

# scattered

Those who had been scattered preached the word wherever they went. Acts 8:4

## Worth the Risk

*By Paul Olver, Latin America*

As we pulled up to the corner, Pastor Hiuberth pointed down a dirt alley. “Our church is right down there,” he said, “and right here is where there was a shootout as people were coming out of church.” He is the district leader and he went on to explain, “These neighborhoods are ruled by gangs and fueled by drugs.”

We were right in the middle of Managua, Nicaragua. With a population of 2 million it is the largest city in Central America. Electricity just arrived in this slum neighborhood last year. Only the main streets are paved and open sewers channel away runoff and refuse. Every house in sight was a shack cobbled together with found materials.

Forty people came out on a Friday night to worship God, hear His Word, and encourage one another. It was an intergenerational group with children, teens, adults and seniors, and they all sang their hearts out. In Nicaragua, if you are a real Christian and this is a real church, you gather for worship five nights a week. But in a city like this it isn’t just going to church – it is being in a safe place and it is living the life of Jesus together against the darkness.

The 18 de Mayo church is one of five Free Methodist churches in Managua. It started some time back but had dwindled to a handful. Two years ago Pastor Hiuberth appointed a lay leader from one of the other churches in Managua as pastor. She bravely went where few would venture, ministering out of great commitment and passion. In two years Pastora Ena and her husband, Pablo, have resurrected this church and made an impact on the surrounding community.

After each service, they pack up everything – chairs, sound system and pulpit – and cart it to a member’s home a few blocks away. Anything left inside gets stolen. There is no way to make the building secure. Just one more reality of ministering in the 18 de Mayo neighborhood.

Some time ago Pastora Ena and her 16-year-old son were walking home after a church service. They were caught in the crossfire between opposing gangs. A bullet grazed her son’s chest. It was only a few inches from his heart, but it just barely broke the skin. They kept on walking home ... and they keep on going to church five nights a week. The cause of Christ is worth risking everything.

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