

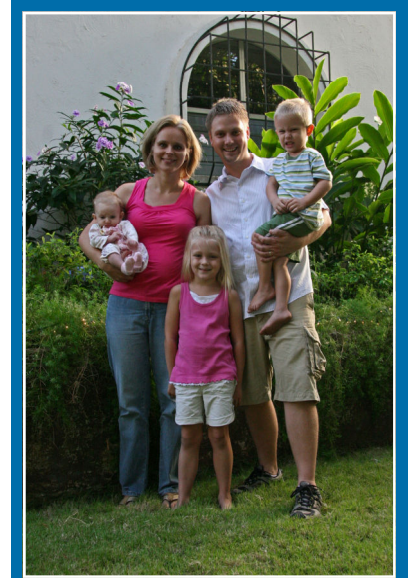


Steve & Kim Holtrop CRWM Missionaries in Nicaragua

I (Steve) am primarily working with a Nicaraguan organization called the Nehemiah Center (www.nehemiahcenter.net). As a group of North Americans and Nicaraguans we work to help individuals transform their lives, institutions and communities to be more of what God would have them be. We do this in the areas of Health, Education, Youth at Risk, Arts and Media, Business and Churches and Families.

I work in the overall leadership of the Nehemiah Center as Sub-director and also serving on the steering committee. I oversee a variety of North-South serving and learning interchanges; groups for two weeks, individuals for three months, and even two semester programs with Trinity Christian College and Dordt College. We look at how the visitor can best serve the community, under their leadership, and also what the visitor can learn from the community that might be transferrable "back home." This coming year we are looking at how to be part of a movement sending Nicaraguans overseas as missionaries. One exciting destination is perhaps Iran, given the political friendship forming.

As a family we will be in North America for much of April, May, June and July visiting churches and individuals, sharing what is happening here in Nicaragua.



(from left) Elise, Kim, Alia, Steve, Nathan



Steve & Kim Holtrop

The Nehemiah Centre—A New Initiative

This past year, Henry Cruz, supervised by the director of the Nehemiah Centre - Daniel Boniche, and an advisory council of pastors from various evangelical denominations in Nicaragua began working on a pilot project to research, recognize and develop healthy church growth.

Cruz began by studying many different approaches to



Staff at the Nehemiah Centre

the dimensions of healthy churches. While Cruz was doing this work, an anthropology intern from Wheaton (a Christian university in Illinois known for its high academic level) was also doing studies of

evangelical churches in Nicaragua. Using Cruz's work, the research by the Wheaton intern, and the experiential knowledge of the advisory council, a list of indicators were agreed upon to evaluate the health of a church and the areas it could grow in.

Currently the Nehemiah Centre is working on implementing the results of the research. Boniche, along with the advisory committee, will select twelve churches to participate in the pilot project. During the

next year, the Nehemiah Centre will partner with the churches to take steps towards building healthier churches.

Initially, the participating churches will be evaluated according to the research done so far. Throughout

the year, fifteen leaders from each of the twelve churches participating in the project will be invited for monthly training in several areas: (1) exposition of the Bible; (2) servant leadership; (3) evangelism; (4) worship; (5) healthy relationships; (6) organization and administration; (7) exercise of gifts and inclusive ministries and; (8) steps for development. At the end of the year, the churches will be re-evaluated according to Boniche's research and will develop a mission, vision, and a strategic plan. They will be followed for at least one more year with another evaluation happening at the end of the year. During the second year the project will begin again with a new group of churches.

Our prayer is that this pilot project will promote healthy churches that demonstrate the love of Christ to its neighbours - in word and deed.



The Nehemiah Centre