

Reaching the Nations

Country reports on the LDS Church around the world from a landmark almanac. Includes detailed analysis of history, context, culture, needs, challenges and opportunities for church growth.



Chile

Population: 17.36 millions (#65 out of countries)

By David Stewart and Matt Martinich

Geography

Area: 756,102 square km. Occupying a thin corridor between 50 and 400 kilometers wide stretching over 4,000 kilometers along the western coast of southern South America, Chile borders Argentina, Bolivia, Peru, and the Pacific Ocean. Temperate weather occurs in most coastal areas and central regions, with warm, arid conditions in the north and cool, wet conditions in the south. Reaching heights over 6,800 meters, the Andes Mountains run along the entire length of Chile and also form the Argentine border. Alpine and polar climatic conditions occur in the extreme south and in high elevation mountains and peaks in the Andes. Located in the north, the Atacama desert is among the driest places on Earth with some areas not receiving precipitation for centuries. Southern coastal areas consist of complex networks of fjords and inlets reaching Cape Horn and the Strait of Magellan at the southernmost tip of South America. Tierra del Fuego is divided between Chile and Argentina. Several small islands in the Pacific are under Chilean administration, namely Easter Island, Juan Fernandez Islands, San Felix Island, and Salas y Gomez Island. Frequent earthquakes, three dozen active volcanoes, and tsunamis are natural hazards. In February 2010, one of the largest recorded earthquakes hit central Chile, measuring 8.8 on the Richter Scale. Environmental issues include deforestation, mining, air pollution, and waste water treatment. Chile is divided into 15 administrative regions.

Population: 16,746,491 (July 2010)

Annual Growth Rate: 0.856% (2010)

Fertility Rate: 1.9 children born per woman (2010)

Life Expectancy: 74.26 male, 80.96 female (2010)

Peoples

white/white-Amerindian: 95.4%

Mapuche: 4%

other indigenous groups: 0.6%

Chile has a homogenous population consisting of whites and mixed white-Amerindians in nearly all populated areas. Mapuche primarily reside south of Santiago in the Temuco area.

Languages: Spanish (98%), Mapudungun (1.5%), other (0.5%). Spanish is the official language and only language with over one million speakers (16.4 million).

Literacy: 95.7% (2002)

History

Amerindians populated present-day Chile for millennia prior to the arrival of Spanish conquistadors in the early sixteenth century. The indigenous population thrived off of the region's fertile valleys and abundant natural resources. Spain realized the potential of the area for agriculture and Chile became part of the Viceroyalty of Peru. Independence from Spain occurred in 1810, spurred by Napoleon's meddling in the Spanish monarchy. Loyalists to Spain and Spanish forces attempted to restore rule, but were defeated by 1818. The Catholic Church, wealthy land owners, and family politics dominated public life for the remainder of the nineteenth century. In the late nineteenth century, Chile obtained sovereignty over the Strait of Magellan and annexed a large amount of mineral-abundant territory from Peru and Bolivia. Political instability marked most of the twentieth century as Marxists, dictators, and democrats vied for power. In 1970, Chile elected Salvador Allende to power who propagated socialist reforms. Three years later, the military overthrew Allende as societal and political conditions deteriorated as reforms failed, placing Augusto Pinochet in power. Pinochet committed numerous human rights violations during his rule, which lasted until 1988. During this period, Pinochet encouraged foreign and private investment and a free-market economy. In the 1990s and 2000s, presidents consisted of democrats and socialists, during which time Chile maintained steady economic growth and development.[1]

Culture

Spanish and indigenous cultures have most strongly influenced contemporary Chilean society, art, language, and religion. Catholicism has been a major societal influence for centuries, but has weakened in power in recent years. Chile is among the most culturally European Latin American countries in South America. Famous Chilean writers include novelist Isabel Allende and poet Pablo Neruda. Cueca is the national dance and shares many similarities with dances common in Andean South America. Cuisine is highly eclectic, consisting of most foods common to Latin America and Europe with strong cooking traditions from Europe.[2] Chile's Mediterranean climate is ideal for the cultivation of a diversity of foods. Chile is one of the world's greatest wine producers. Common sports include soccer, skiing, rodeo, surfing, and basketball. Cigarette and alcohol consumption rates compare to the worldwide average, but are higher than in most of Latin America.

Economy

GDP per capita: $14,600 (2009) [31.5% of US]

Human Development Index: 0.783

Corruption Index: 6.7

With one of the most advanced and developed economies in South America, Chile attained its position as one of the most financially responsible and powerful nations in Latin America through natural resource extraction, economic reform in the 1990s, and trade agreements with some 56 countries. Copper export earnings alone account for a third of total government revenue. Droughts and other natural hazards have periodically limited or stagnated economic growth. Chile went into recession in 2009 as foreign investment and demand for Chilean goods waned. 18% of the population lives below the poverty line. Services employ 64% of the labor force and generate 52% of the GDP whereas industry employs 35% of the labor force and generates 23% of the GDP. Minerals (especially copper), food products, fishing, iron and steel, wood products, cement, and textiles are major industries. Agriculture employs 13% of the labor force and accounts for 6% of the GDP. Primary agricultural products include fruit, grains, vegetables, beef, poultry, wool, fish, and lumber. The United States, China, South Korea, and Brazil are the primary trade partners. Chile is one of the least corrupt nations in Latin America and corruption is perceived at Western European levels, but cocaine trafficking, money laundering, and increasing drug use among Chileans are concerns.

