

Reaching the Nations International Church Growth Almanac

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



Ghana

Population: 25.76 millions (#49 out of countries)

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Geography

Area: 238,533 square km. Ghana is located in West Africa and borders the Atlantic Ocean, Cote d'Ivoire, Burkina Faso, and Togo. Climate transitions from tropical and humid along the coast to semi-arid and dry to the north. Plains and forests with few hills cover the landscape. Lake Volta in the east is the largest artificial lake in the world and stretches north to south. Drought and harmattan winds carrying dry and dusty air from the Sahara and Sahel are natural hazards. Environmental issues include deforestation, overgrazing, soil erosion, pollution, and fresh water scarcity. Ghana is divided into 10 administrative regions.

Population: 24,791,073 (July 2011)

Annual Growth Rate: 1.822% (2011)

Fertility Rate: 3.48 children born per woman (2011)

Life Expectancy: 58.78 male, 62.25 female (2011)

Peoples

Akan: 45.3%

Mole-Dagbon: 15.2%

Ewe: 11.7%

Ga-Dangme: 7.3%

Guan: 4%

Gurma: 3.6%

Grusi: 2.6%

Mande-Busanga: 1%

Other tribes: 1.4%

Other: 7.8%

Languages: Asante (14.8%), Ewe (12.7%), Fante (9.9%), Boron (4.6%), Dagomba (4.3%), Dangme (4.3%), Dagarte (3.7%), Akyem (3.4%), Ga (3.4%), Akuapem (2.9%), other (36.1%). English is the official language and widely spoken in urban areas. 79 languages are spoken in Ghana. Languages with over one million speakers include Asante (3.5 million), Ewe (3.03 million), Fante (2.36 million), Boron (1.10 million), Dagombe (1.02 million), and Dangme (1.02 million).

Literacy: 57.9% (2000)

History

Various African tribes resided in Ghana for thousands of years. Akan peoples settled Ghana in the 13th century and ruled the region when the first Europeans explored the area. The Portuguese and Dutch established small coastal towns and forts to exploit gold resources. The British later arrived, naming western Ghana the Gold Coast. The Gold Coast was a British colony from the late nineteenth century until independence in 1957. Eastern Ghana was first colonized by the Germans and later administered by the British as a separate colony named British Togoland following the division of the former German colony between the British the French during World War I. Greater independence movements began in the mid-1950s. Although a series of coups occurred following independence in the 1960s and 1970s, economic growth and stability returned during the presidency of Jerry Rawlings. Unlike most African nations, Ghana experienced little ethnic tension and a slow transition to a democratic government during President Rawlings rule. Ghana retruned to democracy with democratic elections in the 1990s. Ghana has been praised as one of the greatest successes in political stability and democratization in West Africa.

Culture

The population exhibits considerable ethnic diversity, with each ethnic group possessing some unique cultural characteristics. Christianity is the primary influence on society in southern and coastal areas whereas Islam is the dominant influence on society in the north. Sports are popular, especially soccer. Music, textiles, and dance occupy an important role in culture. Polygamy is illegal, yet practiced among some according to local custom and Sharia law.[1] Cocaine and majiuana use appears higher than most nations.

Economy

GDP per capita: $2,500 (2010) [5.24% of US]

Human Development Index: 0.467

Corruption Index: 4.1

The economy is one of the more developed and diversified in the region. Political stability, abundant natural resources, and foreign investment fuels economic growth, with GDP growth rates over 4.5% since 2006. Ocean access provides for greater growth in trade and commerce and a sizeable population supports needed manpower for economic development and growth. Agriculture and services each account for 37% of the GDP whereas industry makes up 25% of the GDP. Half the labor force works in agriculture. Cocoa, gold, and timber provide the three largest exports and generate the most wealth. Some petroleum extraction, which, combined with hydroelectric power from Lake Volta, makes Ghana energy independent. A developed mining sector provides greater growth in industry. The largest export partners include the Netherlands, Ukraine, and the United Kingdom; the largest import partners are China, Nigeria and India. Although the economy experiences greater success than most West African countries, 28.5% of the population lives below the poverty line and living standards are poor. Ghana demonstrates some of the lowest corruption levels in West Africa, but corruption is a major obstacle which limits economic development and a more equal distribution of wealth. Cannabis cultivation, heroin and cocaine transshipment, money laundering, and general crime are ongoing challenges.

