



THE CUMORAH FOUNDATION

Resources on Church Growth and Missionary Work for
The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints

June 2021

WELCOME!

The purpose of this newsletter is to provide monthly updates on the growth of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints 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)

18. Ijebu-Ode Nigeria - May 30th, 2021
19. Assomada Cape Verde - June 6th, 2021
20. Palhoça Brazil - June 6th, 2021
21. Heber City Utah Old Mill - June 6th, 2021
22. Hyrum Utah West - June 6th, 2021
23. Cococodji Benin - June 20th, 2021
24. Tagum Philippines - June 27th, 2021

New Districts

5. Quebec City Quebec - June 13th, 2021

Discontinued Stakes and Districts

2. Musashino Japan Stake
3. Saitama Japan Stake
4. Fujisawa Japan Stake
5. San Diego California North Stake
6. Santee California Stake

8. Ipoméia Brazil District

Locations Recently Reached by the Church

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

- Autazes, Amazonas, Brazil (23rd, 13,351)
- Borba, Amazonas, Brazil (20th, 14,434)
- Key Largo, Florida (302nd, 10,433)
- Moshi, Tanzania (11th, 184,292)
- Matagalemah, Sierra Leone (N/A)

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

- Chão Bom, Cape Verde (N/A, N/A)
- Dunkirk, Indiana (199th, 2,362)
- Lagos, Portugal (57th, 17,900)
- Olhão, Portugal (36th, 27,700)
- Kemerovo, Russia (30th, 532,884)
- Novokuznetsky, Russia (28th, 547,885)

The Urgent Need to Stabilize the Missionary Force in the Philippines—Goal Set to Reach 4,600 Full-time Filipino Missionaries

The Church in the Philippines launched an effort in May to significantly augment the number of Filipino members serving full-time missions during the next 18 months. Information about this effort, called “I will Go I will Serve” can be found [here](#). The Philippines Area Presidency’s goal is to have 4,600 Filipino full-time missionaries serving in the Philippines by December 2022. The initiative, was prompted by 1,700 foreign missionaries serving in the Philippines leaving the country due to the COVID-19 pandemic. Currently, the Church in the Philippines has approximately 1,900 members serving full-time missions—many of whom are nearing the end of their missions. This indicates that the average mission in the



Philippines has only 83 full-time missionaries. Only half of the Church's wards and branches in the Philippines have full-time missionaries assigned due to a significant shortage in missionaries available. It appears that many Filipino youth single adults have postponed missionary service due to the COVID-19 pandemic. The Church's missions in the Philippines nevertheless appear productive. For example, the article provided a statistic that the Philippines Butuan Mission reported a 1,000% increase from the month in 2018 with the fewest convert baptisms to the month in 2021 with the highest number of convert baptisms. If the Church is successful with this goal to reach 4,600 full-time missionaries by late 2022, then the average mission in the Philippines would have 200 full-time missionaries.

This initiative has tremendous potential to strengthen the Church in the Philippines due to developing greater self-sufficiency in missionary manpower to staff the Church's 23 missions. Furthermore, this effort also has medium-term ramifications with providing more local leadership from returned missionaries in the years ahead. The Church in the Philippines reports low member activity rates overall. For example, the 2015 census counted 196,303 Latter-day Saints in the Philippines, or 27% of Church-reported membership as of year-end 2015. Nevertheless, there has been tremendous progress with augmenting sacrament meeting attendance within the past decade. For example, sacrament meeting attendance increased from 116,000 in late 2011 to 146,000 in late 2015—a 26% increase within four years. In contrast, official Church-reported membership in the Philippines increased by only 10% during this four-year period. Additionally, the number of full-time missionaries assigned to the Philippines increased from 2,600 in early 2013 to 4,300 in early 2014 (at the time, the average mission had 205 full-time missionaries). Also, there were 2,425 Filipino members serving full-time missions in early 2013. Finally, the Church in the Philippines continues to experience steady progress with districts advancing into stakes—a major indicator of improved local leadership development and member activity as stakes have certain requirements to operate which are more stringent than for mission districts. There were 80 stakes and 85 districts in the Philippines in 2010, whereas there are currently 121 stakes and 58 districts in the Philippines (a 51.3% increase in stakes and a 31.8% decrease in districts). Four new stakes have been organized in the Philippines thus far in 2021 with plans to organize at least one more new stake from a district later this month (the Sipocot Philippines Stake from the Pamplona Philippines District). Despite this progress, congregational growth rates continue to lag behind membership growth rates as evidenced by the average number of members per ward/branch increasing from 577 in 2009 to 650 in 2019. However, some of this increase is due to increases in the number of active members per ward/branch in the Philippines. For example, only 45.2% of official

congregations in the Philippines were wards in 2009, whereas 58.2% of official congregations in the Philippines were wards in 2019.