Faiths

Christian: 87.2%

other: 4.6%

none: 8.2%

Christians

Denominations Members Congregations

Catholic 11,722,544

Latter-day Saints 561,920 620

Seventh Day Adventists 126,074 571

Jehovah's Witnesses 70,473 827

Religion

Catholics account for 70% of the population over the age of 14. Evangelicals in Chile are predominantly Pentecostal and are the largest minority religious group, constituting 15% of the population. The indigenous Mapuche population is 65% Catholic and 29% Evangelical. Other large Christian minority groups include Latter-day Saints, Seventh Day Adventists, and Jehovah's Witnesses. There are small groups of Jews, Muslims, Baha'is, and Buddhists. Eight percent of the population is nonreligious. [3]

Religious Freedom

Persecution Index:

The constitution protects religious freedom which is upheld by the government and local laws. There is no state religion, but the Catholic Church often receives preferential treatment. The government recognizes most major Catholic holidays as national holidays. A 1999 law forbids religious discrimination, reformed relations between the government and religious groups, and forbids the government from dissolving a religious group once registered. In 2009, there were 1,872 registered religious groups. Religious education in public schools primarily teaches Catholicism. Societal abuse of religious freedom has been minimal and targets the Jewish community.[4]

Largest Cities

Urban: 88%

Santiago, Puente Alto, Viña del Mar, Antofagasta, Valparaíso, San Bernardo, Temuco, Concepción, Rancagua, Talca, Arica, Iquique, Talcahuano, Puerto Montt, Coquimbo, La Serena, Chillán, Osorno, Valdivia, Quilpué, Calama, Copiapó, Los Ángeles, Punta Arenas.

All 24 cities with over 100,000 inhabitants have an LDS stake or district and all cities over 15,000 inhabitants have an LDS congregation. 57% of the national population resides in the 24 largest cities. The Santiago metropolitan area accounts for 34% of the national population.

LDS History

In the early 1850s, LDS apostle Elder Parley P. Pratt, his wife, and Elder Rufus C. Allen attempted to begin full-time missionary work in Chile over a five month period which did not result in a single convert baptism.[5] In 1952, a Latter-day Saint family from the United States moved to Santiago for business and began corresponding with Church headquarters in Salt Lake City. The following year, LDS Church President David O. Mckay visited Chile. The Church created its first congregation, the Nunoa Branch, in Santiago with 13 North-American members in 1956.[6] Elder Henry D. Moyle dedicated Chile for missionary work the same year. The first full-time LDS missionaries arrived to Chile from the Argentina Mission and baptized the first Chilean converts.[7] In 1957, local members and full-time missionaries officially registered the Church with the Chilean government. During the early 1960s, the Church began to expand to the largest cities throughout the country from Arica to Puerto Montt. Seminary and institute began in 1971. In 1977, LDS apostle Elder Bruce R. McConkie predicted that there would be 490 LDS stakes in Chile one day and that the Church would become the most powerful influence in the nation.[8]

In mid-1989, seven gunmen entered an LDS meetinghouse in Santiago, leaving $12,000 worth in damage from setting a fire. Similar terrorist activity occurred during this period elsewhere at the hands of political extremists targeting foreign interests.[9] In late 1990, terrorists destroyed an LDS meetinghouse in La Pincoya, Santiago.[10] In 1991, five Latter-day Saints were among the approximately 100 Chileans killed by mudslides in the arid north.[11] In 1996, the Church organized the Chile area. Serving as the president of the Chile area, Elder Dallas N. Archibald of the First Quorum of the Seventy perished in a fishing accident in

late 1998, becoming the first accidental death of an LDS General Authority in 60 years since the death of Elder J. Golden Kimball in an car accident in 1938.[12] The largest known gathering of Latter-day Saints occurred in Chile in 1999 when President Hinckley visited.[13] Later that year, President Boyd K. Packer and Elder Dallin H. Oaks met with government officials in Santiago.[14] In the early 2000s, Chile became one of the first three countries in which the Church instituted the Perpetual Education Fund.[15]

