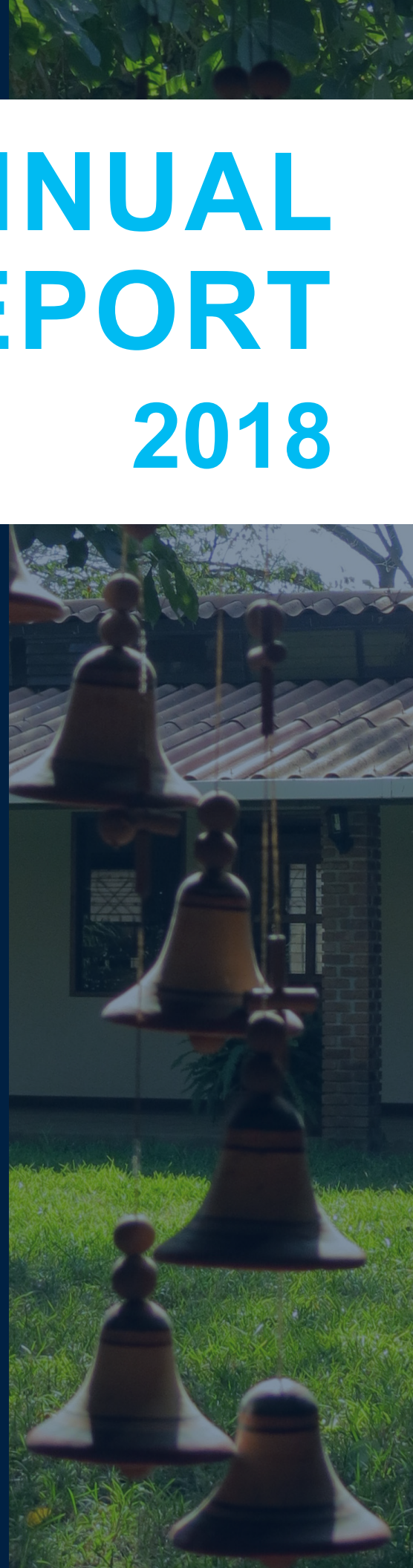




Nehemiah  
Center  
*Cultivating Transformation*

# ANNUAL REPORT 2018



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## Vision Statement

We see healthy churches actively growing in holistic mission.

## Mission Statement

We facilitate opportunities of growth and collaboration for churches and para-church organizations in order to serve them and to strengthen them in holistic mission for the advancement of the Kingdom of God, locally as well as globally.

# Words from the Director

The Lord is my shepherd, I lack nothing...  
he refreshes my soul.  
He guides me along the right paths for his name's sake.

Even though I walk through the darkest valley,  
I will fear no evil, for you are with me;  
your rod and your staff, they comfort me...

Surely your goodness and love will follow me  
all the days of my life,  
and I will dwell in the house of the Lord forever.

Psalm 23 (NIV)

The year 2018 will be difficult to forget because among other things, all of a sudden we as Nicaraguans had to walk through the “darkest valley”. Whether experiencing from near or far, unexpected social events unfortunately occupied our view, afflicted our rest, challenged our faith and altered the lives of thousands of families. In all of this, however, with profound gratitude we have to admit that the Lord has been with us, his presence and provision have renewed our strength.

This past year also was a period of change and adjustment. Changes in leadership at both the level of Board of Directors, Executive Director and the team of collaborators. Furthermore, changes occurred in our ministry focus. We were challenged by God to respond to the new context in ways that were not previously written into our programs. We were called to offer companionship and comfort to a wounded society by means of a more pastoral function which was directed more towards the heart of a person. Despite all the simultaneous changes, we felt that God walked hand in hand with us through straight paths, giving honor to his name, and using the Nehemiah Center to bring comfort and hope inspired by his love and his Word.

This report is a summary of the different ways that God allowed us to serve throughout this challenging year. I would like to inform you of the tasks of this institution, directed until August 2018 by Luz Urania Largaespada and in succession myself. We give thanks for the many ways that our Good Shepherd has shown us kindness and love.

