



LDS Growth Case Studies

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Metropolitan Areas with the Most Stakes without a Temple

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Overview

Metropolitan areas offer some of the most cost-effective opportunities for church growth and missionary work due to high population densities. The Church has taken advantage of proselytizing major cities around the world and oftentimes reports higher percentages of members in metropolitan areas than in small cities, towns, and rural areas as mission resources have been more regularly assigned to metropolitan areas than elsewhere. Centers of strength for the Church have emerged in many of the world's metropolitan areas that consist of tens of thousands of members, multiple stakes, and one or more missions headquartered within the same urban area.

The Church has frequently selected metropolitan areas for constructing new temples due to large numbers of temple-going members concentrated within small geographical areas, adequate numbers of local members to staff temple personnel, and accessibility for membership residing within the metropolitan area and in surrounding areas. 17 of the 31 temples (55%) announced by President Monson during the first five years of his presidency were located in cities or metropolitan areas where there were four or more stakes at the time of the temple announcement. Notwithstanding efforts by the Church to bring temples closer to church membership, there are 30 metropolitan areas or cities that have four or more stakes without a temple.

This case study identifies metropolitan and urban areas around the world with four or more stakes and no LDS temple. Factors that influence temple announcements are identified and reviewed. Reasons that temples have not been announced in metropolitan areas and cities with four or more stakes are examined. Future prospects for additional metropolitan areas to receive temples concludes this case study.

Distribution of Metropolitan Areas with Four or More Stakes without a Temple

In early 2013, there were 30 metropolitan areas that had four or more stakes and no temple. Of the 30 cities with four or more stakes without an LDS temple, nine were in Brazil (Belem, Belo Horizonte, Brasilia, Joao Pessoa, Maceio, Natal, Salvador, Santos, and Sorocaba), seven were in other South American countries (Mendoza, Argentina; La Paz, Bolivia; Santa Cruz, Bolivia; Viña del Mar, Chile; Quito, Ecuador; Chiclayo, Peru; and Maracaibo, Venezuela), five were in the United States (Colorado Springs, Colorado; Tampa, Florida; Blackfoot, Idaho; Pocatello, Idaho; and Heber City, Utah), four were in Central America (San Pedro Sula, Honduras; Puebla, Mexico; Torreon, Mexico; and Managua, Nicaragua), two were in Africa (Abidjan, Cote d'Ivoire and Benin City, Nigeria), two were in Oceania (Pago Pago, American Samoa and Auckland, New Zealand) and one was in the Caribbean (Port-au-Prince, Haiti).

Provided with the number of stakes in parentheses as of early 2013, cities without a temple ranked in order from the most to least stakes include Pocatello (11), Auckland (10), Puebla (9), La Paz (8), San Pedro Sula (8), Santa Cruz (7), Vina del Mar (7), Chiclayo (6), Quito (6), Belo Horizonte (5), Benin City (5), Blackfoot (5), Brasilia (5), Abidjan (5), Belem (5), Maracaibo (5), Pago Pago (5), Santos (5), Tampa (5), Torreon (5), Colorado Springs (4), Heber City (4), Joao Pessoa (4), Maceio (4), Managua (4), Mendoza (4), Natal (4), Port-au-Prince (4), Sorocaba (4), and Salvador (4).

A map displaying the locations of metropolitan areas and cities with four or more stakes and no temple can be found [here](#).

Age of Stakes in Metropolitan Areas with Four or More Stakes and No Temple

The cities with the oldest average age for stakes within their respective cities were Blackfoot (1958), Heber City (1960), Pocatello (1964), Colorado Springs (1982), Vina del Mar (1983), and Tampa (1983). The cities with the youngest average age for stakes within their respective cities were Port-au-Prince (2006), Abidjan (2005), Benin City (2004), Managua (2003), Belem (2001), and Natal (2001).

Factors Correlated with Temple Announcements

Factors correlated with temple announcements include distance to the nearest temple, the number of stakes and districts potentially serviced by a new temple, temple attendance trends for the given area, whether a mission operates in the city, and whether there are any stakes that have operated for 30 years or more that function in a city. Latter-day Saints believe that the ultimate decision to construct a temple is determined by revelation to the President of the Church. However, other factors contribute to recommendations and proposals for new temples.