In 2002, Elder Jeffrey R. Holland began serving as the president of the Chile Area[16] and met with Chilean President Ricardo Lagos later that year.[17] Elder Holland's service ended in mid-2004[18] and focused on training local church leaders, restructuring stake and district organization, and consolidating hundreds of congregations. In August 2003, the Church launched a website for Chile, the first country website ever officially created by the Church.[19] In 2007, a fifteenth-year-old LDS girl in Talcahuano made Chilean news headlines after accidentally slipping into the ocean and surviving for two days in an underwater sea cave before being rescued by divers.[20] In 2010, one Latter-day Saint perished in the 8.8 magnitude earthquake in central Chile.[21]

Missions

The Church created the Andes Mission in 1959, which consisted of Chile and Peru, and the Chile Mission in 1961.[22] Headquartered in Santiago, the Chile Mission divided in 1975 to create the Chile Concepcion Mission. The Church organized additional missions in Santiago North (1977), Osorno (1977), Vina del Mar (1979), Antofagasta (1988), Santiago West (1995), Santiago East (1997), and Concepcion South (2003). The Santiago Chile South Mission was renamed the Chile Rancagua Mission in 2004. The number of LDS mission in Chile reached two in 1975, five in 1979, seven in 1995, and nine in 2003.

Membership Growth

LDS Membership: 561,920 (2009)

There were 450 members by 1959.[23] In 1972, there were 20,000 Latter-day Saints, increasing to 50,000 in 1977. Membership stood at 146,000 by 1983 and 230,000 in late 1988.[24] During the 1980s and 1990s, some 20,000 new converts were brought into the Church annually.[25] The Chile Vina Del Mar Mission regularly baptized over 600 converts a month in the late 1980s.[26] There were 266,000 members in late 1990.[27] The percentage of nominal Latter-day Saint membership in the general population surpassed that of the United States in the early 1990s.[28] By 1996, there were 420,000 members.[29]

Annual membership growth rates declined in the 2000s from 2.1% in 2001 to a low of 0.52% in 2003 and have slightly increased to 0.82% in 2006 and 1.3% in 2009. By year-end 2000, there were 509,592 members. Church membership increased to 527,972 in 2002, 534,754 in 2004, 543,628 in 2006, and 554,749 in 2008.

The 2002 Chilean census reported 103,735 self-identified Latter-day Saints, 45% of which were men. This represents just under 20% of nominal LDS membership at the time, although the census counted only individuals age 15 and over. The ratio of men to women for Latter-day Saints on the census was nearly the same for Catholics and Evangelicals and slightly higher than for Jehovah's Witnesses.[30] However, these other groups achieved significantly greater correlation between official membership and self-identified religious preference than Latter-day Saints. In 2009, one in 30 was nominally LDS.

Congregational Growth

Wards: 421 Branches: 199 Groups: 1+

Five years after the first LDS congregation was organized in Chile, there were 12 branches in 1961.[31] In early 1975, there were eight wards and 43 branches[32] and in 1977, there were 34 wards and 53 branches.[33] Rapid congregational growth occurred in the 1980s and 1990s. In 1995 alone, the Church created over 100 new LDS wards and branches.[34]

By year-end 1999, there were 951 congregations (744 wards and 207 branches). One year later, there were 880 congregations, including 706 wards. The number of congregations declined sharply in the early 2000s to 713 in 2002 and 619 in 2004. By 2005, the Church operated 607 congregations (424 wards and 183 branches). Between year-end 1999 and year-end 2004, the number of congregations declined by 332. Between year-end 2005 and late 2010, slight congregational growth occurred as the number of LDS congregations increased by 13 to 620.

The LDS Church has created congregations in many isolated, remote areas. By the 1980s, an LDS congregation began operating on Juan Fernandez Island.[35] The Puerto Williams Branch began operating in 1995 to serve the small town of 1,800 and became the southernmost LDS congregation in the world.[36]

The its first Chilean stake was organized in Santiago in 1972. By 1975, one stake and nine districts operated,[37] increasing to four stakes and nine districts by 1977.[38] There were 22 stakes by year-end 1980. By early 1988, the Santiago area had 17

stakes; the third most for a metropolitan area outside of the United States.[39] The fiftieth stake was created in late 1988 at which time only the United States, Mexico, and Brazil had more stakes.[40] By early 1996, there were 89 stakes and 14 districts.[41] Chile had 100 stakes[42] a year later and reached a high of 116 stakes in 1999.

Dramatic decline in the number of stakes began in 2000, the first year to have an LDS stake discontinued in Chile, and persisted to the end of 2005. By year-end 2000, there were 115 stakes and nine districts. In 2002, there were 87 stakes and 22 districts and by 2004, there were 75 stakes and 24 districts. In 2006, there were 74 stakes and 25 districts. In total, 42 stakes were discontinued between the beginning of 2000 and end of 2005, 12 of which were in the immediate Santiago metropolitan area and 17 were in cities which had at least two or more stakes. Most of the remaining 13 discontinued stakes reverted back to district status. Consolidating strong priesthood leadership, poor convert retention, and inadequate numbers of active members were reasons the Church discontinued so many stakes.[43] Most discontinued stakes in Chile were originally created between 1993 and 1998, during a time period when the Church created stakes and congregations with small numbers of active members in an effort to assign administrative responsibilities to greater numbers of new members to help increase member activity and convert retention rates. In the late 2000s, two districts were discontinued and in late 2010, there were 74 stakes and 23 districts.