Peace and Joy from the Holy Spirit,

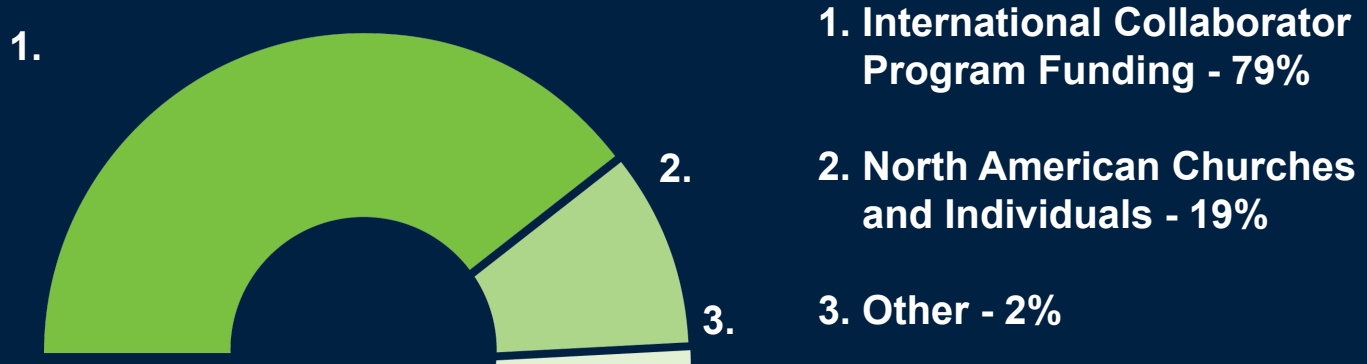
Hultner Isaac Estrada  
Executive Director