Second Stake Created in Benin



The Church organized its second stake in the West African nation of Benin. The Cococodji Benin Stake was organized from the Cococodji Benin District (organized in 2018) and the Cotonou Benin Stake (organized in 2016). The Church in Benin has achieved rapid growth and excellent member activity and convert retention rates. For example, members reported that the Cotonou Benin Stake had more than 80% of its members regularly attending Church in early 2021, and nearly an equal percentage of converts baptized in the past year continued to

regularly attend church meetings. The Church reported a mere 11 members in Benin as of year-end 2004. Half of the Church's 4,000+ members in Benin have joined the Church within the past 6-7 years. There are now 13 wards and 6 branches in Benin. Much of the Church's success in Benin appears attributed to the proactive decision to organize the Benin Cotonou Mission in 2011 at a time when there were less than 1,000 members in the country—a rarity for the Church in Africa within the past couple decades. Typically, the Church in Africa organizes its first mission in a country once there are approximately 2,000 members or more.

Significant Stake Consolidation in Tokyo, Japan



The Church discontinued three stakes in the Tokyo metropolitan area during June, namely the Musashino Japan Stake, the Saitama Japan Stake, and the Fujisawa Japan Stake. The decision to discontinue the stakes did not appear to be due to a sudden drop in member activity or membership, but it has been

the result of steady ward and branch consolidations for approximately the past two decades. Thus, stakes in the city were beginning to not have enough congregations to properly function. Furthermore, the Asia North Area has also focused on establishing congregations which have significantly more active members than previously such as in South Korea. Although three stakes were discontinued, the Church only closed half a dozen

congregations as part of this realignment and consolidation of congregations and stakes. The Church in Japan has reported positive membership growth every year in the past decade, although annual membership growth rates have been less than one percent since 2003. The Church in Japan has annually reported negative or zero congregational growth rates every year since 2000. The number of stakes in Japan has decreased from an all-time high of 31 in 2000 to 25 at present. The number of missions in Japan has fallen more significantly from 10 between 1991-1995 to 6 since 2019.

Fourth Stake Created in Cabo Verde



The Church organized its fourth stake in the island nation of Cabo Verde (Cape Verde). The Assomada Cape Verde Stake was organized from the Assomada Cape Verde District (organized in 2015) and the Praia Cape Verde Stake (organized in 2012). The Church in Cabo Verde has achieved significant

progress within the past decade going from three districts with very slow membership growth rates and stagnant congregational growth rates to four stakes and one district at present. Although stagnant congregational growth rates have persisted since 2016, the Church in Cabo Verde continues to report moderate annual membership growth rates of 5% or higher since 2011. In contrast, the Church in Cabo Verde reported annual membership growth rates of 1-4% between 2003 and 2010. The Church announced its first temple in Cabo Verde in 2018 which is currently under construction in Praia.

New Branches Organized in Zambia—First New Branches in the Country since 2015

The Church in Zambia recently organized two new branches in the city of Ndola—the first time the Church has organized a new branch in Zambia since 2015. The Church in Zambia has generally reported slow membership growth since its initial establishment approximately 30 years ago. Other nontraditional Christian



groups with a strong proselytism focus have significantly more members in Zambia than Latter-day Saints. For example, Seventh-Day Adventists reported 1.3 million members and 7,095 congregations in 2018, whereas Jehovah’s Witnesses reported 223,720 members and 3,402 congregations in 2019. In contrast, Latter-day Saints reported 4,681 members in 2019.

Branches Discontinued in Russia

The Church recently discontinued two branches in Russia in Siberia. The branches functioned in Kemerovo and Novokuznetsky. These branches have historically depended on Church leaders in other cities or full-time missionaries to function, and they numbered among the most recently organized branches in Siberia. The ongoing COVID-19 pandemic and difficulties with the Church’s restrictions in Russia due to limited religious freedom have likely impacted the closure of the branches, although Church services may continue to occur as member groups under the supervision of branches in neighboring cities. The Church no longer publishes membership information from Russia given restrictions on religious freedom. However, information remains available regarding the Church’s congregations and organizations in Russia.