Activity and Retention

4,300 were enrolled in seminary and institute during the 1975-1976 school year.[44] In 1988, the Chile Vina del Mar Mission benefited from an address by President Ezra Taft Benson emphasizing the role of local members in missionary work, which was delivered in a mission presidents seminar in 1985. In early 1988, the mission received typically received 350 referrals from members and 500 from investigators a week and between 600 and 700 investigators attended church services weekly. Convert retention also improved as a result of greater local member-missionary coordination.[45]

In 1988, over 400 young single adults in central Chile gathered for a six day conference in La Serena.[46] In 1993, 1,764 attended a stake conference in the Santiago area.[47] In 1996, 48,000 attended a conference in Santiago with President Hinckley.[48] 57,500 attended a regional conference held in Santiago when President Hinckley visited again in mid-1999.[49] Tens of thousands of Chilean members and investigators attended a temple cultural night prior to the rededication of the Santiago Chile Temple.[50] 29,606 members attended the two rededication sessions for the Santiago Chile Temple in 2006.[51] 13,731 were enrolled in seminary and institute during the 2008-2009 school year. In 2010, most missions appeared to baptized between 40 and 80 converts a month. Most missions have strongly emphasized full-time missionaries participating in reactivation efforts and in 2010 began to experience increases in the number of convert baptisms.

The number of active members varies widely from congregation to congregation, but most congregations report very low member activity rates. 35 of the over 500 members in the Puerto Natales Branch were active in March 2010. There were 50 active members in the Barrancas Ward of the San Antonio Chile Stake in late 2010. The San Clemente Branch in the Talca Chile Stake had 75 active members in late 2010. Only 10% of the known LDS membership in the Codegua Branch of the Rancagua Chile Tupahue Stake were active in late 2010. The Rosende Ward in the Santiago Chile Zapadores Stake had just 35 active members in late 2010. There were over 30 active members in the Río Negro Branch of the Osorno Chile Rahua Stake in late 2010. In mid-2010, there were nearly 30 active members in the Tirua Group, a dependent unit of the Cañete Branch of the Lebu Chile District. In late 2009, 130 of the approximately 1,000 members in the Maquehue Ward of the Temuco Chile Cautín Stake were active. In late 2010, the Pirque Branch in the Santiago Chile Cordillera Stake had over 70 active members.

The average number of members per congregation increased from 579 in 2000 to 915 in 2009 as a result of slow membership growth and the consolidation of hundreds of congregations. In 2006, nationwide sacrament meeting attendance was 57,000.[52] Self-identified Latter-day Saints on the 2002 census accounted for 20% of the Church membership reported for 2002, although the census did not query the religious affiliation of individuals under the age of 15. In 2006, Former Chilean mission and MTC president Ted Lyon reported that an astonishing 200,000 of the 535,000 nominal members claimed by the Church in Chile at the time-- over 37 percent -- are in the "address unknown file," meaning that such individuals do not attend church and cannot be located.[53] Nationwide active membership is estimated at no more than 70,000, or 12% of total LDS membership.

Finding

In the 1970s, full-time missionaries heavily utilized seminary and institute to find, teach, baptize, and retain new converts.[54] In the late 1980s, the Lo Prado Ward in Santiago brought 18 converts into the Church in a short period of time as a result of creative activities organized by the ward and the stake, such as musicals and a children's theater.[55] On Easter 2004, over 1,500 members and investigators attended the Santiago Chile Temple grounds to listen to LDS choir performances and showings of the film "The Testaments: Of One Fold and One Shepherd."[56] 62,065 attended the Santiago Chile Temple open house in 2006 following extensive renovations.[57]

Language Materials

Languages with LDS Scripture: Spanish, English

All LDS scriptures and most Church materials are available in Spanish, including an LDS edition of the Bible complete with full

LDS footnotes, bible dictionary, and topical guide. The Liahona magazine has 12 Spanish issues a year.

