



Iglesia Evangélica Congregacional

Insc. Reg. Nac. de Cultos N° 447 - Ley 21745 - Decreto 2047/79

Personería Jurídica N° 395 - Insc. en el Ministerio de Bienestar Social N° 2124 Dispo. N° 49/77

Domicilio Legal: Cura Álvarez N° 628 - Tel (0343) 4311654 - C. P. 3100 - Paraná - Entre Ríos

1035 Independence Avenue
Crespo, Entre Ríos
Argentina
Zip Code:3116

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INTERNATIONAL CONGREGATIONAL
FELLOWSHIP

Dear Sir or Madam

We are delighted to announce that this year 2022 the **Argentine Evangelical Congregational Church** is celebrating 100 years of fruitful and prolific activity in Argentina. And due to this, our 100th Anniversary, we have adopted the following motto: *“One hundred years announcing the Good News”*.

Last September a special celebration took place in the province of Entre Rios, more precisely, in the congregation of the Village of San Antonio. The whole event was in remembrance of the first, and therefore, the beginning of the Evangelical Congregational Church in South America. In addition to this, a number of activities have been carried out in many Congregational Churches too, among different provinces of the country.

A historical overview reference is attached to this note, to inform you about the past, present and future course of our Institution.

Yours faithfully,

Pr. Gabriel Oscar Fischer
President

Iglesia Evangelica Congregacional

Pr. Damián Weigandt Apaza
Secretary General

Iglesia Evangelica Congregacional

President: Pr. Gabriel O. Fischer - (gabrielofischer@gmail.com) – (+54) 336 4387088

Secretary: Pr. Damián Weigandt Apaza – (iecsecretariageneral@gmail.com) – (+54) 343 6453288



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ARGENTINE EVANGELICAL CONGREGATIONAL CHURCH – Historical overview

In our country, "congregationalism" is represented mainly by the Iglesia Evangélica Congregacional Argentina (IEC). Although not spread as much as other Protestant manifestations, the Evangelical Congregational Church coordinates a number of churches/congregations in its main area of influence, the province of Entre Ríos. It also has a number of them in nearby provinces such as Corrientes, Misiones, Chacho, Formosa, Santa Fe, Buenos Aires and Córdoba.

Everything started in Villa San Antonio's congregation, in Entre Ríos, known as the mother church of all the Evangelical Congregational Church in South America according to a report that this congregation possess. In the early 1920s, after being suggested by relatives and friends who had previously emigrated from the Volga to the USA, the early believers of Aldea San Antonio, engaged in communication with the Evangelical Congregational Church of US.

Two years later, in 1924, the missionary John Hölzer arrived to Entre Ríos. John, commissioned by the leaders of the same North American church and following the instructions from the "Illinois Conference", carried out a survey in order to organize the first congregations. After establishing himself in Urdinarrain, he travelled to San Antonio and in agreement with the leaders of the existing church, did what was required to incorporate the church as a member of the "USA Congregational Church".

In 1924, on the 29th of June, the integration was formalized on the in an extraordinary general meeting. The six congregations grouped at that time, made the decision to adhere to the church of reference in the USA. "The growth after that was so great that in 1937 there were already 35 congregations attended by 5 pastors."

However, to be fair, several of the congregations that became part of the ascent Evangelical Congregational Church of Argentina, including the Aldea San Antonio church, had already existed before. Some did it independently, and others linked to various denominations of German origin

It is a known fact that Argentina was the second mission field of the North American E.C.C. (the first was Canada). According to William Chrystal – the history of the German Congregational Churches in the United States – "four Argentine churches urgently petitioned George Geier, who was in charge of them, for congregational recognition in 1921". The same author adds that the mission continued to grow, despite the opposition of the G.E.S.R.P. (German Evangelical Synod of the Río de la Plata) which depended on the SYNOD of Missouri. "By 1937 36 churches with a total of 30,015 members had been



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established.” Chrystal concludes by expressing that the Congregational Churches of South America “likewise their North American cousins, have adapted to the surrounding culture.”

