



THE CUMORAH FOUNDATION

Resources on LDS Church Growth and Missionary Work

July 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)

31. Santa Cruz Bolivia Central - June 25th, 2017
33. Masatepe Nicaragua - July 9th, 2017
34. Mdantsane South Africa - July 9th, 2017
35. Potrerillos Honduras - July 16th, 2017
36. Santa Cruz Bolivia Viru Viru – July 23rd, 2017

New Districts

13. Polokwane South Africa - July 2nd, 2017
14. Otukpo Nigeria - July 16th, 2017

Discontinued Stakes and Districts

No discontinued stakes or districts reported in July 2017

Locations Recently Reached by the Church

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

- Jardinópolis, São Paulo, Brazil (176th, 34,650)
- Logouale, Cote d'Ivoire (65th, 21,294)
- Sinfra, Cote d'Ivoire (16th, 80,658)
- Afienya, Ghana (N/A, N/A)
- El Obrajuelo, Guatemala (N/A, N/A)
- San Francisco, Guatemala (N/A, N/A)
- San Rafael, Guatemala (N/A, N/A)
- Holualoa, Hawaii (35th, 8,538)
- Vijayawada, India (30th, 1,48 million)
- Bamako, Mali (1st, 3,050,000)
- Mountougoula, Mali (N/A, N/A)
- Koidu, Sierra Leone (4th, 124,662)
- Moyamba, Sierra Leone (17th, 10,249)
- Sierra Rutile area, Sierra Leone (N/A, N/A)
- Springtown, Texas (583rd, 2,658)
- Tsévié, Togo (7th, 51,989)

Locations Recently Closed by the Church

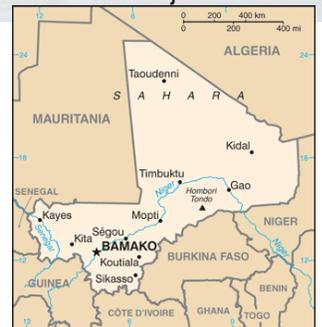
Cities where the only ward or branch was closed; some of these cities may continue to have a dependent unit and/or missionaries assigned.

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

- General Belgrano, Argentina (N/A, 17,365)
- Hyder, Arizona (N/A, N/A)
- Benalla, Australia (N/A, 9,328)
- Hayfork, California (845th, 2,368)
- Vauxhall, Alberta, Canada (109th, 1,222)
- Wallace, Idaho (104th, 784)
- Alexandria, Romania (45th, 42,129)

First LDS Branch in Mali

As reported last month, the Church approved to organize the first official branch in Mali. The Bamako Branch was organized under the jurisdiction of the Cote d'Ivoire Abidjan Mission. Also, a member group in Farako (Mountougoula) was also organized at the same time as the new branch. There have been approximately 40 members and investigators in attendance at the new member group since its organization. Members anticipate that the first full-time missionaries will arrive in Mali during August after the newly called mission president in the Cote d'Ivoire Abidjan Mission becomes adjusted to this calling and is ready to make this assignment. Only Bamako and areas immediately north, east, and south of the city are within the boundaries of the mission and branch. Otherwise, other areas of Mali remain under the administration of the Africa West Area Branch.



Rapid LDS Growth in Sierra Leone



Missionaries and members in Sierra Leone report that as many as five new stakes may be organized in the country within the next year. With the organization of the second stake in Sierra Leone in June 2017, the Church may experience the most rapid increase in the number of stakes in its history in a single

country where only one stake previously operated. Furthermore, many additional cities and towns have recently had member groups organized. Members and missionaries in Sierra Leone report that member groups now operate in Kailahun, Koidu, Moyamba, Mogbewa, Moriba Town, and Mosenesie. Several of these member groups have been approved to become official branches within the next few months. There are currently two stakes and six districts in Sierra Leone.

City Opens to Proselytism in India



The Church has recently opened the Indian city of Vijayawada (population: 1.48 million) to proselytism. A member group operates in the city and has recently had upwards of 27 attending church meetings. Vijayawada is the first previously unreached city in southern India to open to proselytism in

over a decade and appears to be the only city in the country without an official branch and full-time missionaries assigned.

Stake and Ward Realignments in Mexico

Major stake and ward realignments have recently occurred in several Mexican cities such as Puebla and Tijuana. Members and local church



leaders report that realignments have primarily occurred in order to better maximize meetinghouse space to conserve costs for maintaining facilities. Thus far, no stakes have been discontinued and one new stake and one new district have been organized – both of which were in the Puebla area. There has been a net decrease in the number of congregations since these changes have taken place due to the number of discontinued congregations exceeding the number of newly organized congregations.