Faiths

Christian: 68.8%

Muslim: 15.9%

Traditional religions: 8.5%

Other: 0.7%

None: 6.1%

Christians

Denominations Members Congregations

Pentecostal/Charismatic 5,743,631

Protestant 4,432,944

Catholic 3,598,707

Seventh Day Adventist 362,723 1,168

Jehovah's Witnesses 104,256 1,472

Latter-Day Saints 45,094 129

Religion

Christians comprise the majority in the south and central areas of Ghana whereas Muslims constitute the majority in the north. Little conflict occurs between Christians and Muslims, partially due to geographic separation and government tolerance for denominations of both groups. Pentecostal and Charismatic churches are experiencing the greatest growth currently. Followers of indigenous religious generally reside in rural areas. There are some Christian groups which incorporate indigenous beliefs and practices into their faith.[2] Some conflict occurs between the followers of traditional religions and Christians. Shamanism and indigenous faiths are most widely practiced in the north.

Religious Freedom

Persecution Index:

The constitution protects religious freedom which is upheld by government. No restrictions prohibit proselytism and government respects religious minority groups. Major Christian and Muslim holidays are recognized national holidays. Religious groups are required to register and there have been no recent instances of the government refusing to register a religious group. The government has taken steps to foster harmony and tolerance between differing religious groups. Societal abuse of religious freedom occurs at times and targets practioners of indigenous faiths and Muslims.[3]

Major Cities

Urban: 50%

Accra, Kumasi, **Tamale**, Tema, Obuasi, Teshie, **Bolgatanga**, Koforidua, Takoradi,

Sekondi.

Cities listed in bold do not have a LDS congregation.

Eight of the ten most populous cities have an LDS congregation. 15% of the population resides in the ten largest cities.

LDS History

LDS literature and scriptures made their way to Ghana in the 1950s and ignited interest among Ghanaians. Some Ghanaians living abroad came into contact with the Church and later returned to Ghana. Church leaders attempted to visit the country in the 1960s under the direction of President David O. McKay, but were unable due to visa issues. Before the Church came to Ghana some prospective members organized unofficial congregations of the Church for interested individuals and prospective members. The Church established an official presence in 1978, the same year that priesthood and temple blessings became available to all regardless of race or ethnicity. The first convert baptisms in Ghana occurred in late 1978. 89 members were baptized on December 12th of that year. The West African Mission began administering Ghana in 1980 and the first mission in Ghana was established in Accra in 1985. In June 1989, the government of Ghana expelled LDS missionaries based on misunderstandings of LDS teachings regarding government and race. At this time there were 72 young missionaries serving in Ghana, all of whom were Ghanaian citizens. An additional six foreign missionary couples were also serving at this time.[4] LDS Church activities were permitted to resume in late 1990 following the government deeming that the Church promotes racial harmony and the national flag.[5] In 2004, Ghana became the first country in West Africa to have an LDS temple completed. A second mission in Ghana was organized in Cape Coast in 2005 and initially administered Benin, Cameroon, the Central African Republic, and Togo. Missionaries serving in Ghana at the time reported that one of the likely reasons the new mission was created to not only assist in the expansion of LDS missionary activity in other nations but to facilitate several mission districts in the interior of the country to become stakes. Other nations under the Ghana Cape Coast Mission were transferred to the Ghana Accra Mission when the Sierra Leone Freetown Mission was organized in 2007. In the late 2000s, two full-time African missionaries were accused of sexually assaulting a teenage girl and were found guilty in a trial and sentenced to 5-10 years in prison. The missionaries were released and acquitted of the charges in 2011. In mid-2011, the two Ghana missions administered only Ghana and Ghana pertained to the Africa West Area.

