



THE CUMORAH FOUNDATION

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

May 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)

13. Bindura Zimbabwe - April 28th, 2021
14. Jyväskylä Finland - May 16th, 2021
15. Farmington Hills Michigan - May 23rd, 2021
16. Marikina Philippines East - May 23rd, 2021
17. Cauayan Philippines - May 30th, 2021

New Districts

4. Campo Maior Brazil - May 2nd, 2021

Discontinued Stakes and Districts

5. Vanadzor Armenia District
6. Yerevan Armenia District
7. Chişinău Moldova District

Locations Recently Reached by the Church

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

- Colbun, Chile (N/A, 6,995)
- Guiglo, Cote d'Ivoire (27th, 52,544)
- Kikwit, DR Congo (10th, 294,210)
- San Luis Jilotepeque, Guatemala (133rd, 11,675)
- Shirakawa, Japan (N/A, 76,120)
- Holly Ridge, North Carolina (388th, 1,268)
- Wahpeton, North Dakota (11th, 7,766)
- Tipp City, Ohio (188th, 9,689)
- Catmon, Philippines (N/A, ~30,000)
- Pine Ridge, South Dakota (24th 3,308)
- Princeton, Texas (306th, 6,807)
- Willis, Texas (349th, 5,662)

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

- Alaverdi, Armenia (22nd, 12,600)
- Ashtarak, Armenia (19th, 16,900)
- Charentsavan, Armenia (10th, 20,500)
- Gyumri, Armenia (2nd, 113,800)
- Hrazdan, Armenia (7th, 40,500)
- Savonlinna, Finland (28th, 23,555)
- Seinäjoki, Finland (17th, 41,213)
- Treviso, Italy (64th, 82,807)
- Brighton, Michigan (147th, 7,444)
- Balti, Moldova (3rd, 144,000)
- Orhei, Moldova (9th, 33,500)
- Sidney, Ohio (78th, 21,229)
- Chaves, Portugal (62nd, 16,600)
- Mirandela, Portugal (96th, 9,960)

Six Branches and Two Districts Discontinued in Armenia

The Church in Armenia recently discontinued six of its 10 branches in a dramatic development that has indicated continued problems with local leadership development and member activity rates. Due to these changes, the average branch in Armenia now has more than 900 members on the records—an unheard of number for Eastern Europe where most of the Church's congregations have few members on the records even in nations with low member activity rates (e.g., the Church in Russia reported an average of 240 members per congregation in 2018). Furthermore, the Church in Armenia also discontinued both districts and has the remaining four branches under the supervision of the Armenia/Georgia Mission. The situation for the Church in

Armenia is truly unparalleled for any nation of the Church in modern times in which just five years ago a stake had operated in Yerevan, whereas now there are only four branches for the entire country. Returned missionaries have consistently reported that corruption in Church leadership, specifically in regard to the mishandling of Church finances, was one of the major catalysts for the Church's implosion in what was once considered the Church's greatest success story in Central Asia and the Caucasus.



New Stake Created in Finland



The Church organized its first new stake in Finland since 1983. The Jyväskylä Finland Stake was organized from three districts and two wards from neighboring stakes in southern Finland. Of the five wards in the new stake, three were organized from branches in the former districts. Use of technology and steady or increasing numbers of active members in northern Finland appear primarily responsible for the creation of the new stake. The Church in Finland has one of the highest member activity rates in the developed world (as high as 50%

attending Church regularly, 66% of Church-reported membership self-affiliated on the census in 2015) which is attested by the Church operating three stakes in the country even though there are slightly less than 5,000 members on the records. However, the Church closed two branches as part of the new stake's creation—a significant negative development considering the last time the Church had discontinued a congregation in Finland was in 2006. Nevertheless, the Church in Finland has roughly maintained the same number of congregations in Finland (approximately 30) for decades, whereas the Church in most European nations has experienced a significant consolidation of wards and branches since 2000.

Rare Insights into Official Church Statistics for Active Membership in Utah

The Church recently published an article in The Church News about the Church's Utah Area. The article contained a rare statement about the number of active members in the Church in Utah in comparison to the

number of active members who live elsewhere. This article referred Craig C. Christensen as follows:

The Utah Area is the Church's largest in terms of membership and activity, with more than 2 million Latter-day Saints participating in nearly 630 stakes. While that is only 13% of the Church's 16.6 million membership worldwide, the Utah Area accounts for about a fourth of the Church's active-attendance totals, Elder Christensen said.

This statement provides valuable information about official membership activity rates in that member activity rates in Utah are double the member activity rates outside of Utah. Thousands of surveys completed by returned missionaries, church leaders, and ordinary members from around the world support these statistics in that as of the early 2010s approximately 40% of membership in the United States regularly attended Church, whereas only approximately 25% of Church membership outside of the United States regularly attended Church. Previous statements by Church leaders have noted that Utah has had one of the highest member activity rates in the worldwide Church, and it is likely that this activity rate is approximately 50%.