First LDS Meetinghouse in Timor-Leste

The Church in Timor-Leste has recently completed renovating a building to use as its first official meetinghouse in the country. Over one hundred people visited an open house held at the end of July and approximately 25 students registered for free English classes. The next day, there were 17 in attendance



for church services in the Dili Group. No young, proselytizing missionaries have been assigned to serve in Timor-Leste although the country was dedicated for missionary work in 2015. It is unclear whether there are any legal obstacles that prevent the assignment of full-time missionaries as religious freedom is upheld by this predominantly Christian country of 1.3 million people.

LDS Congregations Organized in Four Previously Unreached Ivorian Cities



Within the past month, the Church in Cote d'Ivoire has organized branches in two previously unreached cities: Logouale and Sinfra. Sinfra was previously the third most populous city without an official LDS congregation. Local church leaders also report that congregations have recently been organized in

Adiaké and Agnibilekro although it is unclear whether these new congregations are member groups or branches. Additionally, church leaders indicate that there are plans to organize a new district in the Blankro area within the near future.

Progress in Guatemala

After a period of stagnant or declining congregational growth that persisted between 2000 and 2015, the Church in Guatemala has reported steady increases in the number of congregations. There has been a net increase of 18 congregations in Guatemala during the past 18 months (a 4.3% increase). Furthermore, several new stakes have also been organized in Guatemala during the past 18 months. Thus, the Church in Guatemala has appeared to finally reverse stagnant LDS growth trends despite struggles with convert attrition, member inactivity, and leadership development. There are currently 48 stakes, 15 districts, and 438 official congregations (283 wards, 155 branches).



Rapid Congregational Growth in Nigeria



The Church in Nigeria has reported a net increase of 54 wards and branches thus far in 2017 – a 10.8% increase within the first seven months of the year. This is the largest net increase of wards and branches in any country of the world outside of the United States since the Church reported rapid growth in the Philippines,

Brazil, and Mexico during the late 1990s. Growth has been primarily driven by the creation of new branches in lesser-reached areas of cities where an LDS presence has already been established such as Afikpo, Ogwashi-uku, Otukpo, and Port Harcourt. There are currently 554 official congregations (332 wards, 222 branches) in Nigeria.

Third Togolese City Opens to the Church



Missionaries serving in the West African nation of Togo report that a member group has been organized and missionaries have been assigned to Tsévié. Tsévié is the seventh most populous city in Togo and is the third city in the country to have an LDS presence established. The division of the original Lomé Togo Stake also appears imminent as the stake currently services 14 wards and 3 branches.

Rapid Congregational Growth in the DR Congo

The Church in the DR Congo has organized nine new wards and branches thus far in 2017. If this trend continues for the remainder of 2017, the Church in the DR will report an all-time high for the most new wards and branches organized in a single year. The previous record was in 2010 when 16 new wards and branches were



created. Mission leaders also continues to report rapid growth. During one weekend earlier this year, the DR Congo Kinshasa Mission reported over 100 convert baptisms throughout the mission. There are currently 178 official congregations (136 wards, 42 branches) in the DR Congo.

Rapid Growth in Rwanda

Missionaries in Rwanda report plans to organize two new branches in Kigali in the near future. Currently there are three branches in Kigali. Member activity rates in Rwanda are among the highest in the world at approximately 80-90%. There were 390 members in Rwanda as of year-end 2016.



NEW RESOURCES

LDS Growth in West Africa - Review and Projections

The Church in West Africa has experienced the most rapid growth of any world region within the past decade. Nearly all major indicators of LDS growth have demonstrated significant improvements during this period, such as increases in church-reported membership, congregations, stakes, districts, missions, convert baptisms, the number of countries with an official LDS presence, and the number of full-time missionaries serving from the area. Furthermore, convert retention and member activity rates have appeared to remain constant or improve during this period. Recent LDS growth trends in West Africa have mirrored rapid growth experienced by the Church in the Philippines and Latin America during the 1970s and 1980s. As a result, there appears a high likelihood that the Church in West Africa will replicate its rapid growth trends it reported in Latin America and the Philippines during the late twentieth century, but with higher self-sustainability and better convert retention and local leadership development outcomes.

This case study reviews historical LDS growth trends in West Africa since the official establishment of the Church in the late 1970s. These growth trends are analyzed in regards to the number of members, missions, congregations, stakes, districts, temples, and cities reached by the Church. LDS growth trends in several Latin American countries and the Philippines are also reviewed and compared to current LDS growth trends in West Africa. Projections for each of these LDS statistical measurements are provided. Limitations to this case study are identified.