Membership Growth

LDS Membership: 45,094 (2010)

Membership totaled over 400 in 1979 and 826 in 1983. Rapid membership growth began in the mid-1980s as membership increased to over 2,000 by mid-1986 and 5,500 in 1987. Membership reached 12,000 in 1993, 16,000 in 1997, and 18,630 in 2000. In the early 2000s, around 3,000 new converts were baptized a year in Ghana, Sierra Leone, and Liberia.[6] During the 2000s, rapid membership growth occurred during the latter portion of the decade. There were 22,164 members in 2002, 26,222 in 2004, 32,965 in 2006, 38,224 in 2008, and 45,094 in 2010. Annual membership growth rates ranged between 5.5% and 11.8% during the 2000s. In 2010, one in 550 was LDS.

Congregational Growth

Wards: 72 Branches: 57

By 1981 there were seven LDS branches. In 1987, there were 50 branches. LDS congregations totaled 46 in 1993, 57 in 1997, and 62 in 2000. Rapid congregational growth occurred in the late 2000s and the number of congregations increased to 67 in 2002, 74 in 2004, 84 in 2006, 99 in 2008, and 121 in 2010. Many of the new congregations organized betwen 2008 and 2010 were in the greater Accra area in an effort to make the Church more accessible to members and the general population.[7] By late 2011, there were 129 wards and branches. The number of wards increased from 13 in 1993 to 33 in 2000, 41 in 2005, and 70 in mid-2011.

The first LDS stakes in Ghana were created in 1991 in Accra and Cape Coast. Additional stakes were organized in Takoradi (1997), Accra Christiansborg (1997), Kumasi (1998), Tema (2006), Accra McCarthy Hill (2007), and Assin Foso (2011). The number of stakes increased from two in 1991 to five in 2000 and seven in 2010. In mid-2011, there were five districts in Ghana operating in Asamankese (1987), Swedru (1989), Koforidua (1995), Abomusu (2007), and Konongo (2009). A district once functioned in Kpong from 2006-2007 but was consolidated with the Accra Ghana Adenta Stake. The number of districts totaled eight in 1987, four in 1993, five in 1997, four in 2000, and five in mid-2011.

Ghana has a large number of mission branches that do not pertain to a stake or district. These branches are located in Abakrampa, Agona-Asamang, Agona Nkwanta, Axim, Daboasi, Ho, Kissi, Mampong, Mankessim, Nkroful, Obuasi, and Sunyani (3). Numerous groups belonging to stakes or districts also function in Ghana. Senior missionaries in 2009 reported that two groups were meeting in Maase and Osiem, small cities located northwest of Koforidua. Some districts have district branches for multiple groups within the geographic boundaries of districts. Additional dependent branches or groups likely operate under mission branches but are not published by the Church.

Activity and Retention

Convert retention and member activity rates in the LDS Church in Ghana appear among the highest for countries with over 30,000 members. Convert retention rates appeared to decrease between 2000 and 2006 as the average number of members

per congregation increased from 300 in 2000 to 392 in 2006, indicating some decrease in convert retention rates or the effect of cumulative inactivity from prior years. In 2007 and 2008 the ratio of members per congregation fell indicating that congregational growth rates caught up and surpassed membership growth rates but in 2010 the average number of members per congregation increased by 32 as few new independent units were organized. Current convert retention may be over 50% due to higher congregation growth rates. When President Hinckley visited Ghana in 1998 there were 6,700 in attendance. 5,300 members attended the dedication of the Accra Ghana Temple in early 2004.[8] Before the dedication of the temple, there were 415 endowed members living in Ghana.[9] Approximating active membership is challenging as there are an unknown number of dependent branches and groups functioning throughout the country. There are many members of the Church who, due to distance to the closest meetinghouse, do not attend Church meetings regularly yet actively follow the Church's teachings. In 2000, Elder Glenn L. Pace noted that sacrament attendance was over 50% in the Africa West Area.[10] Most wards and branches appear to have between 75 and 200 active members. Nationwide active membership today is estimated at 16,000, or approximately 35-40% of total church membership.

Language Materials

Languages with LDS Scripture: English, Fante, Twi

In 1988 the Church published the Book of Mormon in the Fante dialect of Akan. The Book of Mormon translation in Twi, the most widely spoken native language in the country, was published in 2005. Only the Testimony of the Prophet Joseph Smith and a few basic support materials are translated into Twi. Ewe only has the Testimony of the Prophet Joseph Smith translated. The Book of Mormon, Doctrine and Covenants, and Pearl of Great Price are translated into Fante along with many materials for Sunday School, Priesthood, Primary, and Relief Society.