First New Stake Created in Michigan Since 1979

The Church in Michigan organized its first stake since 1979. The new stake, the Farmington Hills Michigan Stake, was organized from the division of multiple stakes in the Detroit metropolitan area. Although the Church in Michigan went more than 40 years without a new stake being organized, the number of congregations in the Church in Michigan has increased overall during this period from 75 in 1987 to 96 as of year-end 2019 (all-time high for the number of congregations was reached in 2007 at 108). There are now nine stakes and one district in Michigan.

First Branch Created in Kikwit, DR Congo



In a major development for the Church in the DR Congo, a new branch was organized in the major city of Kikwit. Kikwit was the second most populous city in the DR Congo without an official branch prior to the creation of the new branch in May. Kikwit is the city with the 10th largest population according to the most

recent population figures available from 2004. Kikwit is the first city between the Kasai Region (the area of the DR Congo that has experienced the most rapid Latter-day Saint growth) and Kinshasa to have an official

congregation. However, Kikwit is the Church's second branch in Kwilu Province where the Church organized its first branch in early 2020 in the city of Bandundu.

Church's District in Moldova Discontinued—Branches Now Only Remain in Chisinau

The Church discontinued two of its four branches in Moldova and also closed the Chisinau Moldova District—the only district for the entire country. The Church in Moldova has reported slow growth since its initial establishment in the late 1990s. As of 2019, there were only 430 members of the Church in Moldova. It is likely that the recent COVID-19 pandemic has negatively impacted the Church in Moldova due to disrupted missionary operations, particularly in small congregations that have historically relied heavily on foreign full-time missionaries to operate, namely Balti and Orhei. It is unclear whether member groups may continue to function in these cities. Moldova pertains to the Ukraine Kyiv/Moldova Mission.



New Stakes Created in the Philippines

The Church in the Philippines has organized several new stakes since the beginning of 2021. In March, the Church created the Imus Philippines Stake from a division of the Bacoor Philippines Stake. In late May, the Church organized two stakes, namely the Marikina Philippines East Stake (organized from two stakes) and the Cauayan Philippines Stake (organized from one district). There are now 120 stakes and 59 districts in the Philippines. Moreover, we have also received reports that the Pamplona Philippines District will be organized into the Sipocot Philippines Stake in July 2021. The Church in the Philippines has successfully achieved steady, consistent growth in the number of stakes during the past decade as there were only 80 stakes 85 districts in 2010. Significant progress has



especially occurred with districts maturing into stakes since 2010.

New Branch Created in Japan in Previously Unreached City

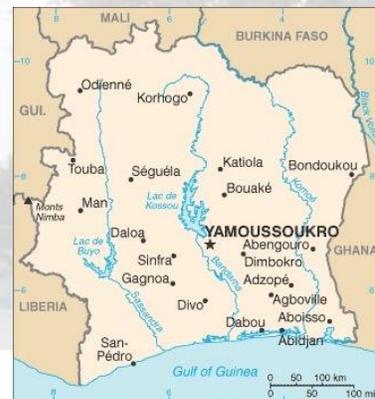


The Church in Japan organized a new branch in a city where no branch previously operated. The Shirakawa Branch was organized under the Koriyama Japan District. The last time the Church organized a new branch in a city where no branch

previously operated was in Higashihiroshima in 2015 (the Saijo Branch). Nevertheless, the Church in Japan has continued to experience a steady decline in the number of congregations and the number of cities with an official Church presence. For example, the number of congregations in Japan has decreased by 25 during the past decade.

New Branch Created in Previously Unreached City in Cote d'Ivoire

The Guiglo Branch was recently organized—the first time the Church in Cote d'Ivoire has organized a new branch in a city where no branches previously operated since the COVID-19 pandemic began. Guiglo was the fifth most populous city without a branch prior to the creation of the



new branch. Guiglo was inhabited by 52,544 people and ranks as the 27th most populous city in the country based upon 2014 government statistics. There are now nearly 60 cities, towns, and villages in Cote d'Ivoire with an official ward or branch. In contrast, there were only eight cities, towns, and villages with an

official ward or branch in 2011.

Branches Discontinued in Portugal

The Church discontinued two branches in Portugal in the Porto Portugal Stake which operated in the cities of Chaves and Mirandela. The Mirandela Branch was organized in 2013, whereas the Chaves Branch was created in 2014. These branches were created during the time of national outreach expansion for the Church in Portugal during the early to mid-2010s. However, the Church in Portugal has since resumed its historical trend of unit consolidations. The average ward or branch in Portugal had 680 members in 2019 – one of the highest ratios in Europe – due to low member activity rates resulting in difficulties with being able to organize and maintain more congregations.



NEW/UPDATED RESOURCES

REACHING THE NATIONS COUNTRY PROFILES

We continue to update the country profiles for our comprehensive work, *Reaching the Nations: International Church Growth Almanac*. The following country profiles were updated and posted on our website, www.cumorah.com, during April. We will continue to update additional country profiles in the coming months, with the goal to release the next edition of the almanac in 2022:

- [Benin](#)
- [Cameroon](#)
- [Togo](#)