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Argentina Union Conference

ANGEL JESÚS TORREL SHAPIAMA, EUGENIO DI DIONISIO, AND SILVIA C. SCHOLTUS

Angel Jesús Torrel Shapiama

Eugenio Di Dionisio

Silvia C. Scholtus

The Argentina Union Conference (UA) constitutes an administrative unit of the Seventh-day Adventist Church within the South American Division (SAD). It oversees the work of the Adventist Church in the Argentine Republic, and has

its administrative offices located at 1452 Esteban Echeverría Street, in the city of West Florida, Vicente López Party, CP: C1428DQR, Buenos Aires province, Argentine Republic.¹

The Argentina Union Conference currently covers the geographical territory of the Argentine Republic. The country's 2010 census reported a population of 40,117,096 inhabitants,² with INDEC³ estimating for 2020 a population of 45,376,763.⁴ The Argentina Union Conference administers 183 pastoral districts and 1,052 congregations (615 organized churches and 437 groups). The number of church members in Argentina is 118,407, indicating 1 Adventist for every 383 inhabitants.⁵

The Argentina Union Conference territory consists of seven administrative units: the Central Argentine Conference (ACC) headquartered at 1662 Avenida Sabattini, Maipú District, city of Córdoba, Córdoba province (23,312 members); the North Argentine Conference (ANN) headquartered at 830 Mexico, Yapeyú District, city of Corrientes, Corrientes province (25,259 members); the South Argentine Conference (AAS) headquartered at 376 Ruta 22 East, Kilometer 1175, in General Roca, Río Negro province (13,264 members); the Buenos Aires Conference (ABO) headquartered at 2429 Uriarte, Ciudad Autónoma de Buenos Aires (19,985 members); the Central West Argentine Mission headquartered at 1191 Avenida San Martín in Godoy Cruz, Mendoza province (9,867 members); the Northwest Argentine Mission (MANo) headquartered at 271 Av. Ernesto Padilla, San Miguel de Tucumán, Tucumán province (13,956 members); and the North Buenos Aires Mission (MiBoN) headquartered at 3346 Valentín Vergara, CP 1603, Florida Oeste, Buenos Aires (12,764 members).⁶

The Argentina Union Conference administers the following educational institutions: the Misiones Adventist College (ISAM), located at 410 Av. Rusia, N3315WAA, Villa Libertad, Leandro N. Alem, Misiones, Argentina (currently 654 students).⁷ The Misiones Adventist College, besides offering higher education, also provides primary and secondary level instruction.⁸ In addition, the River Plate University (UAP), located at 99 St. Mayo 25, E3103XAF, Libertador San Martín, Entre Ríos, Argentina (currently 2,746 students)⁹ offers undergraduate, master's, and doctoral programs, with four faculties: humanities, economic sciences, health sciences, and theology as well as a tertiary institute and other academic programs.¹⁰ UAP has as an annex, the River Plate Adventist Institute (IAP), responsible for the education of children and adolescents.¹¹

In addition, the US maintains such other institutions as: the Belgrano Adventist Clinic, located at 1710 Estomba, C1430 EGF, Ciudad Autónoma de Buenos Aires, which has a capacity of hospital 66 beds;¹² River Plate Adventist Sanatorium, located at 255 St. 25 Mayo, Libertador San Martín, Entre Ríos, with 188 beds;¹³ Northeast Argentine Adventist Sanatorium located at 225 Ruta Provincial (Av. Rusia) and Los Pioneros, 3315 Leandro N. Alem, Misiones, which also has the Healthy Living Adventist Center (SANA) with a capacity of 30 beds;¹⁴ Adventist Development and Relief Agency (ADRA)¹⁵ located at 1452 Esteban Echeverría, B1604ABL, Florida Oeste, Buenos Aires, Argentina (ADRA Argentina projects reach more than 100,000 people every year);¹⁶ and Radio Nuevo Tiempo [Hope Channel-Argentina] located at 1452 Echeverría, Florida, Buenos Aires with a potential viewing audience of 10,000,000.

