

NICARAGUAN LUTHERAN CHURCH “FAITH AND HOPE” - ILFE

Year Started and Brief History

The Lutheran presence in Nicaragua began in 1983 as a pastoral accompaniment for the refugee community of Salvadorans who settled there during the years of the civil war in El Salvador. In 1992, these refugees returned to their homeland after the Peace Accords were signed in New York City. The small group of Nicaraguans who had received these refugees and had worked with them decided to continue the Lutheran witness in their own communities. They began organizing faith communities among poor Nicaraguans living in and in rural areas close to the capital, and joined the Lutheran World Federation in 1994 as the Iglesia Luterana de Nicaragua Fe y Esperanza.

In less than a decade, ILFE grew to more than 20 faith communities. After Hurricane Mitch’s deadly sweep through Nicaragua in 1998, ILFE’s relief and reconstruction assistance proved not only to be life-saving for people in desperate need, but also the means by which peasant farm communities in western Nicaragua first learned about Lutheranism in Nicaragua. More than a dozen new ILFE preaching points and missions were established. Today it is one of the most dynamic churches in the region.

Church Leader

Bishop Dr. Victoria Cortez.

Membership

Number of members: 10.000

Organisational Structure

ILFE is present in approximately 35 Nicaraguan communities the majority located in the northern and western parts of the country (Somoto and Chinandega) and served by lay pastors who live in or near these communities. Church leader is the Bishop Dr. Victoria Cortez following by the next structure; Pastors clergy (Presbyter), Diaconal Minister deaconess, Evangelist and Catequists.

Main Areas of Work

ILFE focuses on lay leadership development, specialized ministries for children, pre-teens and youth, preventive health care, HIV & AIDS awareness, sustainable agriculture and disaster prevention & response.

Activities regarding overcoming of violence

The Lutheran church in Nicaragua works together with different civil society organizations abording topics such as gender, domestic violence and human rights.

Strategies for activating potential actors.

-Systematic lobbying on the state or some of its institutions.

-Participation on human rights national and international conventions.

-Projects to combat and prevent violence. Encouraging people (community leaders, youth leaders and pastors) to reflect on traditional values. Reflect on gender stereotypes and try to develop alternative models of masculinity and femininity.

-Making use of religious networks as a structure for changing the attitude of men and women.

Special Challenges

To decriminalize consciences regarding the topic of HIV/aids and gender. This is a challenge that involves not only human rights organizations, but also to faith-based organizations, theologians and pastoral workers who can contribute a lot in the response to the epidemic and the violence. It is about understanding and communicating that living with HIV is not a punishment from God, in order to counteract the feelings of guilt; the challenge is also to remove the myths about HIV and sexuality, as they result from the lack of information and reach to become a burden for many people.

Involvement in Networks or International Operations

-Lutheran World Federation(LFM)

-Lutheran World Relief(LWR)

-Evangelical Lutheran Church in America(ELCA)

-Evangelical Lutheran Church in Bayern (ELKB)

-CILCA(Communion of Lutheran Churches in Central America)

-Evangelical Lutheran Church in Bovenden.

-ACT(Action by Churches Together)

-CLAI(Latin American Council of Churches)

-CMI(World Council of Churches)