

# “A Light in the Way” (1964–)

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## DANIEL OSCAR PLENC

Daniel Oscar Plenc, Th.D. (River Plate Adventist University, Entre Ríos, Argentina), currently works as a theology professor and director of the White Research Center at the River Plate Adventist University. He worked as a district pastor for twelve years. He is married to Lissie Ziegler and has three children.

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“A Light in the Way” (*Una luz en el camino*) is a radio and television program founded by Pastor Enrique Chaij, widely publicized in the Argentina Republic and other countries, which offers distance Bible courses<sup>1</sup>

In June 1963, Buenos Aires television Channel 13 invited Enrique Chaij, the then young writer of the South American Spanish Publishing House, to present a five-minute reflection message at the end of the programming.<sup>2</sup> Soon Chaij thought about adapting these messages for free distribution through radio stations in Argentina. On the radio version, the program received the name “A Light in the Way.” In the programs, he discussed social and family problems and day-by-day issues in the community and concluded with a reflection on spiritual values. “A Light in the Way” began to spread by Radio El Mundo (AM) [Radio the World, AM] of Buenos Aires, the most popular radio station of that time in Argentina, on Tuesday, June 2, 1964, at 8:30 in the morning. In the same year, Enrique Chaij went to direct the departments of Communication, Public Relations, and Temperance of the Buenos Aires Conference.<sup>3</sup>

The entertaining and brief program, broadcasting from Monday to Friday, was well received. “Soon, the program was already broadcasting in more than 100 stations, and around 10,000 people were attending school by correspondence offered by the program.”<sup>4</sup> To meet this huge demand, Radiopostal School Minifilials were created in the pastoral districts, and a system of “missionary mailmen” was created with a great mobilizing and evangelizing result. Additionally, the director of “A Light in the Way” held stop-smoking courses that had wide repercussions.<sup>5</sup>

In 1967, the first radio recording studio was built at the headquarters of the Austral Union Conference. Enrique Chaij had the valuable collaboration of Pastor Pablo C. Rodríguez and his wife, Laura, in the direction and attention of the Radiopostal School. Rubén Duré served as the recording technician for several years. In 1970, there were 62 programs of “A Light in the Way” for television (in black and white films) to be broadcasted on the main television channels of the country. Christian songs of soloists and of the Melodías quartet were included.<sup>6</sup> In 1972, new studios were built, one for the radio and another one for television. On April 19, 1972, a new communication center named “A Light in the Way” productions was organized. The renewed current studies in the headquarters of the Argentina Union are named after Enrique Chaij.

Chaij made extensive tours to give lectures and courses.<sup>7</sup> From the fifth anniversary of its creation, the program began to celebrate anniversaries in large auditoriums, theaters, and stadiums.<sup>8</sup> Massive meetings were held in important cities of the region, such as Buenos Aires, Bahía Blanca (Buenos Aires), Tucumán, Santa Fe, Mendoza, Córdoba, Mar del Plata (Buenos Aires), Montevideo (Uruguay), and Asunción (Paraguay).<sup>9</sup> Christmas gatherings stood out.<sup>10</sup> The meetings at the Luna Park stadium in Buenos Aires were the most numerous: 9,500 people gathered at Christmas 1976, and 15,000 at the silver anniversary in 1989. On the 30th anniversary in 1994, there were 50 celebrating events organized in the territory of the Austral Union Conference. For the celebration of 50 years in the air uninterrupted, a national tour and great public gatherings were organized.<sup>11</sup>

The program director visited mayors and governors on tours of cities in different provinces of the country. In some municipalities, he has been declared an illustrious citizen.<sup>12</sup> “On three occasions (1974, 1989 and 1994), Chaij and his team received the ‘Santa Clara de Asís’ (awarded by the National League of Mothers of Family) for their contribution to the welfare of the family and the home.”<sup>13</sup> Pastor Chaij participated in evangelization plans and frequently collaborated with the evangelist of the camps. When Dr. Enrique Chaij is asked about the reason for his success as a communicator, he replies: “I put myself totally in the hands of the Lord. Everything else He did.”

In 1979, Pastor Enrique Chaij started on Channel 2 of River Plate, capital of the Province of Buenos Aires, a program he titled “Encuentro con la vida” (Meeting with life). He performed live, and in those years, the television was still black and white.<sup>14</sup> Between 1982 and 1987, 180 five-minute color programs were recorded in their own studios for free broadcast by a large group of channels.

