

MISSIONARY TRAINING SCHOOL
IN ARGENTINA
\$14,385



Students with visiting professor, Dr. Marcos Kempf.



Professor Kempf teaching a class.

MISSIONARY TRAINING SCHOOL

Argentina is the eighth largest country in world. Shaped like a giant cornucopia, it dominates the southern part of the South American continent. Argentina, however, presents the paradox of a rich country perpetually on the brink of economic disaster. Although considered a developing country, it shares many characteristics of a developed country. Its standard of living is one of the highest in South America, with an average annual income of US\$8,030 per person. Its population density is one of the lowest, and its natural resources are among the richest. The country's problems are the product of many decades of political and economic mismanagement. Through the efforts of President Menem, since 1989, economic restructuring has curbed inflation and exposed corruption. There is still widespread poverty, but the country is economically moving forward.

Since the 1500s, Europeans (mainly Spanish) immigrated to Argentina because of its rich natural resources. By the late 1800s, the original Indian population was a small minority. Today, 97 percent of the 37 million people are from European backgrounds and their lifestyles reflect a variety of cultural traditions. Most Argentines (88 percent) live in the cities, with 12.4 million in the capital, Buenos Aires. Many are middle-class and work in industry, business, or government jobs.

Argentina has freedom of religion, though Roman Catholicism is supported by the state. Ninety-three percent of the population claims to be Christian. Of those, 91 percent claim to be Catholic, but more than 80 percent are inactive and increasingly secular, especially the educated upper classes and the very poor. Almost four percent of the population claim to be non-religious. Muslims and Jews account for a little over one percent each.

The Evangelical Lutheran Church of Argentina (IELA) began in November 1905, in Aldea San Juan, mostly among Russian-German immigrants. Today, the work is done in Spanish. The church body has two emphases—mission work, under the theme "Christ for all," and education to recover an evangelistic church. It also conducts social work in many places in Argentina, and owns and operates seven colleges which have 4,200 students in total.

The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod (LCMS) also began work among predominantly Russian-German immigrants in Aldea San Juan, Argentina in 1905. Over the years, a national church was established and, in 1986, the Evangelical Lutheran Church of Argentina became a sister/partner church of the LCMS.

The IELA is leading an effort to increase missionary work and training throughout Argentina and Latin America. Rev. Sergio Schelske has been tasked with creating a missionary training program for Argentines, which gives them a strong missiological background to supplement their theological seminary training—missionaries who are equipped for the unique challenges of modern day Latin America. Training will include mission conferences, counseling, and one intensive class each year.

The intensive class will meet in a different location each year and attempt to accomplish the formation and training of more than 45 individuals as missionaries. Some of them are currently serving as parish pastors and missionaries; others are lay leaders in their congregations who are involved in outreach programs and preparing to serve in missionary projects.

Through this important project, missionary work in Latin America can be expanded as more and more trained missionaries, already familiar with the language and cultures of Latin America, are able to go into the field. Rev. Schelske and his family live in Tucuman, Argentina, but he travels throughout the country as a part of this project.

Funding will be used for:

Funds will provide a salary for the coordinator of the school, travel expenses for visiting professors, student scholarships, school library materials, and other related expenses.

Prayer needs:

- Pray for the students and visiting professors, and that the classes would provide valuable, practical knowledge that the participants can apply in their local congregations.
- Pray for Rev. Schelske and his family as he continues to coordinate this vital training program.
- Pray that resources can be developed and used by those church members interested in missions, but who are unable to participate in the program.