

to ACH 3/12/55 Wca

# The First Methodist Church

PAUL J. ACKER  
Minister

G. V. McCausland  
Associate Minister

G. O. Arkwell  
Minister of Music

MISS MAXINE FINLEY  
Director of Christian Education

MRS. G. J. LEPP  
Organist

PUBLIC SERVICES DIV  
POB

PORTAGE TRAIL AND THIRD STREET  
CUYAHOGA FALLS, OHIO  
PHONE SW 4-5241

MR. VERNON BOND  
Church Secretary  
MRS. CARL D. SPESBACH  
Finance Secretary  
MRS. L. I. WELLS  
Parish Visitor  
WILLIAM G. HARRIS  
Building Superintendent

APR 10 AM 9 55

March 5, 1955

DEPARTMENT OF STATE

The President,  
Washington, D. C.

file  
ack. 3/10/55  
MIO:WBC:JV

My dear Mr. President:

the President

I have just returned from two weeks on a preaching mission in Cuba. I was stationed at Preston and Guaro in Oriente Province. When I finished my work there I traveled to Havana and back to the States.

Several things concern me about the future of our relationship with Cuba.

(1) In the center of the sugar cane industry we have a company, the United Fruit Company, incidentally, listed on the New York Stock Exchange. I met many of my fellow American citizens. Most of them were not even bothering to learn the Spanish language, although they had been there 20 or 30 years, and all of them refused to identify themselves in any way with Cuban culture. I discovered by experience that the Cubans resent this and, I feel, with good cause. We pay the Cuban laborers \$2.60 a day, and workers in the mill \$3.50 a day. The Cuban nationals live like animals and we are doing practically nothing to help them raise their standard of living.

(2) Communism has gained a foot-hold in this very area, Mr. Russell Smith, Manager of the United Fruit Company, at Preston, told me. It is there because of extreme poverty and a one crop economy. The Methodist Church has established an agricultural school where we are trying to help the nationals lift their level of living by gardening and planting the nine months of the year they do not work on the sugar crop. Communism has an excellent chance for growth there, unfortunately, and especially where we American business people draw the resources from the land, but do not identify ourselves with the people or the culture.

(3) I discovered that the intellectuals of Cuba resent very deeply our active relationship and support of President Batista. I was the guest of a dentist who was elected to supervise voting in Preston. He attempted to do his work, but the army came at five o'clock and removed all the ballots, so he realized it would be unsafe to make even a protest. So you see they had an election, but it was very similar to that of Soviet Russia. I discovered that he and other intellectuals resent the United States preaching democracy and giving active support to a dictatorship right in Cuba. I certainly feel that Vice President Richard Nixon is doing a wonderful piece of work, but why do we support a dictatorship when it comes to suit our convenience?

I love our country and all it stands for at best, and when I was sent to

Cuba under the Methodist Church Board of Evangelism, I was instructed not only to witness for Christ, but to identify myself with the Cubans, Jamaicans, and Porto Ricans. This I tried to do, eating in their homes as an honored guest, and preaching to them in their own Methodist churches. I fell in love with all of them and their great land. I could not rest comfortably seeing and sensing this relationship in question without writing to you with the hope and prayer that we may make choices that are closer to truth, honor, democracy, and a Christian witness.

I pray God's blessing upon you and your continued leadership for the best of our country.

I have the honor to remain,

Yours faithfully,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Paul J. Baker". The signature is written in dark ink and is positioned above the typed name "Minister".

Minister

A:B