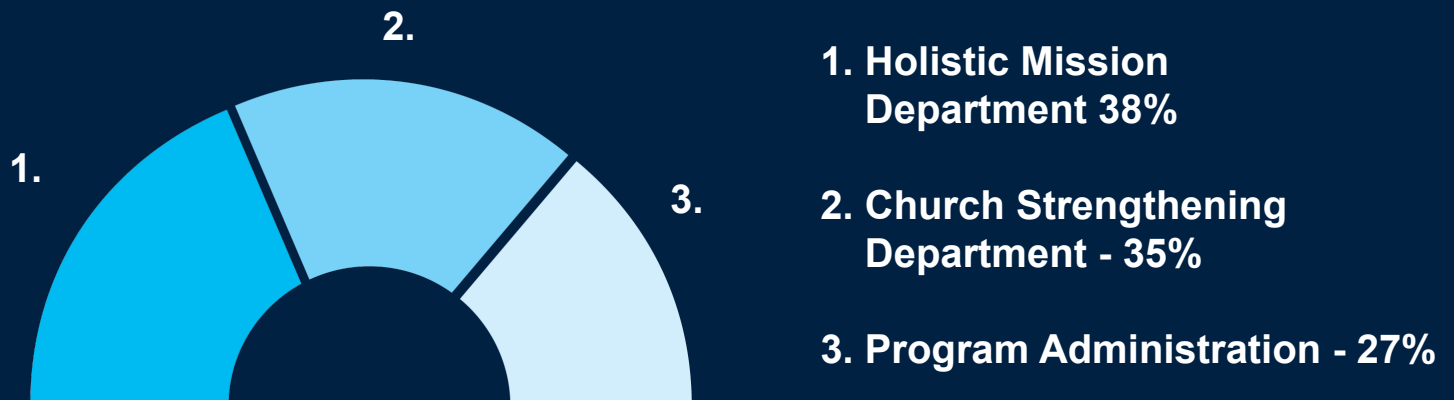
# Financial Highlights



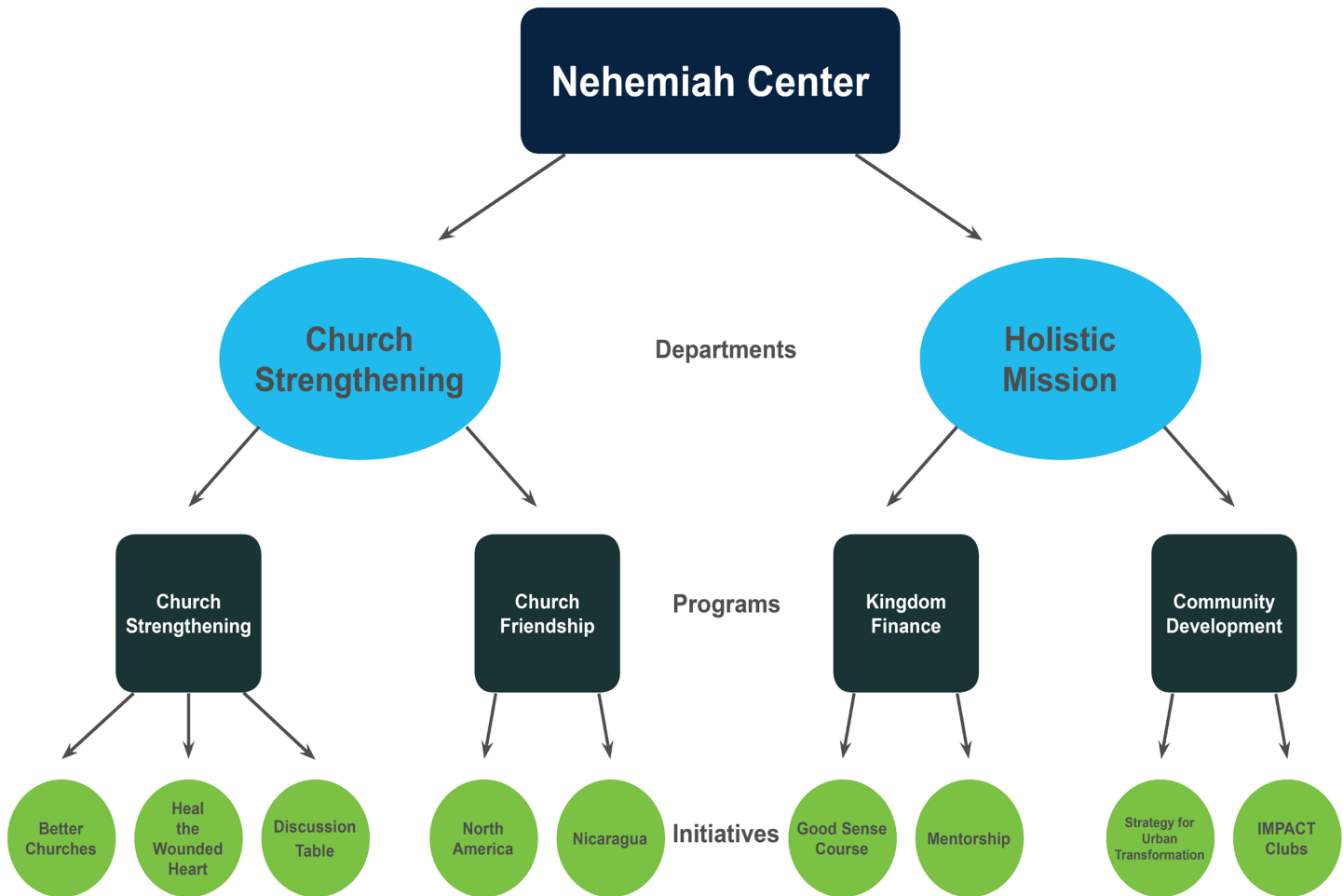
## Sources of Funding



## Annual Expenses



# Programs



Due to the unexpected and ongoing socio-political situation in Nicaragua during 2018, the Nehemiah Center was dramatically impacted in the ability to carry out programming.

However, in spite of the situation, the Nehemiah Center found ways to respond quickly and appropriately to the situation by offering Trauma healing sessions and conflict resolution training.

