

Paraguay

SIM is involved in church planting and evangelism, youth ministry and education in Paraguay.

Paraguay is often described as 'half wilderness and half garden'. In the heart of South America, it is one of only two landlocked countries on the continent. Prior to colonial rule, it was peopled by semi-nomadic, Guaraní-speaking Indians known for their fierce warrior traditions.

Current SIM Ministry

Paraguayans have developed a fiercely independent spirit, which has taken them into several devastating wars. The nation's institutions and infrastructure urgently need rebuilding on the basis of democracy, truth, justice, and religious freedom. While Paraguay has long been dominated by the traditional religion of its early colonisers, there is widespread bondage to pre-Christian 'deities', customs, and superstitions. Paraguay is still waiting for its first true spiritual awakening. Evangelical witness was severely restricted until democratic reforms overthrew a corrupt military dictatorship in 1989. The present constitution provides for freedom of religion and of the press.



SIM sent its first missionaries to Paraguay in 1987. Its main thrust is church planting among the unreached rural communities of the country. SIM also continues to work in some urban areas near Asuncion. The church planting teams have begun five new churches, as well as Bible studies in a number of other locations; they would like to reach other communities as the Lord provides missionaries. Opportunities abound as relationships formed through practical outreaches like veterinary service, medical clinics, youth centres, Christian camping, carpentry shops, Teaching English as a Foreign Language (TEFL), and the running of a Christian elementary school open new doors.

Visionary planning for the future includes

- Hispanic missionaries recruited from other Latin American countries
- leadership development
- radio outreach expansion
- camp development and ministries
- more extensive work with children and young people (more than half of Paraguay's people are under the age of 25)
- Paraguayan churches equipped for ministry to HIV infected individuals and to their circle of friends and family



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History of Christianity

Catholicism arrived with Spanish priests around the year 1524. By 1558, Jesuit missionaries began converting the Indians. In the southeastern region they formed settlements known as *reducciones* among the [Guaraní](#) Indians. These efforts were similar to those in Brazil, Argentina and Bolivia at that time. The number of *reducciones* reached about 35, and approximately 200,000 Indians were baptized before the Jesuits were expelled in 1767.

When the Jesuits left, their heavily paternalistic settlements disintegrated. The Catholic church became completely subservient to the state, with the government appointing bishops. During this period the Catholic church suffered for lack of trained clergy.

Protestant work in Paraguay began in 1856 with the American Bible Society. Over the following decades, other Protestant groups entered the country, including American Methodists, German Lutherans, Seventh-Day Adventists, New Testament Missionary Union, and Disciples of Christ (USA). The Russian revolution of 1917 precipitated the arrival of Russian Mennonite refugees who, seeing the need among the Chaco Indians, appealed to United States Mennonites for assistance. Mennonites have the largest Protestant Christian community in the country, claiming over 20,000 members, followed closely by the Assemblies of God.

Evangelistic crusades by Luis Palau and others have been heavily attended, and many have professed faith in Christ. Large numbers reported by the Southern Baptists, Assemblies of God, Church of God, and others in more recent years, indicate receptivity to the gospel. The percentage of evangelical Christians in urban centres grew from 1.8% in 1986 to about 2.5% in 1990. Physical ministries open hearts in rural areas where 0.5% is evangelical Christian. Materialism is the god of the cities.

While Protestant churches are growing, they are small and are more local than national in scope. They comprise 3% of the total population and are divided among at least 33 agencies.

Please pray for

- continued spiritual awakening at all levels of society.
- a growing missionary work force. wisdom in laying the foundation for the SIM-related church in Paraguay.
- many more workers to serve in this receptive country.
- theological training of national church leaders.
- the grassroots evangelistic movement spearheaded by Paraguayans.

Opportunities

[Church Planter, Nurse](#)

[Pioneer Church Planters](#)

[All Paraguay Opportunities](#)

Projects


[Paraguay Youth and Family Camp](#)

Stories

[A year in Paraguay](#)

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