Meetinghouses

The LDS Church constructed over 300 chapels in three-year period in the 1980s. During the height of rapid church growth in the 1980s and 1990s, as many as six wards would utilize a single meetinghouse.[58] In 1997, 26 LDS meetinghouses were damaged by widespread flooding.[59] In 2006, there were over 500 LDS meetinghouses nationwide.[60]

Humanitarian and Development Work

LDS meetinghouses have been used for emergency shelters for victims of natural disasters, such as earthquakes.[61] Local members have periodically provided service in their communities as the Church has sponsored events like the International Day of Service.[62] In 2002, the Church shipped blankets, hygiene kits, and winter clothing to flood victims.[63] In 2003, the Church donated $11,700 to a telethon fundraiser for disabled children.[64] That same year, a young single adult conference held in Panguipulli focused on community service and had 400 in attendance.[65] In 2005, 10 American LDS dentists traveled to Chile and provided dental care to approximately 500 children from low-income families.[66] In 2006, the Church participated in a project to provide eyeglasses to over 25,000 needy Chileans in the Vina del Mar area.[67] In 2008, the Church donated dust masks and eye protection to those residing in areas affected by the eruption of the Chaitan Volcano.[68] Following the aftermath of the 2010 Chilean earthquake, the Church sent 100 tons of food and emergency aid.[69]

Opportunities, Challenges and Prospects

Religious Freedom

Latter-day Saints benefit from full religious freedom which protects the right to proselyte, assemble, and worship. Foreign full-time missionaries regularly serve in Chile. The Church maintains a positive relationship with the government. In early 2005, the Chilean government recognized the LDS Church as a mainstream religious group and granted a recognized presence at all public government functions.[70]

Cultural Issues

Low levels of church attendance among Latter-day Saints on record has resulted primarily from quick-baptize tactics and inadequate pre-baptismal preparation encouraged by many LDS missions in Chile, but low levels of religious participation in the Church have also been influenced by traditions of religious nominalism among the predominately Catholic population. Other missionary-oriented Christian faiths report frustrations working with low levels of religious commitment and activity, but have not experienced as great of challenges as the LDS Church regarding convert retention and member activity due to more stringent baptism qualifications and preparation. Stronger European influence in Chilean culture than in many other Latin American nations has made Chile more vulnerable to the spread of secularism, which may have impacted receptivity. Potential for LDS Church growth remains fair and past cultural conditions have fueled church growth, namely a widespread Christian background among the general population which is not deeply as entrenched in religious identity as many other predominantly Catholic nations. Latter-day Saints appear to be respected and well recognized in society. Higher alcohol and cigarette consumption rates create challenges for LDS missionaries. Increasing illicit drug use requires proper outreach and approaches from missionaries working with less active members and investigators.

National Outreach

Approximately 67% of the national population resides in cities over 18,000 inhabitants with an LDS congregation. Chile is one of the few nations with over 15 million people which have wards or branches in every city with over 15,000 inhabitants. All 15 administrative regions have multiple congregations. Chile receives some of the most penetrating LDS mission outreach in South America as nine missions administer a population 16.7 million, or one mission per approximately two million people. Administrative regions with the highest percentage of members, as indicated by the population divided by the number of stakes or districts, are not clustered in a particular region of the country and include the Arica and Parinacota, Los Rios, and Atacama Regions. Areas with the lowest percentage of members are regions clustered around the Santiago metropolitan area (Region Metropolitana) and include Maule, Libertador G.B. O'Higgins, and Coquimbo Regions. The Santiago metropolitan area falls in the middle of the continuum of LDS percentages in the population. Currently unreached Chileans tend to reside in rural areas, sectors of large cities far from an LDS meetinghouses and with few LDS congregations, and small cities and towns with fewer than 15,000 inhabitants.

Lesser-reached sectors of medium-sized and large-sized cities and small cities and towns provide the greatest potential for future expansion of national outreach as these locations are easily accessed and densely populated, providing full-time missionaries greater benefits to proselyte compared to rural areas difficult to access that are sparsely populated. In the late

2000s, mission leaders and stake or district leaders began to reemphasize expanding mission outreach in larger cities by creating new congregations. Many of these new units were created in areas with the highest potential to reactivate hundreds of inactive LDS members. The consolidation of hundreds of congregation during the first half of the 2000s aimed to increase the number of active members per congregation, but many members were lost in the process as they had to travel greater distances for church and attend congregations with people with whom they were unfamiliar. Establishing additional congregations in lesser reached sectors of large cities has heavily depended on full-time missionary involvement, which limits long-term prospects for such units to become self-reliant and the number of branches or groups created due to limited numbers of full-time missionaries. In late 2010, new LDS congregations were organized in Yumbel, Biobio and Coquimbo, but there has yet to be a significant increase in mission outreach centers following the consolidation of hundreds of congregations in the early 2000s.

Chile was among the first eight countries to receive an LDS country website in 2003.[71] The website is found at http://www.lds.cl and provides local news, information on church beliefs and doctrine, links to other church websites in Spanish, and a self-referral system for requesting missionary visits.

