



THE CUMORAH FOUNDATION

Resources on LDS Church Growth and Missionary Work

April 2017

WELCOME!

The purpose of this newsletter is to provide monthly updates on LDS Church growth and missionary news stories, and present a synopsis of recently completed educational resources and research. We are a privately funded initiative that provides resources online without cost. The Cumorah Foundation is not authorized or approved by The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints or any other group.

CHURCH GROWTH DEVELOPMENTS

New Stakes

(provided with chronological ranking and date of creation)

- 11. Sherwood Park Alberta - April 9th, 2017
- 12. Oak Harbor Washington - April 23rd, 2017
- 13. Teshie Ghana - April 23rd, 2017

- Atlantic, Iowa (56th, 7,112)
- Klang, Malaysia (2nd, 879,867)
- Nijmegen, Netherlands (10th, 164,223)
- Chivay, Peru (N/A, ~5,000)

New Districts

- 3. Puebla Mexico Citlaltepētāl - April 16th, 2017
- 4. Akoupé Cote d'Ivoire - April 23rd, 2017

Discontinued Stakes and Districts

- 4. Parral Chile District

Locations Recently Reached by the Church

(city population rank, most recent population estimate)
precise population data from www.citypopulation.de

- Adeiso, Ghana (N/A, N/A)
- Asene, Ghana (N/A, N/A)
- Assin Adeimbra (N/A, N/A)
- Assin Anyabrem (N/A, N/A)
- Tlachichuca, Puebla, Mexico (79th, 7,574)
- Calderitas, Quintana Roo, Mexico (15th, 5,326)
- Lamar, Missouri (158th, 4,532)
- Gwagwalada, Nigeria (N/A, ~250,000)
- Ogbuebule Oboro, Nigeria (N/A, N/A)
- Ramenskoe, Russia (N/A, 109,709)

Locations Recently Closed by the Church

Cities where the only ward or branch was closed; some of these cities may continue to have a dependent unit and/or missionaries assigned.

(city population rank, most recent population estimate)
data from www.citypopulation.de

- Grass Valley, California (431st, 12,860)
- Istmina, Colombia (185th, 20,300)
- Quibdó, Colombia (45th, 108,100)

2016 Annual Statistical Report Released

The Church reported the following statistics as of December 31st, 2016:

- Membership: 15,882,417 (increase of 248,218 from 2015; a 1.59% annual increase)
- Congregations: 30,304 (increase of 288 from 2015; a 0.96% annual increase)
- Stakes: 3,266 (increase of 92 from 2015; a 2.90% annual increase)
- Districts: 556 (decrease of 2 from 2015; a 0.36% annual decrease)
- Missions: 421 (increase of 3 from 2015; a 0.72% annual increase)
- Convert Baptisms: 240,131 (decrease of 17,271 from 2015; a 6.71% annual decrease)
- Increase of Children on Record: 109,246 (decrease of 5,304 from 2015; a 4.63% annual decrease)
- Full-time missionaries: 70,946 (decrease of 3,133 from 2015; a 4.23% annual decrease)
- Church service missionaries: 33,965 (increase of 2,186 from 2015; a 6.88% annual increase)

The increase in the number of stakes constitutes the greatest positive development in the 2016 statistical report. The number of stakes increased by 2.90% during the year - the highest annual percentage growth rate for the Church since 1998. Improvements in leadership development outside North America and emphasis on reducing the number of congregations per stake in certain areas of the United States appear to primarily drive

accelerated stake growth in 2016. The number of church service missionaries also increased by 6.88% in 2016 compared to 2015.

Most indicators of church growth reported in the 2016 Statistical Report suggest slightly decelerating growth for the Church as a whole. An analysis of membership growth trends by country for the year indicate that slowing LDS growth rates in the United States, Mexico, Brazil, and Peru are the primary reason that LDS membership growth rates decelerated to a mere 1.59% for 2016 – the lowest since 1937. The Church in these four countries constitute 63% of LDS membership worldwide and therefore changes in LDS membership growth trends within these four nations significantly affect worldwide membership growth trends. Congregational growth rates also significantly declined in 2016 compared to 2015 (e.g. net increase of 288 congregations versus 395 congregations). The number of converts baptized, increase of children on record, and the number of full-time missionaries serving all declined compared to 2015 although these declines were slight (e.g. 4-7% decrease). Thus, the productivity of the Church as measured by converts baptized, increase of children on record, and full-time missionaries serving has appeared relatively unchanged or slightly less than 2015. The "double cohort" of full-time missionaries serving that resulted in the reduction in the minimum age for missionary service in late 2012 has appeared to have fully come to an end, resulting in no more artificial inflation in the number of members serving full-time missions. Thus, future changes in the number of missionaries serving will reflect the rate of members serving full-time missionaries.

Not all aspects of membership growth statistics reported in 2016 indicate negative developments. Fewer members appeared to have had their names removed from church records due to death, resignation, or excommunication during 2016. The difference between the summation of converts baptized and increase of children on record, and net increase in church membership was 101,159 in 2016. Although this is the third highest number for this statistic, it is less than what it was for 2015 (110,090) or 2016 (122,903).

