Uruguay is the second-smallest country in South America. It sits on the Atlantic shore, where it shares a border with southern Brazil and sits entirely outside the tropics. It traces its name to the Uruguay River, which means “river of the painted birds” in the Guarani language.

More than half of Uruguay’s 3.4 million people live in Montevideo, the capital city, which makes urban outreach critical. A highly educated population, 99% can read and write. The country has free elections—and voting is mandatory. Agriculture and livestock production are its primary industry. In fact, cattle outnumber people by 4 to 1.

However, Uruguay is the most secular country in Latin America—to such an extent, it has renamed many of their traditional holidays. Christmas is now called Family Day. Holy Week is now called Tourism Week. As a result, much of the population grows up knowing little about Jesus, a situation which grows more severe as each generation becomes less familiar with religious beliefs.

Lutheran Hour Ministries conducts outreach in Uruguay through mass media, technology and interpersonal channels.

Ministry Response

There is tremendous opportunity to share God’s love and reach out with the Gospel in Uruguay. Lutheran Hour Ministries (LHM–Uruguay) responds to the spiritual hunger across this South American country through a variety of strategies:

**RADIO.** Our original radio programming in Uruguay provide steady encouragement to individuals who crave answers to life’s issues. “Focus” is a daily, 15-second microprogram highlighting LHM–Uruguay’s resources on loneliness, depression, anguish and other topics. “Message of Hope” is a series of special broadcasts speaking about faith and hope. Our radio outreach is concentrated in the southern, more urban region of Uruguay, with potential for expansion into the less populated northern region, as well.

**DIGITAL OUTREACH.** Young adults gravitate to the internet seeking help, including millions who are curious—or have doubts—about Christianity. The Vivenciar.net website serves as our hub for digital outreach in Uruguay and throughout Latin America. Through Vivenciar, we establish online relationships with individuals and provide biblically-based answers for their lives. Eventually, as God opens their hearts, we share the Gospel with them and guide them into church.

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LIVE EVENTS. Holidays and other special days provide opportunities to share the Gospel through film showings, puppet shows, and music concerts. In these casual, pressure-free environments, volunteers show the love of Jesus to those who attend, offering more information to those who do not know Him or are new to the faith.

BIBLE CORRESPONDENCE COURSES. LHM–Uruguay offers Bible Correspondence Courses (BCCs) to introduce the Gospel to people who don’t know Jesus, and to reinforce a biblical understanding for people who do. When someone responds to an outreach activity, LHM–Uruguay will typically invite the respondent to begin a BCC as the next step in his or her spiritual journey. BCCs are available for both children and adults. One key avenue for promoting BCCs is LHM–Uruguay’s radio broadcasts.

AUTOMATED MESSAGING. While mass text messaging is often frowned upon in the United States, Uruguayan culture welcomes it as a form of daily communication. Each week, LHM–Uruguay sends text messages of hope, faith and encouragement to subscribers. It also plants Gospel seeds among not-yet-believers—an ice-breaker to pique their curiosity. Because 73% of people across all ages and economic levels use cell phones, automated messaging provides a cost-effective way to reach a vast audience.

YOUTH MINISTRY. As adolescents struggle with conflicting moral and social choices, our Project JOEL program tackles tough topics—from relationships to sex to drugs—in an honest, relevant manner, rooted in God’s love for them. We work with contacts at schools and other organizations to promote Project JOEL events. We also aim to expand community outreach by offering classes in music and visual arts.

Impact

JESUS AND A YOUNG CHEF: How How God Used Lutheran Hour Ministries to Help a Child Understand Jesus

Ignacio is a seven-year-old who did not come from a Christian home. One day, LHM–Uruguay volunteers visited his school and shared a Bible lesson from Matthew 8, where Jesus calmed a storm. He signed up for LHM–Uruguay’s Junior Chefs program. Ignacio loved it so much, he was the first to arrive each week.

On Ignacio’s first day at Junior Chefs, when the time came for the Bible lesson, he wandered away. “I came to cook, not to hear about Jesus,” he simply said. However, as the weeks passed, he grew interested in the Bible lessons and became an active participant.

One day, after misbehaving, Ignacio told his mother he had asked Jesus for forgiveness. Then he asked, “How do I know if Jesus forgives me?” His mother didn’t know. She contacted LHM–Uruguay and asked the same question. The question opened the door for staff to tell her about the loving, redemptive work of Jesus Christ.

We rejoice as the Lord continues to move on the hearts of Ignacio and his family!