Meetinghouses

Most large congregations meet in their own building, oftentimes a hurch-built meetinghouse or a renovated building. The helping hands service program improved relations with government for the acquisition of new buildings for meetinghouses.[11]

Health and Safety

Ghana enjoys one of the most stable political atmospheres in West Africa. This peace and stability has not turned Ghanaians away from interest in religion. The prevalence of HIV/AIDS has increased, infecting almost 2% of the population. Sanitation problems and endemic tropical diseases pose a health risk for missionaries serving in Ghana.

Humanitarian and Development Work

The LDS Church has performed extensive humanitarian and development work in Ghana. Between 1986 and 2001 the Church sponsored 142 projects valued at 7.5 million US dollars.[12] Senior missionary couples greatly contribute to humanitarian and development work, including working in orphanages, drilling wells, building schools, and distributing wheelchairs.[13] In the early 2000s, more than 100 bore holes were drilled.[14] Members in two Accra wards supplied thousands of books to public schools in 2003.[15] Books were donated to Kumasi in 2005.[16] Clean water projects were undertaken between Koforidua and Kumasi in 2006.[17] In 2007, the Church donated food and clothing to northern Ghana[18] and distributed 15 computers to a rural health clinic built by students in the LDS Business College.[19] 400 local members cleaned and painted streets in Accra in 2007.[20] Mormon Helping Hands projects occur regularly and consist of local LDS members serving in their communities. The Church teaches self sufficiency to families through the Benson Institute.[21]

Opportunities, Challenges and Prospects

Religious Freedom

The government and the Church maintain positive relations despite past misunderstandings.[22] In recent years, the Church has utilized the opportunity of widespread religious freedom in Ghana with the creation of a second mission in 2005. Unique opportunities to conduct missionary work with the Muslim populations in central and northern Ghana which are protected by law have yet to be realized.

Cultural Issues

Ghana benefits from lower alcohol consumption, lower prevalence of polygamy, and fewer adherents of traditional beliefs in Ghana than many other African nations. Cultural practices and beliefs in greater harmony with the Church doctrine have likely

contributed to more rapid growth in Ghana than in other African nations. Interest in religion among Ghanaians remains high and presents excellent opportunity for greater Church growth. Cultural barriers and lower receptivity among Muslims have contributed to the lack of an LDS presence in northern Ghana. Like most African nations, poverty and low living standards prevent greater self sustainability and economic stability among local members.

National Outreach

Approximately 30% of the national population resides in cities, towns, or villages with an LDS congregation. In 2001, the ratio of members to the population was one in 966 and in 2010 the ratio was one in 550, indicating that membership growth greatly outpaced population growth in Ghana during the intervening years. Despite a much higher percentage of members among the population than other African nations, roughly one-third of Ghanaians live in regions which do not have a Church presence, one-third live in regions with a Church presence limited to only a few the largest cities, and one-third live in regions where the Church has a presence in all large cities and most small cities and towns. 5.1 million Ghanaians live in regions of the country which do not have a single organized, independent LDS congregation. These regions include the Brong Ahafo, Northern, Upper East, and Upper West Regions. The majority of the population of the Ashanti, Volta and Western regions reside in cities or rural areas where the Church is not established. These three regions have a combined population of 7.2 million inhabitants. The majority of the remaining 5.7 million Ghanaians living in regions around the capital Accra in areas which have established congregations. These regions include the Central, Eastern and Greater Accra regions. The LDS Church benefits from excellent mission outreach opportunities in Ghana due to a large LDS missionary force, strong local leadership, a receptive population, and widespread religious freedom notwithstanding less than a third of the population resides in locations that receive current LDS outreach.