Currently, the Argentina Union Conference, including its institutions and fields, has 4,569 employees. Nineteen have missionary licenses, 205 missionary credentials, 70 ministerial licenses and 218 ministerial credentials.¹⁷

The Union Organizational History

The beginning of the work in South America was under the direct control of the Board of Foreign Missions of Seventh-day Adventists in the United States. The first Adventist Church organized in Argentina and the SAD was in this union territory. Adventists emerged in Argentina within different groups of Protestant immigrants during a period when the nation encouraged largescale immigration.¹⁸

The initial spread of Adventist beliefs in Argentina had two aspects. One involved the arrival of self-supporting missionaries to Entre Ríos province and the other the distribution of church publications in Santa Fe province.

At first Adventism developed in Entre Ríos province among a group of Russian-German immigrants. One of the settlers, Jorge Riffel, left Russia together with his wife, Maria, and their son, David, and arrived in Brazil in 1876. From there he moved to Entre Ríos in 1880, in the area of the Diamante district. The land on which he settled was difficult to farm. After struggling with locusts and other agricultural pests, he decided to migrate to Tampa, Kansas, United States.¹⁹

Meanwhile, in Argentina, interest in the Adventist message occurred almost simultaneously and independently around 1885 in two different places in Santa Fe Province. To the north of that province, in the city of Las Garzas, lived Italian Pedro Peverini and his wife Cecilia Tourn. Pedro was Catholic and Cecilia Waldensian.²⁰ They had received a Waldensian magazine published in Torre Pellice, Piedmont, Italy that mentioned Adventists and ridiculed the *Les Signes des Temps* (The Signs of the Times), edited by Adventists in Basel, Switzerland.²¹ The articles discussed biblical prophecies and the Second Coming. Their interest roused, the Peverinis wanted to know more about the church.²² Thus, they decided to study the Bible and subscribed to *Les Signes des Temps* (The Signs of the Times). Before long, the Peverinis accepted the Adventist faith.²³

Similarly, in Felicia, Santa Fe, Julio Dupertuis and his wife, Ida Arn, Swiss-French settlers also interested in learning more about the Sabbath, began studying the Bible. When visited by a Baptist pastor, Paul Besson, they asked him about the Sabbath. He tried to dissuade them,²⁴ telling them that in order to follow the Bible to the letter, they would have to keep the Sabbath day, although he did not consider it necessary. The Dupertuis may have had a Baptist periodical that contained a photograph of four people baptized by Adventists in Lake Neuchatel, Switzerland. Pastor

Besson told them that Adventists in Switzerland published a French-language periodical called *Les Signes des Temps* (The Signs of the Times). At the Dupertuis insistence, he helped them get copies of the magazine. Their reading and study of the Bible led them to adopt Adventism.²⁵

In 1888, Jorge Riffel settled in the United States, attended an Adventist evangelistic series conducted by L. R. Conradi, who had charge of evangelizing German-speaking immigrants.²⁶ Jorge and his whole family accepted Adventism. Their desire to share their new beliefs and an invitation made by a church official led them to decide to return to Argentina as self-supporting missionaries. At the end of 1889, Riffel and his family went back to Argentina accompanied by three other families: the Fricks, Yankes, and Zimmermanns. On one of the first Fridays of 1890 arrived at Diamante, in Entre Ríos, Argentina,²⁷ and met Reinhardt Hetze, who had received a letter from his brother who also lived in Kansas and another from J. Riffel. Both letters mentioned that Riffel would arrive to let them know about Adventist beliefs. Hetze looked for Riffel when he disembarked in order to take him to his home. The next day, about 60 people gathered at Hetze's house to listen to Riffel. Then they had meetings several nights in a row.²⁸