# Program Highlights

100+

visits that strengthened relationships in the Church Friendship program.



6 churches with a total membership

of over 1000 people have developed and implemented action plans to improve their church.

1<sup>st</sup> Vision and Prayer Discussion table was organized in 2018.



58 people can facilitate peaceful relationships and seek conflict resolution in their community.



100%

Good Sense course participants can construct a personal budget.

1100

Community members now count on a new Urban Strategy leadership team in Antenor Sandino, Leon, Nicaragua.

105

youth joined 7 new impact clubs in Leon, Nicaragua.



# Freedom to Preach

Being a Pastor in Nicaragua during these days of crisis is complicated.

On April 18th, normal life for Nicaraguans drastically altered, at the root is a series of events linked to a social uprising that is demanding change to the political system. In the midst of this situation, we hear a recurring question among pastors, “What can we preach about in these times?”

The answer to this question is not so simple. One needs to take into account various factors:

1. Vocabulary: Throughout this time of crisis certain words have taken on very specific meanings to express a specific posture. The use of the words like “peace”, “justice”, “be in solidarity”, “love Nicaragua”, or “seek dialogue” are high risk and specific political connotations. A local pastor shared “as I went up on stage I was trembling with fear, asking God to not let any word escape from my mouth that could be wrongly interpreted”.

2. Polarization: It is normal that at certain times the population is polarized around a specific cause, for example, when the final game of the football season has come or when an important law is being approved in the Senate. But in Nicaragua, the social polarization seems permanent, and not for sports or legislative issues, but rather for ideological loyalty. This polarization has grown to the level of hatred in moments of open confrontation. You have to decide which side you are on. If a Pastor decides to take an intermediary posture, he can be seen as either a coward or traitor.

3. Economic Dependency: Save for a small percentage of churches with a membership of over 500 people, the majority of congregations depend on the faithfulness of their members with respect to tithing, offerings, and other contributions. Savings accounts, emergency funds or contingency plans are a “luxury” for larger churches. In this sense, if Sunday’s message is not to the liking for some in the congregation, a staff member can be without a salary for the following week.

“I have the sensation that there are people monitoring what we are saying from the pulpit”, shared a pastor, clearly terrified, “Really, we only want to say to everyone to keep praying, nothing else, if we say something more, it could be used against us.” he added.

In response to the growing polarization, the Nehemiah Center launched a pilot program in conjunction with World Renew, called Peaceful Fellowship. The objective of the pilot program is to impart conflict resolution approaches that will reduce the polarization within churches.







# Better Churches Stronger Communities

Villa Venezuela, is one of the most dangerous neighbourhoods in the capital city, Managua, Nicaragua. “Here there are a lot of drugs, many unoccupied youth, lots of robberies and delinquency” describes Pastor Harold Sanchez. But in this difficult place, the New Jerusalem Church continues to preach the gospel and be dedicated to their community.

Part of the dedication to their community is to strive to be a healthier church, Pastor Harold Sanchez along with two key church leaders, participated in the “Better Churches 1” workshops. Month after month they made a complicated journey of 20kms crossing the bustling city of Managua to arrive at the Nehemiah Center and participate in the workshops.

“These workshops for me have opened my eyes towards different aspects that I didn’t understand well, or that we hadn’t put enough attention to as a church”, explains Pastor Sanchez, “therefore it [the workshops] have been a blessing, full of interest for us as the leadership of the church” added Pastor Sanchez. Pastor Sanchez shared the lessons about Indicators of a healthy church to his team of 12 leaders, using the materials facilitated by the Nehemiah Center.

During a follow-up visit by the Nehemiah Center it was evident that the church leadership was indeed fostering a much clearer vision to impact their community. They had developed a stronger leadership and a larger commitment to discipleship towards marginalized people in their community.

“Then I said to them, You see the trouble we are in: Jerusalem lies in ruins, and its gates have been burned with fire. *Come, let us rebuild the wall of Jerusalem, and we will no longer be in disgrace.*”

Nehemiah 2:17



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