



# Nehemiah Center Annual Report 2006-2007

The Nehemiah Center is a community of service and learning which trains and accompanies lay and pastoral leaders in the development of a biblical worldview and encourages local, national, and international collaboration for a Christ-centered, transformational development of communities and nations.

## INTERNATIONAL COLLABORATORS

Caribbean Ministries

Christian Reformed World Relief Committee

Christian Reformed World Missions

Food for the Hungry  
LifeWind

Missionary Ventures International

Partners in Christ International

Partners Worldwide

Worldwide Christian Schools

Mail: Apartado Postal 1076

Managua, Nicaragua

Phone: 011-505-271-2958

E-mail: [nehemiah@fhi.net](mailto:nehemiah@fhi.net)

## A NOTE FROM THE DIRECTOR

This past year marked the midpoint of our work in the northern Pacific Coast of Nicaragua and the beginning of our work on the Atlantic Coast.

We began our focus on the northern Pacific Coast of Nicaragua in July of 2004. Our plan is to move our primary focus to another part of Nicaragua in July of 2009.

Part of our strategic plan is to develop Centers for Transformation in five key locations on the northern Pacific Coast: Mateare/Los Brasiles, Nagarote, Leon, Chinandega, and Somotillo. In each of these locations we are equipping teams of trainers who will continue to multiply agents of transformation after we have moved to another part of Nicaragua.

In this report you will read stories of agents of transformation from each of these Centers of Transformation. These agents are impacting churches, families, schools, businesses, youth at risk and entire communities from an integral Biblical world and life view.



This year also marked another important milestone for the Nehemiah Center. After renting facilities since our inception in 1999, this past April we were able to move into our own new offices and training center.

We continue to praise God for the opportunity to participate in what He is doing in Nicaragua and we are grateful for the ongoing support of each of our nine collaborating agencies, as well as the many individuals whose generous gifts of time, service, resources, and encouragement make this work possible.



Joel Huyser, Executive Director

“Old ways of thinking are being broken. We used to think that salvation required being poor and hungry. But that’s not how God wants it. We are poor because we don’t take advantage of all the resources God gives us.”

Pastor Wilfredo, Chinandega

# CHINANDEGA

## GOING OUTSIDE THE WALLS

Responding to the growing incidence of HIV/AIDS in the region, in October 2006 the Nehemiah Center began convening a group of pastors and community leaders from all over Chinandega.



Pastor Gerardo of Corinto shares about his church's HIV/AIDS outreach at a recent meeting.

By February 2007, with funding from the Christian Reformed World Relief Committee, six churches had organized and trained a group of individuals to lead HIV/AIDS outreach in the community, and had initiated their outreach strategies. In **Corinto**, a group of 15 youth reached out to 40 of their peers with educational materials promoting sexual abstinence, many of whom made a commitment to sexual purity. In **Somotillo**, after an all-church presentation by the Baptist Church, 5 individuals signed up to dedicate themselves to this new ministry, and began receiving training in December. In addition, the church is collaborating with the local government agencies and other churches to maximize the effectiveness of their outreach. In **La Florida**, two young men from the local Christian Reformed Church organized a series of workshops about the transmission of STDs, prevention, fidelity, personal values, and self-esteem, attended by an average of 15-20 people each time. Teams and full-time missionaries from Food for the Hungry and Christian Reformed World Missions continue to walk alongside these churches and their leaders in reaching out and promoting an integrated vision of community transformation.

**IT'S ALL KINGDOM BUSINESS** A year ago, just two Pastor-facilitated small groups were studying the first manual of the Business for the Kingdom program in Chinandega, focused on "Kingdom Values". Presentations were organized to encourage the existing groups and motivate new groups to form, leading to the addition of 4 more groups, for a total of 36 participants this year. Two of these groups have now finished the second manual, "Strengthening Your Kingdom Business." Through this process, pastors and participants have come to recognize the importance of businesses in the Kingdom of God and have begun to apply Kingdom values like integrity, discipline, and perseverance in the development of their small businesses.

"I was having a lot of trouble balancing my responsibilities at home, in the church and with the development of the new dental clinic I started. But this group was a great support to me, and I realized that God had given me the clinic in order to help build the Kingdom of God."

Yamileth, participant

## A NEW KIND OF HARVEST

Before becoming pastors of the Church on the Rock, Julio and Raquel Talavera were living and working on a farm outside of Nagarote. With their limited academic preparation, neither of them felt equipped for the task of leading a church or Christian school; but, in March 2005 when they heard about the biblical worldview training offered through the Nehemiah Center, they decided to attend. "The Biblical worldview was like our foundation," Pastor Julio says. "Many things have improved since that training. Our vision is better. We are more organized, using our resources more efficiently; we are relating with other churches, and with the community." Today, Pastor Julio serves as a leader in the local pastoral association, and he and his wife work together to oversee the church's school, which currently serves 33 children, preschool to grade 3. The school was going to close, but after beginning the School Improvement Program this past year, they were able to find temporary external funding and are now working towards long-term sustainability. Because of the training offered by the Nehemiah Center, these former farmers are now planting a new kind of seed, and working for an eternal harvest in Nagarote.