Distance to the Nearest Temple

One of the strongest predictors for the construction of new temples is distance from current temples. LDS Church President Thomas S. Monson noted that "we desire that as many members as possible have an opportunity to attend the temple without having to travel inordinate distances."^[1] Reducing the distance that members must travel to attend the temple has been a significant contributor to temple construction in recent years. In 2009, President Monson related, "worldwide, 83 percent of our members live within 200 miles (320 km) of a temple. That percentage will continue to increase as we construct new temples around the world."^[2]

Number of Stakes and Districts Serviced by a Potential Temple

Increasing numbers of stakes is highly correlated with the announcement of new temples. Elder Dallin H. Oaks observed "every stake created improves the probability that there will be a temple."^[3] Many new temples announced within the past decade were in areas of the world where previously operating temples had the most stakes within their temple districts. For example, the temple district of the Guatemala City Guatemala Temple serviced over 100 stakes and districts for many years as it was the sole temple in Central America between 1984 and 1999. By early 2013, temples had been completed in San Jose Costa Rica (1999), Panama City Panama (2008), San Salvador El Salvador (2011), Quetzaltenango Guatemala (2011), and Tegucigalpa Honduras (2013). The organization of new stakes in metropolitan areas frequently improve prospects of a temple announcement.

Temple Attendance Trends

The current number of temple recommend holders and the frequency at which they attend the temple play an important role in new temple announcements. When speaking regarding the possibility of constructing a temple in Cebu, Philippines, former Church President Gordon B. Hinckley remarked, "You have expressed a desire to have a temple in Cebu. It is a long distance and a very expensive journey to go to the temple in Manila. But temples are very costly to build and to maintain. Per square foot, they cost three times as much as a beautiful stake center. We must be sure that there will be enough patrons to justify another temple before we build one."^[4]

Mission Headquartered in City

Many metropolitan areas with temples also have a mission headquartered in the same city. In April 2013, 148 of the 170 temples of the Church (87%) were located in metropolitan areas or cities that had a mission. The concurrence of missions and temples in the same locations is rooted in the Church establishing a center of strength that consists of sizable numbers of active members and church leaders to provide full-time missionary and temple support.

Presence of "Old" Stakes

Some metropolitan areas and cities with four or more stakes that have had temples announced have a larger number of stakes organized before 1985 than in metropolitan areas and cities with four or more stakes that do not have a temple. The Church has appeared to favor some locations with a long-term church presence and an established community of members and leaders, especially within the United States and Canada.

Reasons for Why Temples Have Not Been Announced for Some Metropolitan Areas with Four or More Stakes

Reasons for why temples have not been announced or constructed in some cities and metropolitan areas with four or more stakes varies by world region.

In Brazil and Latin America, low member activity rates and fluctuating temple attendance numbers appear the primary reason for why many metropolitan areas with four or more stakes currently have no temples. Church leaders have emphasized the importance of regular temple attendance in order construct more temples closer to church members. A lack of financial self-sufficiency in meeting meetinghouse and temple construction needs in Latin America has likely contributed to fewer temples in Latin America compared to locations where the Church appears to exhibit higher financial self-sufficiency. For example, Canada has a GDP per capita of \$41,500 (2012 estimate)^[5] and the Church in Canada has less than 200,000 members but has nine temples (eight operating, one announced). On the other hand, Brazil as a GDP per capita of \$12,000^[6] and the Church has over one million members but only seven temples (six operating, one under construction). Member activity rates and temple attendance trends also contribute to this dramatic difference in temple outreach as member activity rates in Canada and Brazil are estimated at 35% and 25%, respectively.

In Oceania, the two cities/metropolitan areas without a temple are within close proximity of temples. Members from the five stakes in Pago Pago, American Samoa can access the temple in nearby Apia, Samoa with relatively little difficulty if properly planned as distance traveled is less than 100 miles. However, travel between these two islands can be inconvenient as it must be done by ship or airplane. Temple trips to the Hamilton New Zealand Temple for members in the 12 stakes in Auckland can be accomplished in half a day as distance traveled is less than 100 miles. Both Pago Pago and Auckland appear likely for future temple announcements due to sufficient numbers of temple-going members, inconveniences attending currently assigned temples, and moderate utilization of operating temples by stakes and districts assigned to the temple districts.

