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OCT 20 94

Jonesville Pastor Meets Castro

An ecumenical delegation of ten Christian leaders from the United States visited Cuba September 26-30 on a mission of faith, hope, and reconciliation. The group, including Dr. Max Hill, pastor of First Baptist Church of Jonesville and moderator of Yadkin Baptist Association, was convened under the auspices of Pastors for Peace. Others represented the Alliance of Baptists, Baptist Peace Fellowship, American Baptists, Episcopalians, United Church of Christ, Disciples of Christ, Church of the Brethren, the Mennonite Central Committee, and Friends Service Committee.

As the first group of religious

leaders to enter Cuba under the Clinton Administration's tightened restrictions of August 20, the delegation's primary purpose was to determine how these new regulations were affecting the Cuban people, in general, and the Cuban church, in particular. To that end, the group met with numerous groups and individuals. Meetings were held with the executive council of the Cuban Ecumenical Council, a larger group of Christian leaders representing a broader cross section of the evangelical community, and Vicar Carlos Manuel de Cespedes, top advisor to the Roman Catholic

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Jonesville Pastor

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Bishop of Cuba. In these meetings the issues of religious freedom and the role of the church in national crisis were discussed.

Several meetings were also held with various Cuban government and Communist Party leaders, journalists and academicians. Wide ranging discussions on various topics were conducted.

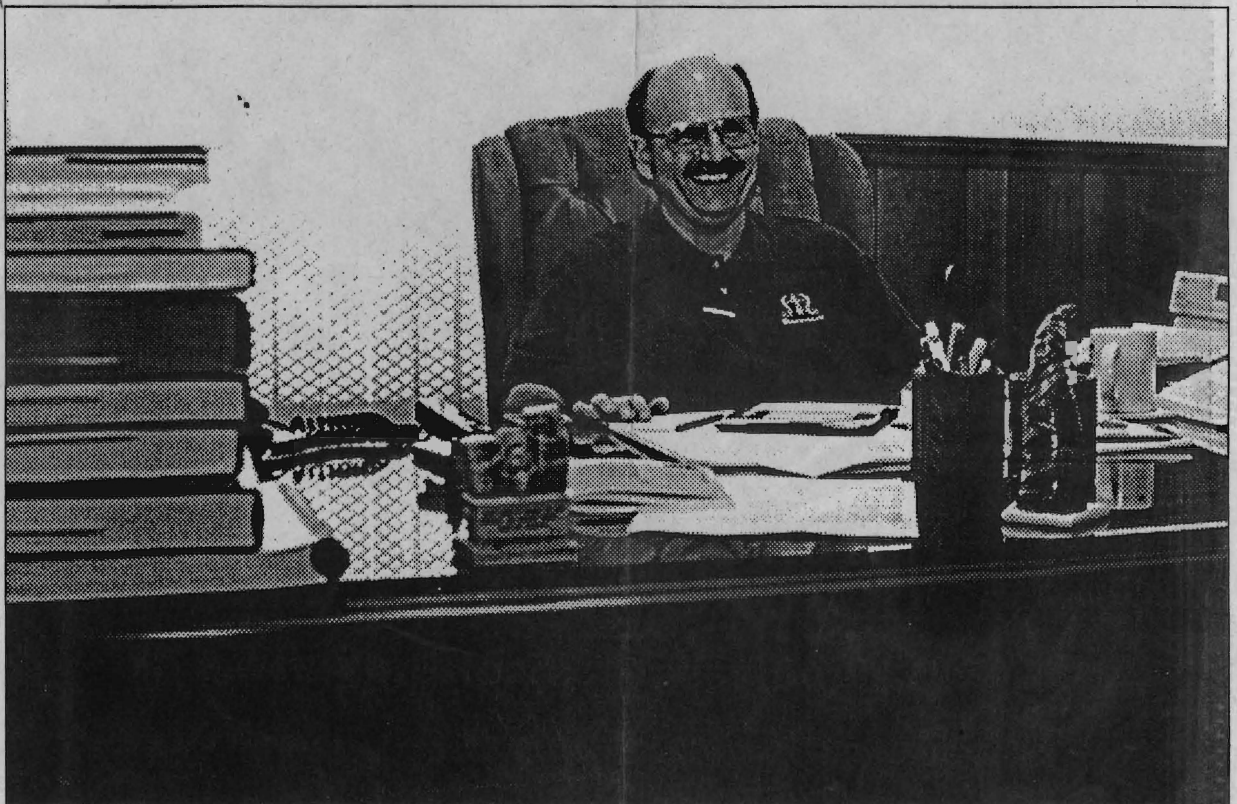
The delegation visited the U. S. Interests Section at the Swiss Embassy to meet with American government spokespersons. This meeting helped to define the U. S. position on the immigration crisis, relations with the Castro government, implementation of the September 9, 1994 Agreements, and human rights in Cuba.

The highlight of the trip was a two hour meeting with President Fidel Castro. This meeting, held in Cuban government offices at the Plaza of the Revolution, convened at midnight Wednesday, September 28. Among the topics of discussion were the immigration crisis, the general state of U. S.-Cuban relations, U. S. involvement in Haiti, the upcoming off-year elections, and the Cairo Population Conference.