The Church as such was then established. The first project of Statutes prepared by the Superintendent, Pastor Federico Guillermo Gross and Pastor Christian Jorge Kuhn was sanctioned In the first Ordinary General Assembly held in Urdinarrain (Entre Ríos) from March 4th to 7th, 1937. Therefore, its dependence on the E.C.C of the USA finished.

Later, on April 21st of 1942, came the approval of the Statutes by the Government of the Province of Entre Ríos conceding Legal Personality to the Church. It was granted by Resolution No. 395. After that, in 1947 and 1948, the Assembly would approve slight changes to the Statutes being the most important reform approved on the 30th of September 1951 by the Extraordinary General Assembly of September, in Seguí, Entre Ríos.

Several years later, on the 24th March 1968, a new project to reform the Statutes presented to the Ordinary General Assembly was approved unanimously. The approval of the Statutes by the Superior Government of the Province of Entre Ríos was resolved by Decree No. 910 of the Government Ministry of Justice and Education on the 2nd of April 1969. Finally, the last reform to the Statutes of the Institution was carried out in 2008 and is still in force.

Initially the activities, both educational and cultural, of these German Volga immigrants, were carried out in their native language. Over time, the imported language yielded to the pressure of the new generations, until the time came when the national language of the adopted country began to prevail.

Although this denomination is classified as “immigration church” or “transplant church”, it does not fit strictly into this description, since the church was a development from already existing churches. Some affiliated with ecclesiastical organizations and others totally independent and originated in the country. This denomination, however, has understood it has an evangelizing mission to fulfil rather than serving the families of immigrants and their descendants. This mission has led eventually led it to its expansion, growth, and impact within the places where it is present.

The Evangelical Congregational Church of Argentina has its National File of Cults number 447 and has registered a number of 100 branches. 90 more are still in formation and registration process, which would give an approximate number of 190 congregations spread among the provinces mentioned above. It should also be noticed that as part of the evangelizing and expansive task of the E.E.C.A., the denomination managed to expand to the south of Brazil and from there to Paraguay. Today, however, these are institutions independent of ours.



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The INSTITUTO SUPERIOR IGLESIA EVANGÉLICA CONGREGACIONAL D-252 it is our own seminary of theological formation. It is located in the city of Urdinarrain, Entre Ríos and it achieved official recognition in 2018 by the Ministry of Education of this province of Entre Ríos. It has also implemented a Teaching Staff in Sacred Sciences, under the following resolutions 1673/18 and 2680/18 granted by the General Council of Education of this province. The Institute also provides other trainings courses related to pastoral and theological work.

Our institution has two schools. One in the town of Maciá, Entre Ríos, “the Wesley Institute” dedicated to kindergarten and primary formation, and the other in the town of Dos de Mayo, Misiones, called San Pablo Institute, dedicated to kindergarten, primary and secondary formation. We highlight the work that the E.E.C.A carries out with children, women, young people, married couples, men, trying to cover the spiritual and formation needs of all possible areas.

It is also important to emphasize that our congregations and pastors have always been involved in the task of charity, social, and solidarity action in the face of the diverse needs present in the contexts of which they are part.

One of the great advances we have achieved as a Church is the recognition of the place of women within the pastoral body. Therefore, since the year 2015 the Evangelical Congregational Church also ordains women to the pastoral ministry. It has also formed ties of connection with other denominations such as ACIERA (Christian Alliance of the Evangelical Churches of the Argentine Republic). In addition, some of our pastors that are members of our pastoral body, take also part in other entities such as: Federal Board of Pastors, APER (ASSOCIATION OF PASTORS OF ENTRE RÍOS) and others.

In conclusion, these hundred years of history that have passed, fill us with pride and at the same time with responsibility, since as the motto we have adopted for this year says: *“One hundred years announcing the Good News”* speaks to us of a path travelled, but of a long road that still remains ahead for us announcing the good news of salvation to all humanity.