In Sub-Saharan Africa, rapid membership growth, few members who have attended the temple, political instability, safety concerns, and poverty are barriers that have likely delayed the announcement of additional temples. In Abidjan, political instability and difficulty securing a sufficient parcel of land to construct a temple appear the primary barriers to a temple announcement. Recent civil war has disrupted church operations. Prospects for a temple in Abidjan appear favorable. The Church in Cote d'Ivoire benefits from unusually high temple attendance and participation among countries without a temple. In 2013, church leaders reported that three of the five stakes in Abidjan rank among the top 25 stakes in the Church for 2012 that had the highest percentage of adult members who have submitted family names for temple ordinances. One stake - the Cocody Stake - had the highest percentage of any stake in the entire Church. Each of the five Abidjan stakes makes two temple trips a year (one for families and one for youth) with approximately 100 members on each trip to the Accra Ghana Temple notwithstanding the difficulties of traveling by bus and across an international border.^[7] In Nigeria, relatively close proximity to the Abuja Nigeria Temple reduces the need for a temple in Benin City. A temple announcement for Benin City will likely occur if temple attendance trends demand a second temple in Nigeria and if there is sufficient political stability. Past political instability has influenced the operation of the Abuja Nigeria Temple in the past, requiring its temporary closure for a period lasting several months.

In the United States, close proximity to operating temples has deterred temple announcements for the five metropolitan areas or cities with four or more stakes. All five of these cities and metropolitan areas are within 100 miles of a temple. Temple announcements will be more likely once temples that service these metropolitan areas and cities are unable to accommodate the number of temple patrons.

In the Caribbean, political instability, poverty, and the relatively small size of the Church pose barriers for constructing a temple in Port-au-Prince. Greater political and economic stability will likely be required in order for a temple announcement to become more likely in Port-au-Prince as many are unable to meet their basic humanitarian and living needs.

Limitations

The Church has no set criteria for the announcement of new temples. Factors that contribute to temple announcements included in this case study were identified through analyzing previous temple announcements made by the Church and collecting statements regarding the construction of prospective temples from general church leaders. Consequently some factors correlated with temple announcements do not directly influence the decision by church leaders to construct a temple. The Church does not publish information on a list of metropolitan areas and cities that are under consideration for future temples. Data on temple attendance is not published by the Church. Inferences on the utilization of current temples is extrapolated from endowment session schedules and isolated member and missionary reports.

Future Prospects

The outlook for the Church to announce new temples in metropolitan areas and cities with four or more stakes appears highly favorable considering slightly more than half of temple announcements since 2008 were in metropolitan areas or cities with four or more stakes. Within the next decade, the number of temples announced in metropolitan areas and cities with four or more stakes will likely depend on the number of overall temples the Church announces. Although predicting the location of new temple announcements is difficult, prospects appear most favorable for the following metropolitan areas and cities to have a temple announced within the near future: Mendoza, Argentina; Brasilia, Brazil; Abidjan, Cote d'Ivoire; Quito, Ecuador; Pocatello, Idaho; Puebla, Mexico; Auckland, New Zealand; and Managua, Nicaragua. Many metropolitan areas with two or three stakes appear likely to have additional stakes organized within the next five years and consequently will become more likely to have future temple announcements such as Bakersfield, California; Lubumbashi, the Democratic Republic of the Congo; Jacksonville, Florida; Antananarivo, Madagascar; Culiacán, Mexico; Lagos, Nigeria; Charlotte, North Carolina; and Harare, Zimbabwe.

[1] Monson, Thomas S. "Welcome to Conference," General Conference, October 2009.
<https://www.lds.org/general-conference/2009/10/welcome-to-conference>

[2] Monson, Thomas S. "Welcome to Conference," General Conference, October 2009.
<https://www.lds.org/general-conference/2009/10/welcome-to-conference>

[3] Kellerstrass, Jack and Pamela. "First Stake in India Organized," Liahona, October 2012.
<https://www.lds.org/liahona/2012/10/first-stake-in-india-organized>

[4] "Notable progress in the Philippines," LDS Church News, 30 April 2005.
<http://www.ldschurchnews.com/articles/47240/Notable-progress-in-the-Philippines.html>

[5] "Canada", CIA World Factbook, retrieved 22 March 2013.
<https://www.cia.gov/library/publications/the-world-factbook/geos/ca.html>

[6] "Brazil", CIA World Factbook, retrieved 22 March 2013.
<https://www.cia.gov/library/publications/the-world-factbook/geos/br.html>

[7] Warner, Terry and Susan. "Apostle visits Ivory Coast, is 'impressed with exceptional spirit," LDS Church News, 2 March 2013. <http://www.ldschurchnews.com/articles/63289/Apostle-visits-Ivory-Coast-is-impressed-with-exceptional-spirit.html>