The news that people in Argentina were interested in knowing more about Adventism reached the United States. It resulted in church members willing to support themselves through the sale of Adventist religious literature coming to Argentina. It was a time when Adventists began to spread their beliefs beyond the United States. Like other Christian denominations of that epoch, they desired to spread the gospel "to the ends of the earth."²⁹ That is why they wrote extensively about "foreign" missions (as they referred to evangelism outside the United States).³⁰

In December 1891, the first three missionary canvassers (literature evangelists) sent by the International Tract Society (Elwin Snyder, Clair Nowlin, and Alberto Stauffer)³¹ arrived to distribute Adventist publications in English, French, and German throughout different parts of Argentina, but they did not speak Spanish. Months later, while they were in Buenos Aires, they met an English-speaking young man, Lionel Brooking. He accepted Adventism and joined the missionaries as a canvasser. Able to speak Spanish, he helped spread the message to Spanish-speaking people.³² Subsequently, Nowlin and Snyder remained in Buenos Aires. Stauffer, who was fluent in German as well as English, went to visit German and French-speaking settlers in the provinces of Santa Fe and Entre Ríos, and then to Uruguay.³³

As the number of believers in the Entre Ríos area grew, Jorge Riffel requested the General Conference to send a pastor to baptize the new converts and organize a church in the area. His letters and the reports sent by literature evangelists of the interest developing also in Santa Fe province caught the GC's attention.

As the missionaries who arrived as canvassers sold their literature, they observed the educational difficulties among the Argentine population as well as the degree of illiteracy that, in some provinces, reached more than 70 percent.³⁴ Because the publications they were selling were in English, French, and German, they began to look for immigrants who spoke those languages. In fact, since the arrival of the literature evangelists in South America, the church realized that it couldn't neglect South American in its evangelistic plans. In March 1893, the General Conference decided to send Richard B. Craig to oversee canvassing and establish a book depository in Buenos Aires.

In August 1894, the Foreign Missions Board also sent 35-year-old Frank Westphal and his wife, Mary Thurston.³⁵ Frank was appointed superintendent of the East Coast Mission (territory that included the countries of Argentina, Paraguay, Uruguay, and Brazil).³⁶ Frank was the first missionary with credentials that permitted him to organize and baptize on behalf of the Adventist Church in South America.³⁷

The early missionaries settled in an area mostly populated by English-speaking people, which included communities of British origin (Irish, Scots, and Welsh) located at Solá Station, near the Roca Railways, in the province of Buenos Aires. It was a strategic place near the port and railways to receive publications that the canvassers sold later. Many of the British immigrants worked to establish and extend the railways in Argentina. Others spearheaded Argentina's agricultural and industrial development. By the 1890s, the country already had more than 16,000 kilometers of roads³⁸ that enabled several of the Adventist missionaries to work throughout Argentina countryside, especially in communities that shared the same cultural outlook.

It is interesting to read the historical records of this "forgotten continent," as Frank Westphal called it, when he related in his book that not only men spread Adventist in South America, but also women.³⁹

In 1894, Frank Westphal left his family settled in Buenos Aires and began his first missionary tour along the Paraná River to the north. First, he went to Entre Ríos to visit the German-speaking colonies.⁴⁰ After his arrival at Diamante port on a cold and wet winter day, he managed to make himself understood enough to reach the Adventist colony in the area of Crespo Campo (known today as Jacobi Village). There he visited the Riffel family home. The initial meetings at the Riffel's house attracted many who were interested in Adventist beliefs. Thus, on September 9, 1894, Westphal organized a church of 36 members.⁴¹

A few days later, on September 18, he went to San Cristobal, Santa Fe province, where he met others whom he instructed, baptized, and organized into a second church of approximately 10 members.⁴² Then he continued to Esperanza and Felicia in Santa Fe province, and from there returned to Buenos Aires. In October, he organized in that city the third Adventist church in Argentina,⁴³ leaving Snyder and Brooking in charge of it.⁴⁴