In 2009, the Church organized many new branches in Ghana to make congregations more accessible to members and the general population. New branches were organized in the Greater Accra Area as well as in rural areas, especially in the Ghana Cape Coast Mission. Several congregations meet in rural areas between Kumasi and Accra in towns or villages so small they are not found on most maps of the area, particularly in the Abomusu Ghana District. The recent establishment of many district branches, which accommodate members living in areas without branches in a district, for districts in the triangle between Cape Coast, Kumasi and Accra indicate the recent extension and multiplication of dependent branches and groups for members which live in regions with too few members to be organized into their own independent unit. The Church has grown in these regions largely due to member missionary work and not from the placement of full-time missionaries to open new cities and congregations in areas where there are no members.[23] Past successes in member-missionary work abound in Ghana. Church membership in Ghana was reported to be around 6,000 in the middle of 1989 when the government banned Church activities.[24] Even though missionary activities were prohibited and Church meetings where confined to members' homes, membership in Ghana increased to over 9,000 by the end of 1990.[25]

Kumasi was reported by missionaries in the Ghana Cape Coast Mission to have around 30 missionaries serving in the city in mid 2009, indicating an increased effort to better establish the Church in the second largest Ghanaian city which is also the most northern location the Church has reached. Prospects appear favorable for the organization of a third mission in Kumasi in the near future.

Following a nontraditional paradigm for expanding LDS outreach, the Church opened Sunyani to missionary work in 2010 despite few or no known Latter-day Saints prior to the arrival of missionaries. Four groups were established in different areas of the city in an effort to maximize outreach and spur local leadership development with a single LDS missionary companionship assigned to each group. Church meetings occurred in large missionary apartments initially. The approach was effective in rapidly extending far-reaching missionary outreach to a medium-sized city and in 2011 some of the groups were preparing to become branches as recent converts were trained and shepherded into learning administrative and member duties. Oftentimes it takes many years or even a decade from the organization of the first branch to the establishment of a district in many African counries. Success in the church-planting approach in Sunyani prompted mission leaders to apply the same approach to the large city of Kumasi in late 2010 and in 2011 by opening an additional 14 meetinghouses and organizing over a dozen new groups in lesser-reached areas of the city thereby more than doubling the number of LDS congregations in Ghana's second largest city. Consistently applying this approach of fostering local member self-sufficiency and church planting throughout Ghana and other nations may lead to accelerated church growth internationally.

The northern regions appear the most difficult for the Church to reach due to their distance from cities which headquartered missions, the lack of languages with translated Church materials, and predominantly Muslim populations. Northern regions have also experienced some ethnic violence in the past couple decades. The greatest opportunities may be with the Christians in these areas, which account for 10-20% of the population. The greatest opportunity to establish the Church in the north is in Tamale due to the size of the city's population. Tamale may already have a small group of members meeting who joined the Church in other areas and moved to Tamale.

Refugees driven from Liberia have experienced LDS outreach. The Liberian Buduburam Refugee Camp has had an LDS congregation for many years because of many members from Liberia fleeing to Ghana. A meetinghouse has not been built due to the temporary nature of the camp. Fulltime missionaries serve in the camp.

Member Activity and Convert Retention

Unlike most African nations in which the Church has a presence, Ghana has a strong membership and leadership base that has

been built over the past 30 years. This membership base endured periods where intense opposition from government occurred and has enjoyed the blessings of a temple in Ghana since the beginning of 2004. Some of the greatest growth occurred during the period when the church was banned by the government as membership grew by the thousands in 1990, indicating local membership was heavily involved in missionary work. Ghana was the third African nation to have a stake. The presence of the temple in Accra has strengthened the overall membership of the Church in Ghana and has assisted in the retention and integration of the nearly 15,000 new converts since its dedication. Member activity and convert retention appear to be the lowest in interior rural aras as evidenced by ongoing delays for districts to become stakes despite having enough congregations and likely enough total members to become a stake for almost a decade. The assignment of large numbers of North American missionaries in the late 2010s and early 2010s has likely reduced member activity rates in some areas as local members have relied on full-time missionaries to teach, baptize, and retain new converts and quick-baptize tactics have been applied in some locations resulting in modest to mediocre retention rates.

The Church has focused on improving retention, activity and leadership development through concentrating on single adults. More than 800 young single adults met with Elder Bednar in 2007 in Accra[26] and 450 young single adults from Accra area stakes attended a fireside with Elder Anderson in late 2009.[27] Single adult members provide excellent opportunities for the Church to increase local fulltime missionary forces and build families in the Church when marriages occur.

