

LDS Growth Encyclopedia on Missionary Work and Church Growth (Missiology)

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Missionary Training Center

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A missionary training center (MTC) is a facility where newly set apart missionaries receive gospel and proselytism training before entering the mission field. MTCs also provide foreign language instruction for missionaries assigned to serve in a second language. The Church calls couples to serve as the president of each of its 15 MTCs around the world. MTC presidents generally serve for two to three years. In late 2012, there were 15 MTCs around the world based in 15 countries (Argentina, Brazil, Chile, Colombia, Dominican Republic, Ghana, Guatemala, Mexico, New Zealand, Peru, the Philippines, South Africa, Spain, the United Kingdom, and the United States). Additional MTCs once operated in Japan, Samoa, South Korea, and Tonga [1] but were decommissioned between the late 1990s and late 2000s. In late 2012, church value leaders reported that the duration of training at MTCs would be reduced by approximately one-third in order to accommodate anticipated increases in the missionary force.[2] Prior to this announcement, missionaries received training from three to 12 weeks depending on the difficulty of mission language studied.

In 1925, LDS missionaries began receiving training at the beginning of their missions in a mission home in Salt Lake City, Utah. [3] In 1961, the Church established the Language Training Mission initially at Brigham Young University and later at church colleges in Idaho and Hawaii to meet foreign language study needs for missionaries called to serve foreign language-speaking missions.[4] The Church established its first MTC in Provo, Utah in the early 1970s and its first international MTCs in Sao Paulo, Brazil and Hamilton, New Zealand in 1977.[5] In the early 2000s, the Provo MTC provided foreign language education in approximately 50 languages and could accommodate up to 4,000 missionaries at a time. During most of the 2000s and early 2010s prior to the announcement reducing the minimum age for missionary service, the number of missionaries at the Provo MTC generally averaged around 2,000. In 2010, the Church reported that the Provo MTC could accommodate only 3,000 missionaries.[6] Other MTCs provide missionary training in Cebuano, French, German, Italian, Portuguese, Samoan, Spanish, Tagalog, and Tongan.[7] In 2010, missionaries attending MTCs in Argentina, Brazil, Ghana, South Africa, the United Kingdom, and the United States received their full missionary training before entering the field at these MTCs unless visa issues delayed the arrival of foreign missionaries to these centers. Phased training occurs in MTCs in the Dominican Republic, Guatemala, Peru, and Spain which require foreign missionaries to attend basic language training at the Provo MTC and then complete the remainder of their training at the MTC within or near the nation they are serving in. In 2010, MTCs in Colombia, Chile, Mexico, New Zealand, and the Philippines solely met the needs of missionaries from these or other nearby nations.[8] In 2010, one-third of LDS missionaries entering the field were trained in MTCs outside the United States.[9] In 2011, all MTCs were located nearby a temple to permit missionaries to attend the temple regularly during their training and to provide the opportunity for members residing in nations without an LDS temple to receive their own temple endowments. Due to the massive influx in the number of full-time missionaries serving in the early 2010s, the Church began training North American missionaries in essentially all 15 MTCs.

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Missionaries who do not receive language training only receive proselytism training during their two to three week stay at a MTC. Proselytism training consists of gospel study centered on the five missionary lessons in Preach My Gospel, personal scripture study, and practice teaching lessons to mock investigators. Missionaries in some MTCs spend time in a phone referral center where interested individuals call in requesting missionary lessons, or church literature and DVDs. This provides experience answering gospel questions and inviting callers to learn more about the Church through accepting the missionary lessons. Upon arrival to the MTC, missionaries begin living mission rules outlined in the Missionary Handbook pertaining to finances, contact with family and members of the opposite sex, missionary conduct, and gospel study. Missionaries spend the majority of the day in a classroom where they are instructed by teachers.

The establishment of additional MTCs over the past few decades has primarily occurred as a result of increasing numbers of

members serving missions but has appeared to promote church growth within their jurisdictions. MTCs provide a sense of LDS community within a particular country or area similar to the sense of community present on church colleges and universities in the United States, Mexico, and Oceania. International MTCs reduce the logistical challenges of obtaining needed visas and documentation to permit members in other countries to enter the United States for training at the Provo MTC. The establishment of additional MTCs places more responsibility on local church leaders to prepare youth for full-time missionary service and make opportunities for missionary service more accessible.

The outlook for the opening of additional MTCs appears favorable within the next decade due the massive influx in the number of members serving full-time missions. Since the early 2000s, the Church's trend has been to consolidate resources to conserve costs, create a more meaningful MTC experience with larger numbers of missionaries and resources available, and efficiently utilize limited resources when the number of missionaries decreased and was stagnant for nearly a decade. Prospects appear most favorable for the opening of additional MTCs is Sub-Saharan Africa, Latin America, and Asia due to long distance from established MTCs and high potential for augmenting the native full-time missionary force. Locations that that may be favorable for future MTCs include Kinshasa, Democratic Republic of the Congo; Aba, Nigeria; Guayaquil, Ecuador; and Tegucigalpa, Honduras.

[1] White, Joyce B. "News of the Church," Ensign, January 1997. http://lds.org/ensign/1997/01/news-of-the-church/missionary-training-centers-churchwide

[2] "Church Lowers Missionary Service Age," www.mormonnewsroom,org, 6 October 2012. http://www.mormonnewsroom.org/article/church-lowers-age-requirement-for-missionary-service

[3] Olaveson, Breanna. "International MTCs Play Important Role," Church News and Events, 5 August 2010. http://lds.org/church/news/international-mtcs-play-important-role

[4] "News of the Church," Ensign, February 1974. http://lds.org/ensign/1974/02/news-of-the-church/new-missionary-language-training-center

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[6] Olaveson, Breanna. "International MTCs Play Important Role," Church News and Events, 5 August 2010. http://lds.org/church/news/international-mtcs-play-important-role

[7] Poulter, Danielle Nye. "Inside the MTC," New Era, March 2007. http://lds.org/new-era/2007/03/inside-the-mtc?

[8] Olaveson, Breanna. "International MTCs Play Important Role," Church News and Events, 5 August 2010. http://lds.org/church/news/international-mtcs-play-important-role

[9] Olaveson, Breanna. "International MTCs Play Important Role," Church News and Events, 5 August 2010. http://lds.org/church/news/international-mtcs-play-important-role