On a third mission trip, Westphal again visited the believers in the provinces of Entre Ríos and Santa Fe, organizing with Jean Vuilleumier the Felicia church, the fourth Adventist congregation in Argentina. It had at that time 25 French members. Among them were Julio Dupertuis; Ida Arn de Dupertuis (from Felicia); Alberto Arn; Floris Mathieu (from Esperanza); the Dobantón family; and Arnoldo Pidoux and his wife (from Colonia Grütly). Obviously, those who formed the church came from different groups that met in neighboring towns. An elder from one of the groups,

Rodolfo Dirivaechter, was especially active in the church organization.⁴⁵

But the story of the spread of Adventist beliefs in Argentina would not be complete if we overlooked the role the first missionaries had in promoting a healthy lifestyle. One of the first individuals trained in the area of health was Ole Oppegar, a Norwegian who had studied in the United States before arriving in Argentina in 1895.⁴⁶ Recognizing the importance of promoting Adventist beliefs through health programs, the missionaries requested that the General Conference send a physician.

As membership grew, *La Carta Mensual* [The Monthly Letter] and *El Faro* [The lighthouse] reported Sabbath School groups meeting in various locations in Entre Ríos, Córdoba, and Santa Fe.⁴⁷ In 1896, the Las Tunas Church organized in Santa Fe under Jean Vuilleumier's direction.⁴⁸ For three years it hosted the first Adventist school in Argentina.

In addition to the publications disseminating Adventist beliefs, the first missionaries emphasized that people needed to study out biblical teachings for themselves. That required knowing how to read. Not only did Argentina had a low literacy level,⁴⁹ it was complicated by the fact that Adventists could not attend Catholic schools because they were Protestants. Furthermore, Adventists desperately needed local individuals who could speak Spanish and be well-trained in different areas of community service. It demanded something much greater than schools in family homes such as they had been conducting in the area of Entre Ríos and Santa Fe. Therefore, on September 26, 1898, local church leaders voted to open an educational institution in Entre Ríos province with Nelson Town as its first director.⁵⁰ His initial goal was to start teaching literacy and prepare students to be canvassers. The next year the school moved to the Camarero area in Entre Ríos.

In April 1901, at the thirty-fourth General Conference Session in the United States, church leaders decided to establish three South American missions (Argentina Mission, Chile Mission, and Brazil Mission) under the umbrella of a South American Union Mission. At the same time, it was requested that someone capable of acting as general superintendent in South America be chosen.⁵¹ The one appointed for that role was Joseph W. Westphal (younger brother of Frank Westphal), who became the first president of the newly organized South American Union Mission which incorporated both Spanish and Portuguese-speaking countries.⁵²

That same year, the Argentina Mission organized as the River Plate Conference (CRP, the so-called Buenos Aires Conference), which included the countries of Argentina, Paraguay, and Uruguay. The River Plate Conference came into existence during meetings held in Aldea Palma, near Crespo, Entre Ríos, from November 10 to 20, 1901, under the supervision of Joseph Westphal. Nelson Z. Town became president. By the end of 1901, Argentina had a total of 446 members in 14 organized churches with four ministers and nine other missionaries.⁵³

In December 1901 the first missionary physician, Robert (Roberto) Habenicht and his family arrived in Buenos Aires. His wife, Adela Allen, was a nurse.⁵⁴ They settled in the area of Camarero and Crespo in Entre Ríos province. His medical success and his work as a physician and pastor, along with that of his wife, made him think seriously about opening a sanatorium. A few years later, the annual administrative meeting of the Adventist Church voted to build a sanatorium (now River Plate Adventist Sanatorium) in connection with the school launched in Entre Ríos (currently River Plate Adventist University).

Five years later, the South American Union Mission would convene a constituency meeting in the city of Paraná, capital of Entre Ríos province, Argentina. It would bring together delegates from Argentina, Brazil, Chile, and other South American countries during March 15 to 25, 1906. On March 19 they recommended the organization of the South American Union Conference (UAS, now Argentina Union Conference). Thus, the South American Union Mission acquired the status of a union conference. The delegates appointed Joseph W. Westphal as president, H.F. Graf vice president, and N. Z. Town secretary-treasurer.⁵⁵ The session also created seven missions and three conferences,⁵⁶ naming their respective directors.

