

# Northwestern Nicaragua Mission

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## ELÍAS FLEY

Elías Fley González, M.A. (Montemorelos University, Nuevo León, Mexico), has served the church for 30 years as a district pastor, ministerial secretary, and department director in two of the Nicaraguan fields. He is married to Enna Xiomara Soza and has three adult children.

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Northwestern Nicaragua Mission is a part of the South Central American Union Mission in the Inter-American Division of Seventh-day Adventists.

## Territory and Statistics

Northwestern Nicaragua Mission's territory is composed of the North Caribbean Coast Autonomous Region (or North Atlantic Autonomous Region) and the departments of Chinandega, Estelí, Jinotega, León, Madrid, Matagalpa, and Nueva Segovia. The mission was created in 2003 and organized in 2011. In 2020 it had 125 churches and 19,963 members in a population of 3,199,060.<sup>1</sup>

Northwestern Nicaragua Mission also has 96 organized church groups. The workers for this mission include six ordained ministers, five licensed ministers, four laymen with missionary licenses, 14 administrators and office staff, six Bible workers, four other staff, and 109 workers in elementary and secondary schools.<sup>2</sup> It is located across from the SOS Children's Village Matagalpa orphanage and on the road that leads to the Hospital Regional César Amador Molina in Matagalpa, Nicaragua.



Northwestern Nicaragua Mission

Photo courtesy of Elias Fley González.

## Institutions

## Primary Schools

These schools function successfully at the primary level: *Escuela Adventista Porteño de Puerto Cabezas*, established in 1953; *Escuela Adventista de La Trinidad*, established in 1963 and authorized to operate by the government in 1967; *Escuela Adventista de Matagalpa*, established in 1973 and authorized to operate by the government in 1976; *Escuela Adventista de Chinandega*, established in 1981; *Escuela Adventista de León*, established in 1982; *Escuela Adventista de Estelí*, established in 1984; *Escuela Adventista de Malpaisillo*, established in 1992; *Escuela Adventista de Matagalpa II*, established in 2013; and *Escuela Adventista de Waslala*, established in 2015.<sup>3</sup>

## Secondary Schools

The following schools function successfully at the secondary level: *Colegio Adventista Porteño*, established in 1977; *Colegio Maranatha de Estelí*, established in 1992; *Colegio Adventista de Matagalpa*, established in 1994; and *Centro Educativo Adventista de Chinandega*, established in 2000.

## Radio and TV Stations

Nine radio stations operate in the mission territory.

*Stereo Redención* in Matagalpa, was established in 2007 and is located in the Northwestern Nicaragua Mission office. It was the first radio station in the territory established with the entrepreneurial vision of Dr. Cesar N. Castillo, Pastor José A. Vargas, Marvin Gómez, and Juan F. Altamirano.

*La Radio "Cross to Crown"* on 94.1 FM in the city of Puerto Cabezas broadcasts in Spanish and in Misquito, which is the language of a predominant ethnic group in the region. The radio ministry program is broadcast with the support of Mike Halverson.<sup>4</sup>

*La Radio Adventista en Waslala* covers an extensive territory in the north and center of the country. It was established through the initiative of the brethren in the area and with support from Pastor Elías Fley. It was officially inaugurated in January 2014.

The radio stations in Chinandega, Somotillo, and León cover the western part of the country.

The radio stations in Estelí, La Trinidad, and Somoto cover the northern zone.

On September 15, 2009, the *La Verdad Presente* television channel began transmitting in the city of La Trinidad. The program was accessed through subscriptions to local cable and the Internet. On April 21, 2016, a radio station with the same name of *La Verdad Presente* began broadcasting.<sup>5</sup>

## Hospital

In 1960 the Adventist Hospital of Nicaragua in the northern part of the country was established in the municipality of La Trinidad. In 1981 it was closed by order of the revolutionary government. Providentially, it reopened in 2003. In 2018 the facilities were moved to the city of Estelí to a newly constructed hospital building with modern facilities and infrastructure.

## Origin of Adventist Work in Nicaragua

The Adventist presence in Nicaragua began on the north Caribbean coast of Nicaragua. The first Adventist missionary in Nicaragua was Pastor Frank Hutchins. He provided services as a pastor, colporteur, and dentist along Central America's Caribbean coast from the end of the 1800s to the beginning of the 1900s.<sup>6</sup>

The first to convert to the Adventist faith was a merchant from Jamaica, Charles Brooks, who lived in the Prinzapolka municipality. Pastor Hutchins sold Brooks a book that led him to learn the truth about the Sabbath. As a result of his new faith, he relocated to a place named Yulo on the Wawa riverbank, where he performed missionary work among the natives.<sup>7</sup> After years of waiting, Pastor Hiram Carleton Goodrich made contact with the small church. Pastor Goodrich traveled from Panama and performed the first baptism in Nicaragua; thus, the first Nicaraguan Seventh-day Adventist church recognized by the General Conference was established in 1912.<sup>8</sup>