Julio and Raquel (left) participate in small group discussion activities with other pastors at a training at their church in Nagarote.

# NAGAROTE

## LOURDES...IN HER OWN WORDS

Lourdes and Alejandro Espinoza are pastors of the Getsemani Assembly of God church in Barrio Guadalupe, in Leon. Their story of growth and transformation—within their marriage as well as their ministry—is one shared by many pastoral couples participating in the Nehemiah Center’s training in the region.



“Our relationship with the Nehemiah Center began several years ago with a marriage course. In the university and seminaries, you don’t learn how to deal with marriage conflict. But now we have received this integral teaching, how to counsel youth, adults, elders, marriages. As a pastor’s wife, I felt estranged...but now I see that I am useful in the work of the Lord. I have learned how to manage our finances, and now Alejandro and I make decisions about our home together. Our leadership has changed. The pastor used to have to orchestrate everything. But now there are other people with vision

and enthusiasm who we have trained using the material we have received... We used to be isolated from the community; but now the community sees that we are interested in them.”

The Getsemani church has expanded its vision and outreach to the community through the development of home groups, special couple nights for parents in their after school program, a women’s sewing program, biblical counseling services, and in the last year has grown from 200 to 300 members.

This coming year, Lourdes and Alejandro, who are the coordinators of the Leon Pastoral Association, will be leading the multiplication of biblical worldview training for leaders in the various churches in Leon, where less than 10% of the population is evangelical Christian. The work of these local Leon pastors is part of the Nehemiah Center’s long term strategy to equip regional training teams who continue to multiply the community impact of the training they have received by sharing it with others.

## LEON

“We have learned how to expand our vision. Before, we saw things as either ‘secular’ or ‘spiritual’. But now we see that everything is from God and for God.”  
Alejandro Espinoza

## FORGOTTEN NO LONGER

In Mateare, the youth leadership training’s impact has rippled out from the lives of individual youth into the entire community. More than providing tips and techniques to help youth workers with their ministries, the content of the training (led by Nehemiah Center Ezra staff and international collaborator Caribbean Ministries) is designed to help participants dig deeper into **the heart of ministry**, to ask the hard questions of why we are who we are and why we do what we do. Asking these hard questions has led Francisco Obregon, a faithful participant for the last 2 years and a member of the King of Glory church, to reach out to the youth on the streets of his home town. Every Sunday afternoon Francisco and a group of friends lead sports outreach activities that have been attracting 30+ youth on a regular basis.



In the last 8 months of this outreach, amazing changes have occurred in the community. Violence between gangs has dropped substantially, older youth are maintaining steady jobs that have brought stability, provision, and peace to their homes, and **the power of the gospel is transforming lives**. Yader, after almost dying in a street fight, received loving care and attention from church youth leaders, and the following week made a decision to accept Christ as his Savior. Since then, this young man has been growing steadily and recently had the joy of being baptized in the church. In the midst of individual and community transformation, local churches like King of Glory are becoming welcoming places for previously forgotten youth like Yader to experience the **love and grace** of God.

## MATEARE / LOS BRASILES

## HIGHLIGHTS FROM 2006-2007

**252** pastors, educators, entrepreneurs & community leaders representing **25** churches completed the basic training for Kingdom agents of transformation. **110** others completed the second level of training, applying a Kingdom worldview to family relationships, community transformation, effective adult education methods, and conflict resolution.

**75** Christian schools are providing better education to their students through training offered by the national association of Christian schools (ACECEN), supported by Missionary Ventures and Worldwide Christian Schools.



**15** communities have elected a local committee which has been trained using LifeWind materials to share preventative health principles with their neighbors.

**83** entrepreneurs in churches throughout Chinandega, Leon, and Granada received training in Christian business principles through participation in the Kingdom Businesses program supported by Partners Worldwide.



**16** churches now have integrated family-oriented ministries.

**141** youth leaders representing 38 churches have been equipped to better serve at-risk youth in their communities through a series of trainings for Youth Agents of Transformation supported by Caribbean Ministries.



### LEARNING & TRANSFORMATION ON THE ATLANTIC COAST

Through Nehemiah Center collaborator Partners in Christ, 80 pastors in the Bluefields area of Nicaragua's Atlantic Coast are receiving monthly leadership training and sharing it with other communities. They are reaching out beyond their four walls to their communities in presenting the gospel, giving relief resources and social/health prevention. One pastor visited a part of a community where people young and old make a living from breaking rocks and selling to those who are doing construction. Originally he planned to start a church, but then he realized the children do not have a school, and they cannot afford the required uniforms

so they stay home. So he put up a wooden box that serves as a church on Sundays and a school during the week. He was also able to secure a few teachers through the government and some volunteers from among the Christians in the area. In this humbly constructed building with a dirt floor and plastic chairs, children and adults are finding hope because a pastor was willing to more beyond the walls to reach out with God's love.