On October 29, 1906, a change occurred in the names as the River Plate Conference started to be called the Argentina Conference (CA), since most of its territory consisted of this country. The first Argentina Conference president was Joseph W. Westphal (1906)⁵⁷ with Robert Habenicht as vice president and Nelson Town as secretary-treasurer. R. Dirivaechter became the first literature evangelist⁵⁸ and Arthur Fulton educational director.⁵⁹ In 1907, Ottena de Fulton assumed the role of general secretary of the Sabbath School department. Other women filled additional leadership roles.⁶⁰

A new organization would come into existence during the 1916 biennial session of the South American Union held in the city of La Plata, capital of the province of Buenos Aires, Argentina. J. W. Westphal would chair the meetings along with General Conference secretary W. W. Prescott and Nelson Z. Town, GC publishing director.⁶¹ The two GC representatives helped establish the South American Division as authorized by the GC a year earlier. Therefore, on February 6, 1916, the division organized with Oliver Montgomery as president and W. H. Williams as secretary and treasurer.⁶² The new administrative unit would supervise three unions, four conferences, twelve missions, three schools, two publishing houses, and a sanatorium, all scattered throughout South America. Most of the institutions, however, were in Argentina and Brazil.⁶³

The same session established the Austral Union Conference (now Argentina Union Conference) from the South American Union Conference⁶⁴ with the goal of continuing Adventist work in Argentina, Chile, Paraguay, Uruguay, and the Falkland Islands. Its first president was Joseph W. Westphal⁶⁵ with G. E. Hartman as secretary-treasurer.⁶⁶ The men had the responsibility of guiding the various conferences of Argentina and Chile, and the missions of Alto Paraná, Patagonia, and Uruguay, with a total of 2,559 members throughout their territory.⁶⁷ The division offices

continued to operate in Buenos Aires, because their leaders were still part of the Austral Union Conference. During this time, plans developed for an educational institution in Chile and a Spanish language printing press in Buenos Aires. This last institution was located near the offices of the Austral Union Conference in Florida, Buenos Aires.⁶⁸

During the reorganization of the work in the Austral Union Conference during the sessions from February 24 to March 5, 1921, a restructuring of its territory took place:⁶⁹ a Central Argentine Mission covering the province of Buenos Aires, La Pampa, and Neuquén; and the Buenos Aires Conference (the city of Buenos Aires and suburbs). Those units joined the already existing ones: the Chile Conference (organized in 1907); North Argentine Conference (reorganized in 1921, incorporating the provinces of Entre Ríos, Santa Fe, Córdoba, La Rioja, Santiago del Estero, Tucumán, Catamarca, Salta, Los Andes, and Jujuy); the Alto Paraná Mission (organized in 1906 to include Paraguay and the Argentine provinces of Misiones, Chaco, Formosa, and Corrientes); and the Uruguay Mission (organized in 1906).⁷⁰

The Austral Union Conference, which had carried out its activities since 1916 at 1436 Esteban Echeverría, Florida, Buenos Aires, Argentina, moved in 1932 to 3227 Lavallol (now Valentine Vergara), Florida, Buenos Aires, Argentina. It should be noted that the Argentine Conference (1906-1915) and the Buenos Aires Publishing House (1906-August 1925) started and developed in the same building.

