

## News from Feliberto

Many people ask me about the news of President Obama's trip to my homeland, Cuba, as part of efforts on the part of U.S. and Cuban officials to reconcile some of the differences that have existed for decades between the two nations. As Disciples, we are a reconciling people who seek to break down barriers. So we can support nations doing that also. Yet we also follow the scriptural example of the Good Samaritan by offering help to persons seeking asylum from very troubling conditions in Cuba and a number of other countries. The route that thousands from Cuba have chosen is not the 90 mile water route between Cuba and Florida. Securing or making a watercraft for the journey is difficult without the Cuban authorities learning of the plan. If a boat with refugees does make it safely out of Cuban waters, the water journey is still fraught with dangers. Miguel, pictured here, made it by boat.



Surviving threats from snakes and crocodiles on the short river journey to the sea, he and those on his boat veered off course in storms. We got the call that he had made it to the Texas coast, and he came to us malnourished and dehydrated since provisions had been depleted while adrift at sea. At SWGSM his nutrition, housing, legal and medical needs are being met as he works through the asylum process to get a work permit.

Cubans must actually make it onto U.S. soil in order to qualify for asylum. If captured (or rescued!) on the water, they are sent back or elsewhere. Given the risks of a water journey, thousands of Cuban refugees begin their journey to asylum in the U.S. by securing a travel visa for Ecuador from the Cuban authorities. From there they journey through Colombia, Panama, and Costa Rica. The next

stop, Nicaragua, is Castro-friendly, and has now closed its borders to Cuban refugees seeking to pass through to Honduras. The Costa Rican government has negotiated with the U.S. and the United Nations to secure air transport over Nicaragua, and from there the journey north continues. And so it goes. So many borders. So many obstacles, natural and man-made. It is impossible for me to summarize here the full nature of these journeys and the condition of those persons who survive the journey to arrive at our doorstep. A couple who arrived recently were brutalized by bandits in Mexico. Their 11 year old son arrived at SWGSM with them, terribly traumatized that he was unable to defend his parents as he watched them being tortured. Because we could help with comfort, temporary shelter, transportation, and other needs, this family and others get resettled in the U.S. with family, friends, or churches. You, Dear Readers, are our “angels” who make our work possible through your prayers and your gifts. We cannot thank you enough, and we pray that you will continue to help us break down barriers to freedom and the quality of life that God seeks for all.