Member Activity and Convert Retention

Low member activity and poor convert retention rates have been the primary culprit for stagnant real church growth in the 2000s. Many predictions and aspirations by LDS international and mission leaders made prior to the 2000s have been frustrated as a result of these problems. The baptism of hundreds of thousands of Chileans with little or no meaningful pre-baptismal teaching and inadequate and inconsistent post-baptismal teaching and fellowshipping to new converts are primary reasons for low activity and retention rates nationwide. Culturally low religious attendance among the Catholic majority has also likely affected Latter-day Saint activity rates as most converts come from a Catholic background. In the late 2000s, mission and local leaders reported that convert retention rates had significantly improved in some areas of the country as a result of implementation of the missionary guide Preach My Gospel and requirements for prospective converts to attend sacrament meeting at least twice before baptism. Reactivation efforts have experienced only limited success notwithstanding heavy involvement of full-time missionaries in teaching and finding less-active members. Utilizing full-time missionaries in mentoring local church members and carrying out reactivation efforts appear to be a major objective of the creation of Chile's ninth mission in Rancagua (Concepcion South) in 2003 as few converts were baptized in the early 2000s.

In 1996, there were 7,000 Latter-day Saints among the 150,000 inhabitants of Arica, which had three LDS stakes at the time.[72] Prospects appeared high for additional stakes to be created in the near future, yet in 2010 only two stakes remained, both of which had five wards and one branch. Declining membership growth rates, poor member activity, and inadequate numbers of active priesthood leaders appear to be the primary reasons for the lack of any visible church growth progress in Arica and in most Chilean cities during the 2000s.

The Church has tried to facilitate greater activity and fellowshipping among local young single adult members by organizing Helping Hands service projects which involve local LDS institutes. Some of these activities have had several hundred participants in the past and provide community service.[73] Consistent, regular coordination of such efforts may help improve member activity rates over the long term and better establish Latter-day Saint communities.

Ethnic Issues and Integration

Few if any ethnic integration issues have been encountered in LDS congregations due to the relatively homogenous population. Some challenges may occur with assimilating Mapuche Amerindians and white or white-Amerindian Chileans in congregations populated by both ethnic groups. However, full-time missionaries report no significant challenges.

Language Issues

At least 98% of the population has access to LDS materials in their native language due to the widespread use of Spanish and lack of linguistic diversity in the Chilean population. Mapudungun-speaking Mapuche are the largest indigenous ethnic group without any LDS materials. Controversy surrounding what script to use in printing the Mapudungun language has likely contributed to the lack of LDS materials. Only Mapudungun appears likely to have future LDS materials translated as other indigenous languages have few speakers and likely few or no LDS members.

Missionary Service

The first male Chilean members began serving full-time missions in 1959. By 1977, there were 120 local members serving full-time missions.[74] The first sister missionaries began serving in 1967.[75] The Chile Missionary Training Center opened in 1981.[76] Chilean missionaries accounted for half of the full-time missionary force assigned to Chile in late 1988.[77] 114 Chilean missionaries served in North and South America in 1995.[78] A third of full-time missionaries serving in Chile in 1997 were Chilean.[79] At present, Chile remains highly dependent on foreign full-time missionaries to staff its nine LDS missions. In 2010, approximately half of full-time missionaries serving in Chile were Chilean. Low member activity rates appear to have severely limited the native full-time missionary force. Reactivation efforts headed by local members, increasing convert retention rates, and encouraging youth to prepare for full-time missionary service all appear necessary components to improve

the self-sustainability of the Chilean missionary force.

Leadership

Developing self-sufficient congregations in Chile has always been a challenge for the LDS Church. In 1961, four of the 12 Chilean branches had local branch presidents.[80] Nationwide leadership training meetings have been held regularly to help ameliorate lacking Chilean church leadership and better train local leaders. There have been times when prospective local leadership has more rapidly grown. In a special stake conference for the creation of the Santiago Chile Vicuna Mackenna Stake in 1993, 61 men were presented to receive the Melchizedek Priesthood.[81] In 2003, the Church broadcasted a leadership conference throughout the country to reduce travel and time constraints, constituting the first area-specific broadcast for leadership training in the Church.[82] Low levels of self-sufficiency in local leadership has been manifest in the overrepresentation of Church Education System (CES) employees in leadership positions. At times, Church employees have constituted two of the three men in some stake presidencies. Elder Jeffrey R. Holland was assigned to the Chile Area in the early 2000s to help address leadership shortfalls and convert retention challenges. In the late 2000s and in 2010, the Church was hesitant to organize new congregations and new stakes due to concern over whether local members would be consistently self-sufficient over the long term. In 2010, a senior missionary couple serving in the Santiago area reported that some wards did not have a bishop as a result of inadequate local priesthood leadership; it was unclear exactly how such congregations operated.

Despite lacking nationwide leadership manpower, Chile has generated many regional and international church leaders serving as regional representatives, area authorities, mission presidents, Seventies, and temple presidents. In 1988, the Church called Benigno H. Pantoja from La Florida, M. Gonzalo Sepulveda from Santiago, Hector Verdugo from Rancagua,[83] and Florencio Castro from Concepcion as a regional representatives.[84] In 1993, Jorge Fernando Zeballos from Antofagasta was called as a regional representative.[85] In 1994, Juan Carlos Castillo from Santiago,[86] Eduardo Adrian Lamartine Aguila from Santiago, [87] and Fernandez Cerpa Guillermo German from La Serena[88] were called as a regional representatives.