Evangelistic efforts in the Austral Union Conference never stopped. As a result, in 1935, baptisms reached 744, double what they had been a previous decade, though N. P. Nielsen observed, "We are not working to baptize a large amount of partially prepared candidates, but our plan is to give detailed instructions to those interested and encourage them to live the truth of the advent message, attend our services on Saturday, pay their tithes and study their Bibles for a good period before being baptized."⁷¹

Through the years, the Austral Union Conference territory underwent modifications.⁷² In 1948, Paraguay became a mission. The Austral Union Conference until then had six mission fields, adjusting their boundaries from time to time, then divided the territory into one additional mission.⁷³ By 1950, the Chile Conference split into two territories, creating the Central North Chile Conference (reorganized in 1951) and the South Chile Conference.⁷⁴

In the middle of the 1950s a new opportunity developed through radio and the Radio Bible Correspondence School, and thus, the first program of "Voice of Hope" began broadcasting in Argentina on Sundays at 2:00 pm. Until September 30, 1957, it aired on 29 stations,⁷⁵ fostering numerous Bible studies by correspondence.

In 1961, the Buenos Aires Conference divided its territory, forming another mission in the Austral Union Conference: the Patagonia Mission (the provinces of Neuquén, Río Negro, Santa Cruz, Tierra del Fuego, and the Falkland Islands). Subsequently, it acquired the southern part of the Buenos Aires province.⁷⁶ In 1966, the territory of Chile organized a mission union attached to the South American Division.⁷⁷ Therefore, the Austral Union Conference territory covered only Argentina, Paraguay, and Uruguay⁷⁸ with a population of 5,342,020, 119 churches, and 18,290 church members (1 Adventist for every 138 inhabitants). The new president was Elbio Pereyra.⁷⁹

In 1970, the church in Argentina began broadcasting an Adventist television program under the direction of Enrique Chajj who would set up a recording studio to shoot the first films of "Una Luz en el camino [A light on the way]."⁸⁰ The project produced 62 black and white programs, many of them aired on the main television channels in the country.⁸¹

In 1982 the Austral Union Conference would return to 1452 Esteban Echeverría, Florida, Buenos Aires, Argentina. That same decade the Austral Union Conference sponsored a program known as "the National Chain of the Bible" that delivered 15,000 Bibles until June 1985. During the campaign period, church members received a Bible and a set of Bible studies, and with these tools in hand, they went door to door to leave a Bible in the home of anyone interested in having Bible studies. If the interested person was baptized, they would get another Bible and set of Bible studies to give to someone else. Thus, he or she would become the new biblical instructor; and, consequently, the biblical chain would continue without breaking, and the study of God's Word would reach homes throughout Argentina.⁸²

On the eve of the new millennium, in 1999, the Austral Union Conference had surpassed 470 organized churches and already had 83,487 baptized members, almost quadrupling their number since the last reorganization in 1966. A few years later, in 2004, it had 530 organized churches and about 106,000 members throughout its territory.⁸³

Because of such constant membership growth in the Austral Union Conference territory, and to better serve the countries within the conference, leadership decided on a new reorganization in 2009,⁸⁴ that is, beginning in 2010 "the territory of the Austral Union Conference was reduced only to Argentina, which received the name of Argentina Union Conference. Both Paraguay and Uruguay received the title of Union of Churches,"⁸⁵ becoming directly attached to the South American Division.⁸⁶ The first president of the Argentina Union Conference, Carlos Gill,⁸⁷ would operate from the headquarters of the former Austral Union Conference.

Now restructured, the new Argentina Union Conference, would begin with 106 SDA members, 519 organized churches, and 315 groups. To guide its activities, it had 184 ordained ministers and 64 licensed ministers. Thus, when 2010 ended, evangelistic series resulted in 6,240 baptisms for a membership growth of 2.98 percent.⁸⁸

The restructuring initiated a process of change, and for that to be possible, the conference had to remodel its headquarters building at Echeverría 1452, 1602 Florida, Buenos Aires. Administration also acquired property in the city of Escobar, Buenos Aires, for an eventual transfer of offices. In 2009, the South Argentine Mission changed its status, becoming a conference, and its headquarters shifted from Bahía Blanca, Buenos Aires, to General Roca, Río Negro, and a new administrative complex.⁸⁹ In Corrientes, the building of the North Argentine Conference was

completely remodeled and new space added for the educational area.