In 1975 and 1976, the program “A Light in the Way” was also broadcasted in Portuguese by several broadcasters from Brazil, directed by Pastor Paulo Sarli. In 1986 a version of the program “A Light in the Way” in Guarani began, called “Peteí Tesapé Ñandé Rapepe,” with Pastor Lidio Vargas. It was aired by six broadcasters of the Paraguay Republic.

Another important contribution was the creation of a Christian music publisher with the name of “A Light in the Way,” which allowed the diffusion of the music of local artists, as well as those of the program *Voice of Prophecy*. The program was so popular that in 1990 the Gallup consultant revealed that “A Light in the Way” was the Seventh-day Adventist Church activity that Argentines knew best.

Dr. Enrique Chaij retired in 1997. He had traveled extensively in Argentina and other countries to offer conferences and seminars and to make contact with the listeners of the program. He has directed conferences on stress, family relationships, healthy emotions, and Bible teachings.<sup>15</sup> The Radiopostal School was replaced by the distance Bible School, and communication with the listeners was diversified.<sup>16</sup>

“A Light in the Way” is broadcast in more than 600 radio stations in Argentina and other countries, such as Panama, Costa Rica, Puerto Rico, Venezuela, Ecuador, Paraguay, Uruguay, the United States, and Spain, and through the international network Nuevo Tiempo (Adventist radio and TV: [nuevotiempo.org](http://nuevotiempo.org)).<sup>17</sup>

In 2016, a third stage of “A Light in the Way” began with the introduction of Rodrigo Arias as the new speaker of the program.<sup>18</sup> There is also the half-hour television version aimed at psycho-spiritual health.<sup>19</sup>

In many ways, “A Light in the Way” is a unique resource for evangelization through social media. The extent of dissemination and massive reception have made the program an instrument of inspiration and salvation for many people.

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## NOTES

1. “‘Una luz en al camino’—50 años transmitiendo esperanza” [“A Light in the Way”—50 years transmitting hope]. Una Luz en el Camino, accessed March 30, 2018, <http://unaluzenelcamino.org.ar/Paginas/Quienes-somos.aspx>. See the autobiography Enrique Chaij, *Ese chico travieso llamado por Dios* [The naughty boy called by God] (Buenos Aires: Ediciones E, 2005); Pablo C. Rodríguez, *Las alas del mensaje: reseña histórica del uso de los medios masivos por parte de la iglesia adventista en la difusión del evangelio* [The wings of the message: historical review of the use of the mass media by the Adventist Church in spreading the gospel] (Santa Fe, Argentina: s. n., 2004), 69–88.
2. See Rodríguez, *Las alas del mensaje*, 83–88. Enrique Chaij, writer, communicator, and author of several books, was born in Buenos Aires city, Argentina, on December 19, 1933. He completed his secondary studies at River Plate Academy, Entre Ríos, Argentina (1947–1951). In the same institution, he completed his higher studies in theology (1953) and the course of superior normal teacher (1954). He earned a master’s degree at Wheaton College, Illinois, U.S.A. (1982), and Ph.D. in communication in California. He is married to Nelda Calvo (1957), and they have two children: Ariel and Elisa. He was a copywriter in the South American Spanish Publishing House, Florida, Buenos Aires, for seven years (1957–1964), and then he directed departments in the Buenos Aires Conference and Austral Union Conference. Chaij wrote 8,500 songs for radio and 500 for television and 18 small books to give to listeners and is the author of 37 books.
3. Enrique Chaij, “La obra radial en la Asociación Bonaerense” [The radio work in Buenos Aires Conference], *La Revista Adventista* [Adventist review], January 1965, 14–15.
4. “‘Una luz en al camino’—50 años transmitiendo esperanza.”
5. Enrique Chaij was a pioneer on offering the “5-Day Plan to Stop Smoking” in 1965, in Buenos Aires city, San Miguel de Tucumán, Bahía Blanca (Buenos Aires), Rosario (Santa Fe), Santa Fe, La Plata (Buenos Aires), Salta, Santa Rosa (La Pampa), Córdoba, Mar del Plata (Buenos Aires), La Rioja, Mendoza, San Francisco (Córdoba), Necochea (Buenos Aires), San Nicolás (Buenos Aires), and elsewhere. Since 1967 he took these courses to Paraguay, Chile, Lima (Peru), and Miami (United States).