Five New Temples Announced

The Church announced the construction of five new temples on April 2nd, 2017. These temples will be built in the following locations:

- Brasília, Brazil
- The greater Manila, Philippines, area
- Nairobi, Kenya
- Pocatello, Idaho
- Saratoga Springs, Utah

The official Mormon Newsroom Facebook page for the Philippines later reported that the new temple in the

greater Manila area will be built in Alabang, Muntinlupa City. Manila is now the second metropolitan area outside of the United States to have a second temple announced. The first city outside the United States to have two temples announced was Lima, Peru. The announcement of the new temples increases the total number of temples announced, under construction, or in operation to 182. Prior to the announcement, Kenya was previously the nation with the eleventh most Latter-day Saints without a temple.

Rapid LDS Growth in West Africa Continues

Missionaries serving in West Africa report that there were a total of 99 new stakes, districts, wards, and branches approved to be created in the Africa West Area during the first three months of 2017. Thus far, only 61 new stakes, districts, wards, and branches have been officially reported, indicating that as many as 38 new organizations may be created in the next month or two – not to mention an unknown number of additional units approved to be created during the month of April. Area leadership indicates that the Church in West Africa will reach 100 stakes by the year 2018. As there are currently 76 stakes in West Africa, there may be as many as 24 new stakes created within the next 12-18 months. LDS membership growth rates in West African nations continue to number among the most rapid in the world. The Church in Cote d'Ivoire, for example, reported an annual increase in church membership of 22.7% - the highest annual membership growth rate reported by the Church for a country with at least 30,000 members in more than two decades. Area leaders also note that they have been working to officially establish the Church in additional West African nations where no official LDS presence currently operates, such as Mali and Guinea.

First New Ward Organized in Ireland in More than 20 Years

Last Sunday, the Church in Ireland reorganized the Bray Branch as the Terenure 2nd Ward - the first time a branch has advanced into a ward in Ireland since the creation of the Dublin Ireland Stake more than 20 years ago. The advancement of the branch into a ward may be related to recent accelerated membership growth in Ireland. In 2016,



LDS membership in Ireland increased by 11%, whereas membership increased by over 12% in 2014. It is unclear whether this recent membership growth has been due to immigration, updates in membership records, or increases in the number of convert baptisms. There are now five wards and three branches in the Dublin Ireland Stake.

Church Planting Tactics in Bolivia – Four New Branches Created in One City on the Same Day

The Church in Tarija, Bolivia has appeared to implement a church-planting approach to growth as evidenced by the organization of four new branches within the city last weekend. The Church in Latin America for more than 15 years has avoided these types of tactics to achieve growth, whereas church planting tactics have been widely implemented by the Church in West Africa with often good results. The organization of several branches in one city within a single weekend suggests that this may be a pilot program to determine whether similar church planting approaches may be effective in other cities within Bolivia or Latin America. The Church organized its second stake in Tarija in 2016 and has recently reported the most rapid LDS congregational growth in Bolivia. Reports from recently returned full-time missionaries indicate that most wards in Tarija have between 100-200 active members.



LDS Congregations Strengthened in the Philippines



Dozens of recent member surveys from the Philippines indicate that the number of active members in most congregations is comparable to the average number of active members in many congregations in the United States (e.g. 100-300 members attending sacrament meeting). Furthermore, the Philippines Area Presidency reported that sacrament meeting attendance increased from approximately 116,000 in late 2011 to 146,000 in late 2015 - a 26% increase within four years. In contrast, LDS membership increased by 10% during this four-year period.

This signals significant improvements in regards to the self-sufficiency of congregations in the Philippines, especially given historically low member activity and convert retention rates. Approximately 20-25% of church-reported members in the Philippines regularly attend church.

First Full-time Missionary from Sao Tome and Principe Begins Mission

The first known member to serve a mission from Sao Tome and Principe recently began his missionary service in the Cape Verde Praia Mission. The member joined the Church in Cape Verde a couple years ago shortly after moving to Cape Verde with his family. Although mission leaders from the Angola Luanda Mission have visited Sao Tome and Principe, there is no branch or official LDS presence in Sao Tome and Principe notwithstanding widespread religious freedom, a predominantly Christian and Portuguese-speaking population.



Second Mandarin-Speaking Branch Organized in Hong Kong

After several years of preparation, the Church in Hong Kong organized its second Mandarin Chinese-speaking branch in April. There is now one Mandarin-speaking branch that administers Hong Kong Island and one Mandarin-speaking branch that services the Kowloon Peninsula and New Territories. Nearly all LDS congregations in Hong Kong conduct worship services in Cantonese or English. Missionaries who serve in Hong Kong report regular convert baptisms among Mandarin-speakers.



LDS Congregation Organized on Remote Brazilian Island

The Church held its first sacrament meeting for the newly organized Fernando de Noronha Group in April. There are approximately 10 active members on this small Brazilian island inhabited by 3,000 people.

UPDATED RESOURCES

During April 2017, we updated most of our country statistical profiles on cumorah.com to reflect LDS statistical data for 2016. These data can be accessed [here](#).