In 2013, after the reorganization of the Central Argentine Conference, the Central West Argentine Mission came into being. Its headquarters are located in Godoy Cruz, Mendoza, and it also administers the provinces of San Juan, San Luis, and La Rioja.⁹⁰ In 2015, in order to provide better service, the North Conference established a branch office in Leandro N. Alem, Misiones, for a field secretary and two departmental officers. On its part, the Northwest Argentina Mission built a new headquarters, located on the second floor of the Tucuman Adventist Academy, 2910 San Lorenzo street, San Miguel de Tucumán, Tucumán. It will use the previous building as an influence center.

Administration completely renovated and expanded the Buenos Aires Conference headquarters along with the acquisition of an adjacent property. Division of the territory resulted in the organization of the North Buenos Aires Mission to begin operating January 1, 2018. The annual council of the South American Division of the Seventh-day Adventist Church had authorized it on May 22, 2016, with vote no. 2016-096.⁹¹

Another advance in media outreach was the development of the Centro de Comunicaciones y Multimedia Nuevo Tiempo [New Time Adventist Media Center] and its film studio. In line with the SAD's strategic media expansion plan, the Argentina Union Conference established an ambitious program for radio, TV, and Internet. The radio network has already reached through its New Time radio stations more than 1,000 cities with a potential audience of 10 million. Some of the major cities targeted in recent years include: Rosario, Paraná, Corrientes, Resistencia, Posadas, Formosa, San Luis, Concordia, Villa Carlos Paz, Villa Mercedes, Santiago del Estero, and Ushuaia. Buenos Aires has two radio stations. Currently, 261 cities receive the Hope Channel TV signal. Buenos Aires is the greatest challenge for the Hope Channel television. It is noteworthy that one of the programs produced by Hope Channel in Argentina, "Vivir con Esperanza [Live with Hope]," has aired on Channel 13, one of the most popular channels, since August 2014. The program, along with the television version of "Una luz en el camino [A light on the way]," reaches more than 1,100 cities in the country every Saturday morning.

In relation to internal church communication, the conference seeks to motivate membership participation through the web, social networks, videos, and a weekly newsletter. Social networks are the most flexible way to connect the church with people, allowing both largescale and personalized communication. The church invests 190 hours a year in the production of television programs, along with the multimedia work of the River Plate Adventist University, which produces the program "Bienestar [Well-being]." The emphasis on expansion has involved reaching out to more cable companies. To finance such advances, the conference has created a strategic fund.

Still within the context of communicating the message, the publications ministry continues to have a prominent role in the church in South America. The project "Impacto Esperanza" [Hope Impact]⁹² has distributed 11,113, 220 missionary books in Argentina since 2017.

Another highlight of recent years has been the emphasis on Global Mission. Between 2010 and 2015 the conference constructed more than 130 new church buildings, 30 of them in large cities. It resulted from God's blessing, member commitment, and a strategic fund organized by the SAD and its constituent units. In order to reach the large cities and fulfill the motto "They await us,"⁹³ the conference purchased four properties and built and dedicated on them four churches in Buenos Aires just during 2013. Leadership also devised a plan to renovate older church structures, especially in larger cities.

A new approach to evangelizing urban areas involves the Centers of Influence. Beginning in 2015, they rent strategically located sites to conduct programs that meet community needs. Currently, 12 Centers of influence operate in Argentina: 2 in Córdoba, 2 in Rosario, 1 in Resistencia, 6 in Buenos Aires, and 1 at the Belgrano Adventist Clinic.

Likewise, as part of their goal of spreading the gospel of Christ and God's interest in the well-being of humanity, educational institutions have been erecting representative church complexes on their campuses. The River Plate Adventist University, for example, made sure that their church was the most important building on campus. The Misiones Adventist Academy has finished its church, and the Balcarce Adventist Academy is in the process of establishing its place of worship.

