



## FOCUS ON: Celebrating Our Partners

*Reflections by The Rev. F. Russell Mitman, Conference Minister*

In November there were two special celebrations of ecumenical partnerships between Pennsylvania Southeast Conference and churches in different parts of the world.



From October 30 through November 6, a delegation of 9 people from PSEC visited with our partners in the **Fraternity of Baptist Churches in Cuba**. (President Antonio Santana was present in PSEC for the Spring Meeting in 2009). The group included Don and Marian Weisel (Pleasantville UCC), Alice Reyes and David Glancey (Old First, Philadelphia), Judith and Bruce Fryer (Trinity, Collegeville), David Reppert (Emmanuel, Philadelphia), and Joseph Irwin and Russell Mitman (Conference staff).

Dr. Mitman commented, "This was an mind-blowing and eye-opening experience for those of us who experienced Cuba and some of its churches for the first time. Churches are emerging with vibrancy and excitement through committed lay leaders and tent-maker pastors in an economic environment that affords little funding for church programming and pastoral leadership. At the roll-call to the 20<sup>th</sup> Anniversary Annual Meeting of the Fraternity I was amazed that *all* of the congregations were represented by both their pastors and up to five lay delegates!" The witness to Jesus Christ through our partners is alive and growing in Cuba.

From November 15 to 22, two representatives of our other partner, the **Evangelical Regional Church of Anhalt in Germany** were present in PSEC. The new Church President, the Rev. Joachim Liebig, and the Regional Church Musician, Mr. Sebastian Sass, were our guests for the Fall Meeting of the Conference on November 21, and for other opportunities for interaction with pastors and lay members of Conference churches. Mr. Sass presented an organ concert in First Reformed UCC, Reading, and was organist for the Sunday service in Old First Reformed UCC, Philadelphia. Rev. Liebig, in addition to serving as preacher for the concluding worship service at the Conference Meeting, also was the preacher for the Sunday service in Trinity Reformed UCC in Colledgeville. This was the first time that Rev. Liebig and Mr. Sass visited the USA, and both went away with wonderful new impressions of our churches and different understandings of political and cultural life in the USA from what is portrayed in the media.

Conference Minister Russ Mitman will be visiting in Anhalt in February and will be the official UCC representative to the UCC/UEK Working Group of the Evangelical Church in Germany meeting in Hannover on February 17.



**NOTICE TO ALL CONGREGATIONS:** The Conference books for 2009 will close on **January 14**. Any money received at the Church House after this date will be credited to 2010. *(If you send money for 2010 before Jan. 14, please indicate clearly that it is for Jan. 2010.)*



**PRAYER PARTNERS** - Your prayers are welcomed today for Ms. Krista Keisling and the congregation of St. Paul's (New Schafferstown) UCC, Bernville.