

## Uruguay

SIM is involved in evangelism, children's and youth ministries in Uruguay.

Uruguay, officially the Oriental Republic of Uruguay, is the only country in the Western Hemisphere besides Canada that lies entirely outside the tropics. It also has the highest percentage of atheists and non-religious people in Latin America. Over 90% of its population is of European origin.

### Current SIM Ministry

Uruguay is the most secularised nation in Latin America with the highest percentage of atheists and agnostics. Amid the prevailing secularism and related apathy toward organised religion, there is a growing spiritual openness that offers increasing opportunities to share Christ.

SIM has been ministering to the whole spectrum of society and especially to the growing population of Uruguayans who struggle to meet basic daily needs. Two SIM-related community radio stations went on the air in 2006. A Ministry and Training Centre is under construction to provide a vital resource in training leaders from a broad spectrum of Uruguayan churches. The goal is to promote excellence in children's and youth ministry, mission, and pastoral care in order to build up the local church and encourage co-operation and unity. SIM has been a strong model for servanthood to the existing churches.



Eastern Montevideo is the fastest growing area of the country, and only a few of the people have had the Gospel presented to them in a clear way. SIM missionaries focus on helping existing churches through children's work, Bible studies, Marriage Encounters, providing programmes and equipment for local Christian radio stations, promoting the sending of Latin missionaries, and providing tools for evangelism and discipleship.

The number of evangelical churches has grown from 1,000 in 1995 to an estimated 3,000 in 2008. Most of these are small with only about 30 members.

### Unreached People Groups

Eastern Montevideo is the fastest growing area of the country and only a small proportion of the middle and upper classes have had the gospel presented to them in a clear way. The middle class neighbourhoods in eastern Montevideo hold the greatest concentration of unreached people in Latin America.

### History of Christianity

Franciscan and Jesuit missionaries arrived in 1616 and began to set up communal villages among the Indians. Following the expulsion of the Jesuits in 1767, these villages were destroyed.

In contrast with its earlier emphasis on evangelism, the Catholic Church in recent years has prioritised ministries to the urban poor. The Church's progress in Uruguay has been hampered by the attitude of the local inhabitants, who are primarily of Spanish, French or Italian background. Many demonstrate an anti-clericalism and an opposition to state-related Catholicism, a legacy which their forefathers may have brought from Europe.

Protestant work began in 1838 when North American Methodists entered the country. But ongoing civil strife caused the mission to close until 1878. In 1856, Italian Waldensians arrived, followed by German Lutherans, the Salvation Army, and Seventh-Day Adventists. In 1911 Southern Baptists entered Montevideo from Argentina. Progress for Protestant missions is slow, but recently seven Pentecostal groups have made a significant impact in the country. The Assemblies of God and the Church of God (Cleveland) have seen the greatest growth.

According to Operation World, a new interest in the transcendent has begun to replace the secularism and humanism which characterised Uruguayan society in the twentieth century. Many have sought to fulfil this longing through false religious systems. The largest non-Catholic religious bodies are the Jehovah's Witnesses and New Apostolic Church. Brazilian Spiritists, long banned, are now becoming influential. More occult centres (1,200) are registered than Protestant churches. The agnostic middle-class and intelligentsia are latching onto 'new age' thinking. On the other hand, some evangelical groups have been able to take the advantage of the search for spiritual fulfillment, and have found 'unprecedented spiritual openness'.

### Please pray for

- the Holy Spirit to convict Uruguayans of their need for salvation. missionaries to discover appropriate ways of penetrating the culture with the Gospel.
- churches to work together in reaching the nation for Christ.
- those lost in apathy, spiritism, and occultism to come to know the love of Christ.
- many more workers to help grow and train the local churches during this exciting time of increasing church growth.

## Opportunities

[Children's Ministries](#)

[Theological Educator](#)

[All Uruguay Opportunities](#)

## Projects

[Montevideo Ministry Training Centre](#)

