For more info, contact missions@estero.church.

PS: Men can do this sort of thing as well—it is not just women's work!



Cuba Update—Helping Pastors Communicate



La Levisa is our sister-church in Báguanos, Cuba, which is in the Holguín province of southeast Cuba. The Methodist church has a long history in Cuba dating to the 1880s. Cuban Methodists were part of the Florida Conference until the time of Fidel Castro, when religious suppression and political upheaval between our two countries separated them from the denomination. In the 1990s, Methodists in Cuba were able to once again practice their religion more openly, and communications with Florida were reestablished. The Florida Conference established the Cuba/Florida Covenant for the purpose of praying for each other, building relationships, and helping to meet the needs of the Methodist Church in Cuba. Our sister-church relationship with La Levisa grew out of that covenant.

Churches in Cuba have not been allowed to meet during Covid, so pastors rely on text message communications with each other and their congregation. However, cell phones and data service are not affordable on their income. Estero Church Missions has helped with cell phone purchases in the past and is currently funding monthly digital communication cards for 5 pastors, including La Levisa Pastor Aleaga. This is the way they can encourage each other with the Word of God until they can gather together again. Your regular giving to Estero Church supports the Missions budget, which in turn helps support our sisters and brothers in Cuba even if we cannot visit them personally at this point.



**LA LEVISA CONGREGATION
WORSHIPPING IN THEIR OPEN AIR CHURCH**



**LA LEVISA PASTOR
CARLOS ALEAGA & FAMILY**

Cuba Update—Helping Improve Lives

Estero Church has made several visits to La Levisa, with the last in 2019. On each trip the team brings many useful everyday items that are scarce in Cuba, such as hygiene items, common medications, and used eyeglasses. One memorable story is told about a gift of eye glasses that went to a man dying of cancer. He wanted the glasses to read his Bible. With the Bible propped on his knees and the glasses perched on his nose, he read his Bible for two days and went to be with the Lord.



We also help them improve their infrastructure. The church is known for its garden which provides low-cost produce for its members and community, so Estero Church funded a pair of oxen, a cistern, and a well (one of the parishioners said God told him where to dig the well, and sure enough, they found water at the spot!).



Monthly Cuba food rations provide only enough for one week; the rest is bought at full market price on an average salary of \$10 per week. Meat is for special occasions only. In the past, Estero Church has helped provide money for La Levisa members to eat Sunday dinner together. When our team visited one Easter, La Levisa roasted a pig to share.



"Unlike people from the States, Cubans emphasize relationships over to-do lists... Cubans appreciate what little possessions they have and are willing to share them with others."
2019 Team Member

Cuba Update—Helping the Deaf

Fun fact: Estero Mission trips to Cuba are what initially connected us to Yady and Cesar Galano! They established the interdenominational *Freedom from Silence* deaf ministry because Cuba has a large marginalized and underserved deaf population. *Freedom from Silence* holds an annual conference for pastors and missionaries to 35 poor deaf congregations across Cuba that provides them with training, encouragement, and economic support. Friends from other churches in the US and families of Estero Church as well as Missions have funded various projects for these congregations. Estero Church trips to Cuba have included ministering at that conference as well as visiting La Levisa. Team members join in worship, share testimonies, help with teaching, and enjoy fellowship with attendees.



YADY TRANSLATES CUBAN SIGN LANGUAGE THANKING ESTERO CHURCH FOR BIBLE STUDY AIDS



"I was humbled again by the way the Cuban deaf congregation unite to help each other out in times of need...Whether it was taking in a child of a sick member of their congregation or walking miles to aid a village low on food or in need of spiritual encouragement, they go and do in Jesus's name.

What an example they set for us all." 2019 Team Member



Cuba Update—Consider Joining a Trip

When travel to Cuba opens again, we invite you to consider joining one of the trips. You will experience warm and welcoming fellowship with beautiful people serving God faithfully despite the hardships on their beautiful island. It is expected that people will be able to travel to Cuba by mid-November without mandatory quarantine, and flights will be available round trip. Yady and Cesar hope to do a trip by the end of the year. The main goal of the upcoming trip will be taking funding to continue support on the ground and to take much needed medical supplies. You do not need to know Spanish or sign language to participate. There is a visa process that takes some time, so if you are interested, please email Yady directly yadigalano74@gmail.com with any questions.



2017 CUBA TEAM



TO VOLUNTEER OR FOR MORE INFO ON ANY OF THESE OPPORTUNITIES

EMAIL MISSIONS@ESTERO.CHURCH



School Backpacks

We purchase backpacks and basic school supplies in bulk to be packed by volunteers in May. The backpacks go to elementary students in the Super Kids Summer Reading Club at our church and elsewhere in the area. Extra backpacks are made for other area students who need them in the fall. We typically assemble 250 backpacks each year.



Thanksgiving Food Build

We typically provide 300+ area families with basic Thanksgiving food supplies that include a turkey plus sides and dessert. Bags are made for both traditional and Latino taste preferences. We buy the food in bulk, then the congregation helps pack and distribute bags of food on the Saturday before Thanksgiving.



Christmas Angel Tree

Christmas wish lists for area children in need are provided by trusted partners such as New Horizons, Wings of Shelter, Single Parent Ministries, etc. We typically provide 300+ unique gifts to the children. We also provide gift bags and cards to be distributed by trusted area ministries such as the Pregnancy Resource Center, Come As You Are homeless ministry, etc. During Advent, the congregation is invited to shop for gifts personally or donate money for volunteers to purchase on their behalf.



Migrant Food Ministry

A group of weekly volunteers procure and deliver staple food supplies (corn flour, potatoes, oil, etc.) during season to the Bonita Springs arm of the Redlands Christian Migrant Association, which operates child-care centers for migrant workers. Volunteers to shop for, organize, or deliver the food are welcome to help expand this ministry.



Art Ministry

A member of our Missions team teaches the art of mosaic glass to recovery groups and adults with developmental disabilities. Students make a beautiful work of art using broken pieces of glass, while learning to see how broken people are pieced together by God to be His beautiful masterpieces. Donated supplies, or volunteers to get involved with this outreach, are very welcome.

New Horizons of Southwest Florida

Faith based organization striving to empower at-risk youth to reach their full potential through tutoring, mentoring and faith building. We support this program through our budget and by having children on campus participating in daily after-school programs. Volunteers are encouraged!

Burning Bush Ministries

Making disciples and serving Fort Myers in the context of small communities that embody and reveal the Kingdom of God on the margins.

Come As You Are

One of the Burning Bush Communities serving homeless/nearly homeless families, children, and Veterans in the Fort Myers area by offering food, support, and Bible study.

FGCU Gulf Coast Wesley

Providing a congregational connection to the United Methodist Church for college students.

FGCU Young Life

Introducing college students to Jesus and helping them grow in faith.

God's Protected Harbor

Providing permanent supportive housing, enhanced with Christian care, for adults with intellectual and developmental disabilities.

Interfaith Charities of South Lee

Feeding the hungry and providing hope and help for those in need.

Love INC

Mobilizing local churches to transform lives and communities by verifying client needs that can be met through participating churches, with the goal of connecting them to a church.

One Way Out

Helping women become free and whole by going wherever they are to develop relationships, meet practical needs, and walk with them in a strong Christian faith-based program.

Pregnancy Resource Center

Part of a network of clinics and education centers providing medical based pregnancy confirmation and education for those facing unplanned pregnancy and sexual health crises.

St. Matthew's House

Providing addiction recovery and other services.

Wings of Shelter

Offering restoration, rehabilitation, and safe housing to minor female survivors of trafficking while fighting against factors that encourage trafficking.