



THE CUMORAH FOUNDATION

Resources on LDS Church Growth and Missionary Work

December 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)

64. Cochabamba Bolivia Aeropuerto – November 12th
65. Cochabamba Bolivia Blanco Galindo - November 12th
73. Abidjan Cote d'Ivoire Niangon Centre - December 3rd
74. Calabar Nigeria North - December 3rd
75. Freetown Sierra Leone East - December 3rd
76. Las Vegas Nevada Desert Foothills - December 3rd
77. American Fork Utah South - December 10th
78. Asamankese Ghana - December 10th
79. Caldwell Liberia - December 10th
80. Paynesville Liberia - December 10th
81. Santa Ana El Salvador Los Pinos - December 10th

New Districts

22. Kadoma Zimbabwe - December 10th, 2017
23. Mbombela South Africa - December 10th, 2017

Discontinued Stakes and Districts

6. Golden Colorado Stake

Locations Recently Reached by the Church

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

- Barra de São Miguel, Alagoas, Brazil (56th, 6,521)
- Santa Bárbara, Minas Gerais, Brazil (124th, 21,809)
- Sapé, Paraíba, Brazil (10th, 36,904)
- Warman, Saskatchewan, Canada (15th, 4,764)
- Lonquimay, Chile (N/A, N/A)
- Sant'Agata, Italy (N/A, 12,531)
- Buchanan, Liberia (3rd, 50,245)
- Greenville, Liberia (14th, 13,370)
- Harper, Liberia (8th, 23,517)
- Zwedru, Liberia (6th, 25,349)
- Mendenhall, Mississippi (104th, 2,504)

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

- Kootenay Bay, British Columbia, Canada (N/A, N/A)
- Mount Vernon, Iowa (86th, 4,506)
- Waverly, Iowa (39th, 9,874)

Eighty-One New Stakes Organized in 2017

Accelerated stake growth continued in 2017 albeit at a slightly slower pace than in 2016. The Church organized 81 new stakes and reported a net increase of 75 stakes during 2016 – a 2.30% annual increase. The number of new stakes organized, the net increase of stakes, and the annual percentage growth rate for stakes in 2017 is the second highest reported by the Church since 1998. Provided with the number of new stakes created in parentheses, locations where the Church organized the most new stakes during 2017 include Utah (9), Philippines (5), Bolivia (4), Ghana (4), Sierra Leone (4), Brazil (3), Cote d'Ivoire (3), El Salvador (3), Guatemala (3), Honduras (3), Liberia (3), Nevada (3), and Nigeria (3). The number of new stakes organized by world region for 2017 is as follows: United States/Canada (28), Africa (22), Central America (13), South America (10), Asia (6), Oceania (2), and Europe (0). Thirty-two percent of new stakes in 2017 were organized in the United States. Currently the Church reports 3,341 stakes worldwide.

Sacrament Meeting Attendance Improves in Some Congregations in the United Kingdom

Recent returned missionary survey data indicate that there has been an increase in sacrament meeting attendance in many congregations in the United Kingdom during the past five years. This is a positive development

especially since there has been a slight decline in LDS membership for the country in recent years.

Two New Stakes in Liberia

Three new stakes were organized from districts in Monrovia in 2017 – two of which were created in a single weekend in December. As a result, Monrovia is entirely serviced by four stakes. Never has the Church in a particular country grown from zero stakes to four stakes in so short a period of time (13 months). The Church reestablished a stake in Liberia in November 2016. The mission has recently reported approximately 100 convert baptisms a month.