The Adventist work in the Nicaragua Caribbean area continued to grow, and several English- and Misquito-speaking churches were established in Yulo, Pearl Lagoon, Corn Islands, Bluefields, Puerto Cabezas, and Sukatpin, all of which were administered by the West Caribbean Conference. In 1926 the first church in Managua, the capital of Nicaragua, was established. In 1928 Nicaragua Mission was organized with Pastor E. P. Howard as superintendent in charge of leading the Adventist work in the entire country of Nicaragua.<sup>9</sup>

The first church in Nicaragua was established in the community of Yulo in 1912 in the Northwestern Nicaragua Mission territory. Additional churches were established in Sukatpin in 1920; León in 1939; Matagalpa in 1940; Malpaisillo in 1948; Puerto Cabezas Inglesa in 1949; La Trinidad in 1960; Chinandega in 1971; Somotillo in 1972; Matiguas and Estelí in 1973; Ocotal, Bonanza, and Rosita in 1974; Quebrada Honda in 1976; Yasica Sur in 1978; Sebaco and Los Encuentros in 1980; Ciudad Darío in 1981; Waslala and El Naranjo in 1984; Laodicea and Reparto Estela in 1987; and El Progreso in 1990.<sup>10</sup>

## Events that Led to Organization of the Mission

The Nicaragua Mission coordinated the Adventist work throughout the country territory until 2002. The mission's board of directors approved the creation of a new administrative field, the Northwestern Nicaragua experimental mission, administered by Pastor José Antonio Vargas. It was officially recognized as Northwestern Nicaragua Mission, formerly part of Nicaragua Mission and organized in 2003. Its headquarters is located in

Matagalpa, Nicaragua.<sup>11</sup>

## Church and Community

The Adventist Development and Relief Agency (ADRA) has been very active in the territory of the Northwestern Nicaragua Mission. Since 1990 ADRA has benefited more than 300 communities in the municipalities of Nueva Segovia, Madriz, and Estelí.<sup>12</sup> After the passage of hurricanes Mitch in 1998 and Felix in 2007, ADRA provided medical and food assistance and helped rebuild houses and infrastructure that were destroyed by the hurricanes. ADRA's "Healthy Children in Healthy Communities" project was implemented in six communities of Madriz and benefited 10,212 children of age five and under, as well as 31,965 women of reproductive age.<sup>13</sup>

Another way the church gets involved with the community is through the community's social sale of medicine program in conjunction with "*Nica Salud*," a comprehensive community health program. These are implemented in 25 communities in the municipality of Waspam, Río Coco, in the North Caribbean Coast Autonomous Region and benefit more than 10,000 people. The church also participates in the family gardening and adult education programs with support from Hope for Humanity.

## Plans to Fulfill Mission

The Seventh-day Adventists of the Northwestern Nicaragua Mission are challenged to establish churches in unreached municipalities in the countryside, construct new churches, convert groups into organized churches, strengthen educational institutions through the continuation of teacher professional development plans, remodel the infrastructure of educational centers, increase the number of district pastors, and change the status of the mission into a conference.

The radio stations that operate in the territory of the Northwestern Nicaragua Mission are in need of modernization. This will allow many more people to hear the proclamation of the gospel. Particularly, the mission hopes to reach the *zumo* and *mayagna* ethnic groups. Northwestern Nicaragua Mission also commits to continue the professional development of pastors to better serve the Misquito communities.

## List of Presidents

José Antonio Vargas (2003-2014); Evaristo García (2015-2017); Gabriel Gámez (2017-present).

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## NOTES

1. "Northwestern Nicaragua Mission," *Seventh-day Adventist Yearbook*, accessed March 16, 2021, <https://www.adventistyearbook.org/entity?EntityID=32975>.
2. Northwestern Nicaragua Mission, *Obreros de la Misión*, June 2019, information accessed from secretariat office archives.
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6. Richard W. Schwarz and Floyd Greenleaf, *Light Bearers* (Nampa, Idaho: Pacific Press Publishing Association, 2000), 219.
7. *Ibid.*
8. Gómez Otero, 24.
9. "Nicaragua Mission," *Seventh-day Adventist Yearbook* (Takoma Park, Washington, D.C.: Review and Herald Publishing Association, 1929), 254.
10. Gómez Otero, 187-188.
11. "Northwestern Nicaragua Mission," *Seventh-day Adventist Yearbook* (Hagerstown, MD: Review and Herald Publishing Association, 2012), 167.

12. Nicaragua Mission Secretariat Report on ADRA, *Informe de la 1<sup>ra</sup> Sesión Cuadrienal*, 2000, information accessed from secretariat office archives.

13. Nicaragua Mission, *Informe de la 2<sup>da</sup> Sesión Cuadrienal*, 2004, 101-105, information accessed from secretariat office archives.

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