In 1995, Juan Carolos Castillo C. from Santiago, Julio Humberto Jaramillo from Santiago, Eduardo Adrian Lamartine from Santiago, Claudio Daniel Signorelli from Santiago, and Jorge Fernando Zeballos from Antofagasta were called as area authorities.[89] In 1996, Julio E. Otay from Puerto Varas, Jorge A. Pedreros from Puente Alto, and Hector M. Verdugo from Rancagua were called as area authorities.[90] By April 1997, there were seven Area Authority Seventies serving from Chile.[91] In 2001, Oscar W. Chavez from Pealolen was called as an Area Authority Seventy.[92] In 2002, M. Gonzalo Sepulveda from Villa Alemana was called as an Area Authority Seventy.[93] In 2004, Gabriel A. Campos from Villa Alemana and Dinar M. Reyes from Vina del Mar were called as Area Authority Seventies.[94] In 2005, Daniel M. Canoles from Santiago and Gerardo L. Rubio from Santiago were called as Area Seventies.[95] In 2006, Hernan I. Herrera from Santiago was called as an Area Seventy.[96] In 2007, Mario E. Guerra from Santiago was called as an Area Authority.[97] In 2008, Juan C. Barros from Santiago, G. Guillermo Garcia from Santiago, and Fernando Maluenda from Penalolen were called as Area Seventies.[98] In 2010, Valetin F. Nunez from Santiago and Gerardo J. Wilhelm from Puerto Montt were called as Area Seventies.[99]

In 1988, Bruce F. Carter from Santiago[100] was called to preside over the Colombia Bogota Mission.[101] In 1990, Wilfredo R. Lopez from Santiago[102] began presiding over the Argentina Resistencia Mission and Gustavo Alberto Barrios from Santiago [103] began presiding over the Chile Osorno Mission.[104] In 1991, Emilio Liberio Diaz from Santiago was called as a mission president.[105] In 1993, Hector Manuel Verdugo R. from Rancagua[106] and Thomas E. Coburn from Santiago[107] were called as a mission president. In 2003, Mario Edmundo Guerra from Santiago[108] was called to preside over the Venezuela Valencia Mission and Hernan Isaias Herrera from Santiago[109] was called as the mission president of the Uruguay Montevideo West Mission.[110] In 2006, Jorge Fernando Zeballos from Antofagasta was called as a mission president.[111] In 2006, Gerardo Jose Wilhelm from Llanquihue began presiding over the Chile Vina del Mar Mission.[112] In 2007, Juan Amando Urra from Concepcion was called to preside over the Chile Antofagasta Mission.[113]

In 1990, Eduardo Ayala from Santiago was called to the Second Quorum of the Seventy.[114] In 2008, Jorge F. Zeballos from Concepcion was called to the First Quorum of the Seventy.[115] In 2004, Julio Humberto Jaramillo Bichet from Santiago was called as the Santiago Chile Temple president.[116] In 2010, Julio Enrique Otay Gomez from Puerto Montt was called as the Santiago Chile Temple president.[117]

Temple

The Santiago Chile Temple was announced in 1981 and dedicated in 1983. In 1998, the Church dedicated a new temple patron housing building with 168 units to accommodate members from distant areas of the country that travel to the temple.[118] The remodeling of the Santiago Chile Temple in the mid-2000s expanded the square footage by 43%.[119] At present, the temple has two ordinance rooms and four sealing rooms. The temple does not operate close to capacity despite having the temple district with the fourth most stakes sixth most districts worldwide. In the late 2000s, local church leaders reported that temple attendance increased until the early 2000s, then decreased, but rebounded in the mid to late 2000s. In 2010, there were eight daily endowment sessions scheduled Tuesday through Friday, and eleven on Saturdays. Most temples with as large of a temple district schedule endowment sessions hourly or every half hour to meet the needs of temple-going Latter-day Saints in their districts. Low temple attendance and participation has resulted in the delay of announcing additional temples. It was not until 2009 when the Church announced a second temple for Chile in Concepcion, despite 560,000 nominal Latter-day Saints in Chile meeting in 74 stakes and nearly two dozen districts. Greater temple attendance may one day warrant the construction of additional temples. Only Valparaiso/Vina del Mar appears to be a potential candidate for an LDS temple in the foreseeable

future unless the Church recommences the construction of the small 10,700 square foot temples commonly built in the late 1990s and early 2000s.