On its return to the United States, the delegation issued a statement calling on both governments to "implement their agreements expeditiously and to use the proposed further talks to ensure their compliance, thereby rejecting the behavior of the past." The statement further calls on President Clinton to lift the August 20 travel and remittance restrictions immediately. The churches are called upon to "join their sister churches in Cuba in advocating and working for full restoration of diplomatic relations between the U. S. and Cuba."

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The Tribune, Elkin-Jonesville, N.C., Monday, September 30, 1996 — Page OPOW-B-5



TRIBUNE/Michael Andrew
Max Hill, 47, has been pastor of the First Baptist Church of Jonesville for 10 years. He lives in Jonesville.

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Max Hill
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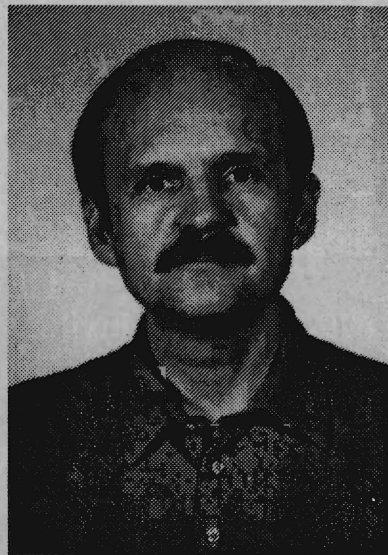
Yadkin Minister In Cuba

Dr. Max Hill, pastor of First Baptist Church in Jonesville, left Thursday for Havana, Cuba with three other Jonesville residents to carry out evangelistic efforts until February 14, in an area that has been closed for many years to outside visitors.

Dr. Hill, moderator of the Yadkin Baptist Association, is making his fifth mission tour to the country. Accompanying Hill are laypersons in his church: Wayne Moore, and Pam and Ronnie Anthony. The Jonesville team will be engaged in evangelistic activities with El Jordan Baptist Church in Havana. First Baptist Church, Jonesville, and El Jordan Baptist Church, Havana, have developed a sister-congregation relationship.

Six members from El Jordan visited their sister church in Jonesville

last October. While here, they attended the annual session of the Yadkin Baptist Association.



DR. MAX HILL

Carolina

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JOURNAL
WINSTON-SALEM, N. C.

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Jonesville pastor meets Castro during trip to help Cubans suffering because of embargo

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PEACE MISSION

By Amy Andrews
JOURNAL REPORTER

JONESVILLE

The Rev. Max Hill learned firsthand last month that Cuban President Fidel Castro knows how to preach.

Hill, the pastor of First Baptist Church, went to Cuba in late September with nine other U.S. religious leaders in response to the embargo against Cuba. The delegation, sponsored by Pastors for Peace, met with Castro and other Cuban political, economic and religious

leaders. They met with Castro about midnight Sept. 28 at the Plaza of the Revolution in Havana.

"He has a reputation for being a night person and having meetings at odd hours," Hill said.

The Americans were shown to a waiting room. Hill was drinking coffee when a large sliding door beside him suddenly opened and Castro strolled in wearing military fatigues. Castro, a big man, so startled Hill that he did a double take.

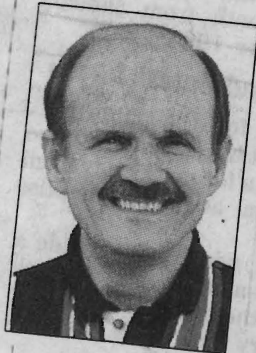
The group met with Castro for nearly two hours, with Castro doing

much of the talking. "He preached us a couple of sermons, including one about David and Goliath," Hill said. "Guess who's David?"

Castro's reference to Cuba being David and the United States being Goliath ended with Castro pointing out that Cuba doesn't have a sling-shot with which to defend itself, Hill said.

Hill, 45, had been to Cuba several times before but had never met Castro. He plans to leave again Nov. 10

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MAX HILL: He met Castro while in Cuba.

TRIP TO CUBA ✓

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to preach and help start new churches. First Baptist of Jonesville, a 450-member church, has a sister congregation in Havana.

"Every Cuban that I know in Havana has lost 15 to 20 pounds (recently)," Hill said. When the Soviet Union collapsed, so did the Cuban economy.

The delegation wanted to learn what Christians could do to help the Cubans deal with what Hill calls the madness of the embargo and restrictions.

"I'm opposed to the embargo for two reasons," he said. "Pragmatically, it is a failure. It has gone on for 35 years and nine U.S. administrations, and Castro remains in power.

"At the point of its inception, it made good political sense because it was done at the height of the Cold War." But the Cold War is over. "The only possible reason for maintaining the embargo is simply to punish Castro, and it's a failure at that as well. It's punishing the Cuban people."

Hill said that the embargo is immoral. "The ends do not justify the means in this case or any other case. The notion that we ought to starve Cuban children or deny medicines to Cubans for the accomplishment of dubious political goals is immoral."

Hill said he does not support Castro, nor does he oppose the United States government. Cuba's human-rights violations are no worse than those in North Korea or China, Hill said, and the United States is negotiating with those countries.

"It's absurd to single out Cuba as the only communist regime with which we refuse dialogue," Hill said.