6. The “Melodías” quartet did not belong officially to the program nor was it financially supported. The quartet performed on TV programs and for public meetings of the program.
7. Pablo C. Rodríguez, “Gira de Una Luz en el Camino” [A Light in the Way tour], *La Revista Adventista* [Adventist review], December 1978, 15–16.
8. “Cumplió sus primeros cinco años Una Luz en el Camino” [A Light in The Way concluded its first five years], *La Revista Adventista* [Adventist review], October 1969, 12.
9. Pablo C. Rodríguez, “Aniversario de Una Luz en el Camino” [A Light in the Way anniversary], *Revista Adventista* [Adventist review], June 1989, 12–13; Enrique Chaij, “Una Luz en el Camino celebra su 20° Aniversario” [A Light in the Way celebrates its 20th anniversary], *Revista Adventista* [Adventist review], August 1984, 24–25; Pablo C. Rodríguez, “Ciclos de cosecha radiofónica” [Radio harvest cycles], *Revista Adventista* [Adventist review], March 1988, 11–12; “Bodas de Oro para una Luz en el Camino” [Golden Anniversary for A Light in the Way], *Revista Adventista* [Adventist review], July 2014, 8–9.
10. Daniel Ostuni, “Navidad Adventista en el Luna Park y en Mar del Plata” [Adventist Christmas at Luna Park and Mar del Plata], *Revista Adventista* [Adventist review], April 1977, 18–19.
11. Juan Carlos Priora, “Una Luz en el Camino” [A Light in the Way], *Revista Adventista* [Adventist review], April 1976, 18.
12. In the program’s silver anniversary, in 1989, Enrique Chaij and Pablo Rodríguez visited all the governors of the Argentine provinces to inform them about the activities of the church and to pray for them.
13. Rodríguez, *Las alas del mensaje*, 76; Pablo C. Rodríguez, “Nueva distinción a Una Luz en el Camino” [New distinction to A Light in the Way], *Revista Adventista* [Adventist review], February 1979, 17.
14. Rodríguez, *Las alas del mensaje*, 81.
15. José A. Plescia was born in Buenos Aires, Argentina, on December 12, 1946. He married Ana María Jáuregui in 1969. They had four children: Alejandra, Pablo, Graciela, and Patricia. He graduated with a degree in theology (1977) from River Plate College, Entre Ríos, Argentina, and a master’s degree in theology, in the Latin-American Adventist Theological Seminary. He acted as a pastor and evangelist in the Central Argentine Conference and Argentina Union before becoming a speaker of “A Light in The Way.”
16. The Radiopostal School offered free correspondence courses, such as “Felicidad en el hogar” [Happiness at home], “Encuentro con la vida” [Meeting with life], “Tiempo joven” [Young time], and “Tesoros de vida” [Life Treasurers]. Currently the Bible school offers the distance courses “La Biblia habla” [The Bible Speaks], “Por una vida mejor” [For a better life] and “Familia feliz” [Happy family]. They are requested online through Facebook, Twitter, YouTube, or the website at [unaluzenelcamino.org.ar](http://unaluzenelcamino.org.ar) or by the free telephone line: 0800.555.0201.
17. Alcibiades Aguilera, “Una Luz en el Camino en México” [A Light in the Way in Mexico], *Revista Adventista* [Adventist review], July 1989, 30.

18. Rodrigo Arias was born in Puerto Madryn, Chubut, graduated with bachelor's degrees in theology (2000) and in psychology from the River Plate Adventist University, Entre Ríos, Argentina. He is married to Karen Carballo, a nurse, and they have three sons: Joaquín, Agustín, and Franco. He was a pastor in Buenos Aires and a chaplain at River Plate Adventist University, and he worked at the Healthy Living Adventist Center in Libertador San Martín, Entre Ríos, Argentina.
  
  19. The health program has the leadership of Alexis Villar and the speaker Rodrigo Arias. It is broadcast on Channel 13 in Buenos Aires. "El programa 'Una Luz en el Camino' llega a la televisión abierta" [The program "A Light in the Way" arrives on open television], Adventistas.org, April 3, 2017, <https://noticias.adventistas.org/es/noticia/comunicacion/programa-una-luz-camino-television-abierta/>.
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