Comparative Growth

The LDS Church in Chile has the fifth largest number of members, sixth most stakes, sixth most districts, and the sixth most missions in the world, although Chile ranks sixtieth in the world by total population. No other country with a population over one million has as high of a percentage of Latter-day Saints as Chile. Notwithstanding impressive raw membership numbers, the realities of the LDS Church in Chile are far more modest. Only about 70,000 Chileans, or 12% of LDS members, attend church on a regular basis, and only 20% of nominal members identified the LDS Church as their faith of preference on the national census (however, the census did not include those under age 15). Chile has one of the lowest LDS member activity rates in the world and one of the highest rates of lost members on the "address unknown file." No other country has as high an average number of members per congregation as Chile: an astonishing 915 members per unit, although average attendance is only about 100. The ratio of Latter-day Saints on Church records to LDS congregations is so low that some islands of the South Pacific have the same ratio of the general population to LDS congregations as Chile has of Latter-day Saints to LDS congregations. The Latin American country with the second highest average number of members per congregation in 2009 was Nicaragua with 673 members per unit, 242 fewer than Chile. Other countries experienced as large of a decline in the number of congregations between 2000 and 2009 as Chile (-266 congregations) and Chile experienced the second largest percentage decrease in the number of congregations during this period (-30%) after Belgium (-35%). In late 2010, Chile was the country with the most Latter-day Saints on Church records with only two LDS temples. Chile has one of the lowest percentages of local full-time missionaries among missionaries assigned to their native country in Latin America. In 2009, Chile had 81,000 more Latter-day Saints on the records than Peru, yet Peru had 156 more congregations, 20 more stakes, one more district as of the end of 2010, and was not only self-sufficient in its full-time missionary force but also exported LDS missionaries to other Latin American nations. Annual membership growth rates in Chile ranked among the lowest for Latin America in the 2000s. The LDS Church reached maturity in local leadership prior than most Latin American countries in the twentieth century as manifest by the Church completing its first temple in a Spanish-speaking country in Chile in 1983, less than three months prior to the dedication of the Mexico City Mexico Temple.[120]

Non-Catholic Christian groups have experienced moderate to rapid church growth since the mid-twentieth century. Seventh Day Adventists arrived in the late nineteenth century[121] and reported nearly the same number of congregations as Latter-day Saints in 2009, yet Latter-day Saints claimed nearly five times as many nominal members. In the 2000s, Adventists experienced moderate membership and congregational, generally baptizing 5,000 to 8,000 converts annually and adding between 10 and 30 new congregations a year. The number of active Latter-day Saints is almost the same as the number of active Jehovah's Witnesses, yet Witnesses maintained two hundred more congregations. Witnesses report slow to moderate membership growth rates. There were 119,455 self-identified Jehovah's Witnesses on the 2002 Chilean census, 15,720 more members than Latter-day Saints.[122] Evangelicals and Pentecostals have experienced the greatest growth and today account for approximately 15% of the population. Evangelicals have relied on self-sufficient congregations and member-missionary work to accomplish strong church growth.

Future Prospects

While visiting Chile in 2006 to rededicate the Santiago Chile Temple, President Hinckley stated that "where we have thousands, we will have tens of thousands."[123] This statement as well as others by international LDS Church leaders continued to be unrealized as of 2010. Poor member activity rates, low convert retention, inadequate numbers of active priesthood holders, dependence of foreign missionaries to staff Chile's nine missions, and lacking self sufficiency continue to prevent greater real church growth for Latter-day Saints. Past mission policies promoting the rushed baptism of poorly prepared investigators have generated impressive paper membership numbers but have lost converts out the back door of the church almost as quickly as they have been brought in the front. Such practices have not only failed to develop locally self-sufficient congregations and missionary efforts, but have sapped strength and burdened congregations with impossibly long home teaching lists of inactive and disaffected members for the few active priesthood holders, diverted resources from productive outreach to poorly productive reactivation efforts. Member enthusiasm for missionary work has been severely diminished by a system historically focused more on baptismal goals and quotas than on the needs and spiritual well-being of investigators and members, and in which baptism only rarely leads to ongoing church activity. Recent guidelines that investigators should attend at least two sacrament meetings before baptism present a positive step and have led to at least some improvement, although overall standards for baptism in the LDS Church remain far lower than those generally adhered to by Jehovah's Witnesses and Seventh Day Adventists, and the rush to baptize prospective LDS converts with unresolved issues to meet baptismal goals or quotas remains an ongoing problem. Problematic patterns and practices established in prior years are not easily overcome.

Future church growth will hinge on maintaining consistently high baptismal standards for converts, directing proselytism activity on a congregation-level with a strong member-missionary emphasis, finding and fellowshipping efforts, greater emphasis on seminary and institute attendance, opening new congregations, and increasing temple attendance. Full-time missionaries report some districts are close to becoming stakes, such as the Melipilla Chile District. However, missionaries serving in other areas report that some stakes may become districts due to problems with member activity and local leadership. Nonetheless, improvement in convert retention rates in the late 2000s and in 2010 is a positive development that if sustained over the long term may help to stabilize the LDS Church in Chile following a decade of stagnation, consolidation, and decline, and provide a foundation for future growth.

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