

More than 80,000 Bibles shipped to Cuba for churches

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MIAMI (BP)—Three 40-foot containers packed with 83,723 Spanish-language Bibles are expected to arrive in Havana March 25.

The shipment is the third Southern Baptists have sent to Cuba since 1999. This latest effort brings the total number of Bibles sent to nearly half a million, said Kurt Urbanek, [International Mission Board](#) strategy leader for Cuba since 1997.

However, this represents the first time Bibles were shipped directly from the United States. The extensive process of seeking permission from the Cuban government to ship Bibles required a great deal of negotiation with government officials and the [Cuban Bible Society](#), Urbanek explained. Clearance for this effort was given late 2014.

“We are grateful the Cuban government opened the doors for the Bibles,” Urbanek said.

The shipment of the Bibles and Bible resources represents a collaborative partnership between the IMB, LifeWay Christian Stores, [First Baptist Church of Woodway in Waco](#), the Florida Baptist Convention, Church by the Glades in Coral Springs, Fla., and other groups and individuals, including [L.M. Dyson](#), a layman at First Baptist Woodway who has traveled to Cuba more than 40 times since 1999.

Last year, LifeWay customers across the country donated funds to purchase 144,000 Bibles for distribution in several Central American and Caribbean countries. Of those Bibles, 60,000 were designated for Cuba. The IMB provided \$100,000 for the project. Florida Baptists contributed \$2,000 from

the Maguire State Mission Offering to purchase 600 leather-bound Bibles. Others provided funding for additional Bibles and resources, as well as the cost of shipment.

In the past, the Cuban government required Bibles to be distributed to all evangelical denominations in the country. But this time 75 percent—or 64,000—of the Bibles will be allocated to the Havana-based Western Cuba Baptist Convention and the Santiago-based Eastern Cuba Baptist Convention, resulting in each group receiving 32,000 Bibles.

The shipment also includes Bible commentaries, study Bibles and giant-print Bibles for the visually impaired.