The Church in Liberia has also reported rapid national outreach expansion for the first time. The official operation of the Church was restricted to the greater Monrovia metropolitan area from the late 1980s until 2007 when the first branches were organized in two additional cities, Harbel and Kakata. However, with the advancement of districts into stakes in Monrovia, the mission has begun to aggressively open congregations and assign missionaries to previously unreached cities. The mission recently opened member groups (small congregations that operate under the oversight of an official ward or branch) in five previously unreached cities including Buchanan, Greenville, Harper, Totota, and Zwedru (family group). Most, if not all, of these member groups appeared to be organized in 2017. Member groups in Buchanan and Totota opened in November, and the mission has since received approval to organize these groups as official branches. Over 30 attended the first sacrament meeting in Totota and over 40 people attended the first sacrament meeting in Buchanan. The mission continues to explore opportunities to open additional cities to proselytism and establish member groups in currently unreached locations. Approximately 60% of the full-time missionaries assigned to Liberia were Black Africans as of late 2017.

New Ward in Botswana

The Church in Botswana organized a new ward from the division of a previous ward. This marks the first time that the Church in Botswana has organized a new ward from the division of a previously operating ward since the creation of the Church's first stake in the country in Gaborone. Although the population appears to continue to be highly receptive to the Church, problems with visa restrictions have reduced the number of missionaries assigned and have slowed growth. There are now seven wards and six branches in Botswana.

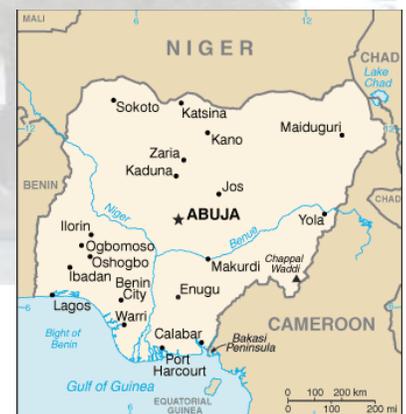
New Stake in Sierra Leone



The Church in Sierra Leone organized its fifth stake, the Freetown Sierra Leone East Stake, in December. The new stake was created from a division of the original Freetown Sierra Leone Stake – the first stake organized in the country and the 3,000th operating stake in the Church (organized in 2012). The Church organized four new stakes in Sierra Leone in 2017, making Sierra Leone the country that has gone from one stake to five stakes in the shortest amount of time in LDS history. Senior missionaries report that there are plans to organize a new district in the country in the near future from newly organized mission branches in the Sierra Rutile and Moyamba area. There are now five stakes and four districts in Sierra Leone.

101 New Wards/Branches in Nigeria for 2017

There was a net increase of 101 official congregations in Nigeria during 2017 – a 20% annual increase. These 101 new wards/branches were organized in the following Nigerian states/territories: Rivers (20), Edo (14), Akwa Ibom (10), Delta (9), Abia (8), Cross River (8), Abuja [Federal Capital Territory] (5), Ebonyi (5), Ondo (5), Benue (4), Imo (3), Lagos (3), Oyo (3), Plateau (3), and Anambra (1). Accelerations in congregational growth during 2017 in Nigeria has appeared primarily attributed to the establishment of branches in less-reached areas of several major cities in order to spur greater growth. Moreover, 16 additional cities or towns had an official branch organized for the first time during 2017. The last time the Church reported an annual net increase of 100 or more congregations in a single country (excluding the United States) was in the Philippines in 2000 when there was a net increase of 106 official congregations.



NEW/UPDATED RESOURCES

[Top 10 Most Encouraging and Top 10 Most Discouraging LDS Growth and Missionary Developments in 2017](#)

The year 2017 appears to primarily stand out for two developments: the rapid growth and expansion of the Church in West Africa, and the continued slowdown of LDS growth in the United States. This case study identifies 10 of the most encouraging LDS growth and missionary developments in 2017. Furthermore, the 10 most discouraging LDS growth and missionary developments during the year are also reported. Limitations to this case study are identified.

Sacrament Meeting Attendance Figures – LDS International Atlas

We are continuing to update our LDS International Atlas with additional sacrament meeting attendance figures obtained from thousands of returned missionary surveys and local member surveys. As a result, we have obtained estimated church attendance figures for a sizable minority or even a majority of congregations in many countries such as most of Europe and most Latin American countries. Access the atlas [here](#).