In 2011, a missionary movement of Adventist university students, called "I Will Go," started at River Plate Adventist University. The project came as a natural consequence of the intense missionary activity of student missionary groups on campus. "I Will Go" aims to supplement both the short and long-term missionary projects already conducted by the university itself, and places special emphasis on the 10/40 window, the greatest evangelism challenge of Christianity. This vision led the university to adopt one such country and send missionary students annually to it. Such was the initiative's impact that, in 2013, SAD decided to expand the project to all the 15 universities in its territory.⁹⁴

Finally, 2019 was a special year for the Argentina Union Conference, since that year marked 125 years of the Adventist church in Argentina and South America. And "to celebrate in the same way that the first pioneers began the work, preaching,"⁹⁵ during September 21-28 all the churches in Argentina opened their doors. In them, more than 1,000 ministers from SAD, the Adventist Media Center, and the Argentina Union Conference preached in the "Hope Week". At the end of the week, with the "Baptism of Spring," pastors baptized nearly 1,250 new believers.⁹⁶

From its beginnings, the Argentina Union Conference has concentrated on programs of humanitarian social assistance, health care, education, and evangelism. And to continue reaching those goals, the church's strategic mobilization plan has focused on discipleship established on five goals: (1) A more faithful church, in which each

member seeks the Lord through His Word and gives their talents for service. (2) A church that lives in community, where through small groups each one develops their gifts. (3) A church with more members involved in mission, teaching, and preaching the Word of God. (4) A church that establishes more congregations by building new church structures in places of global mission. (5) A church where each new member experiences the discipleship cycle⁹⁷ It is in this way that the Argentina Union Conference fulfills its mission, unceasingly taking the gospel everywhere on Argentine soil.

Chronology of Administrative Leaders⁹⁸

Presidents: Joseph W. Westphal (1916-1919); Roscoe T. Baer (1920-1925); E. L. Maxwell (1926-1929); Nelson Zane Town (1930-1932); Walter E. Murray (1933-1940); E. N. Lungebeal (1941-1944); Alfredo Aeschlimann (1945-1954); Héctor J. Peverini (1955-1965); Elbio Pereyra (1966-1972); José Tabuenca (1973-1977); Juan Carlos Viera (1978-1985); Rubén Pereyra (1986-1991); Enrique Becerra (1992); Carlos Mayer (1993-2000); Bruno A. Raso (2001-2007); Carlos Gill (2008-2017); Darío M. Caviglione (2017-).

Secretaries: G. E. Hartman (1916-1923); G. E. Emmenegger (1924); C. L. Bauer (1925-1927); F. C. Varney (1928); G. E. Emmenegger (1929-1937); J. Wagner (1938-1946); Ner Soto (1947-1957); Daniel Nestares (1958-1961); M. F. Perez (1962-1965); R. N. Wensell (1966-1973); Juan Carlos Viera (1974-1977); R.N. Wensell (1978-1979); Edwin I. Mayer (1980-1982); Roberto Gullón (1983); Rubén Pereyra (1984-1985); Walter H. Weiss (1986-1990); Aníbal D. Espada (1991-2000); Víctor Peto (2001-2010); Roberto Oscar Gullón (2011-).

Treasurers: G. E. Hartman (1916-1923); G. E. Emmenegger (1924); C. L. Bauer (1925-1927); F. C. Varney (1928); G. E. Emmenegger (1929-1937); J. Wagner (1938-1946); Ner Soto (1947-1955); Daniel Nestares (1956-1965); M. F. Perez (1966-1979); R. N. Wensell (1980-1984); Juan Carlos Viera (1974-1977); R.N. Wensell (1985-1995); Edwin I. Mayer (1980-1982); Roberto Gullón (1983); Rubén Pereyra (1996-2000); Walter H. Weiss (2001-2008); Aníbal D. Espada (2009-2016); Víctor Peto (2001-2010); Roberto Oscar Gullón (2017-).⁹⁹

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