Lack of member activity and leadership development may have contributed to none of the districts becoming stakes in the interior between Accra, Cape Coast and Kumasi. 600 members traveled from the Assin Foso Ghana District to the temple open house in late 2003.[28] Although the Church continues to create additional branches in districts, it does not as yet appear that they have enough active members or priesthood holders to mature into stakes.

Ethnic Issues and Integration

Since few ethnic tensions are present in Ghana, the Church has not appeared to have experienced problems with integrating differing ethnic groups into the same congregations, districts, or stakes. Differing languages among members living in a common area present the greatest challenges. Some ethnic tensions in the north may present challenges for future growth.

Language Issues

Only 37% of the population are native speakers of languages with translations of Church materials. The Church benefits from the wide usage of English in large urban areas of Ghana, which has been one reason why more materials have not been translated into indigenous languages. However, English is less widely spoken in northern and rural unreached areas. Much work is yet to be accomplished in translating LDS materials and scriptures into native languages spoken by members not including additional languages which have no LDS speakers. A large number of the 79 languages spoken in Ghana are indigenous to northern areas near Burkina Faso. Many languages have over 100,000 speakers, demonstrating the need for additional Church material translations to facilitate the teaching of unreached ethnic groups, some of which may be easily reached from established Church centers. Additional language materials would also facilitate the opening of additional rural areas to missionary work.

Missionary Service

Ghana has been largely self-sufficient in providing its own missionary manpower as well as missionaries to serve in other nations due to the willingness of youth and young adults to serve full-time missions and the interest of local leaders in providing missionary preparation. The majority of full-time missionaries come from Ghana or other nations in West Africa. Ghana has experienced increased emphasis and allocation of mission resources in the past decade with the organization of a second mission in the country. North American elders have begun serving in Ghana in greater numbers recently. In 2009, the number of missionaries serving in the country began to be increased as more missionaries began to be called to serve in the two Ghana missions. The significant increase in the number of missionaries assigned to Ghana challenges the local Church to be self sufficient in staffing the enlarged missionary complement. Missionaries serving in the Ghana Accra Mission typically numbered around 110 in the early 2000s[29] but in 2011 likely numbered between 250 and 300. The Ghana Missionary Training Center opened in Tema in 2002 to serve missionaries from the Africa West Area and was the first missionary training center for the LDS Church in Africa. The facility could accommodate 104 missionaries and had 54 missionaries enter the day it opened.[30]

Leadership

With the highest percentage of LDS Church members in Africa, Ghana has one of the strongest LDS membership and leadership bases. The construction of West Africa's first temple in Ghana came as a result of a large, active membership base and strong local membership.

Unlike many areas of the world where few congregations have been created over the past decade, the Church has engaged in a more proactive "church planting" approach in Ghana with considerable success. For example, the McCarthy Hill Ghana Stake was originally created with four wards and three branches with the bare minimum for priesthood leadership as some of the bishoprics only had one counselor and no ward secretary, yet the number of congregations grew to seven wards and a branch by late 2009 and eight wards and a branch by 2011. Membership increased enough in activity, maturity, and size to begin the

filling of all vacant priesthood leadership positions in the congregations in the stake. There were 3,000 members in the stake at the time and the stake was also declared to have moved from basic to full strength. Senior missionary couples have been instrumental in the creation of additional congregations, particularly in rural areas with lacking local leadership and by finalizing unit boundaries for approval by international church leadership.

Several Ghanaian members have been called to serve as Area Seventies, including Emmanuel A. Kissi from Accra in 2002, Richard K Ahadjie from Accra in 2007,[31] and Freebody A. Mensah from Takoradi in 2009.[32] Ghanaian leadership has assisted in building of the Church in other African nations and Ghana will likely continue to be a center of priesthood strength for West Africa in the years to come.

Temple

Ghana is assigned to the Accra Ghana Temple district. President Hinckley noted that during his visit in 1993 that the Church attempted to locate land in Accra for the building of a temple but was unsuccessful. During the construction of the Accra Ghana Temple, membership growth began to occur more rapidly. Many government and tribal leaders were invited to the temple open house.[33] By the beginning of 2006 there were 160 local temple workers in the Accra Ghana Temple.[34] In Ghana, heads of families typically memorize their genealogy back to seven to 14 generations, greatly facilitating temple work.[35] Church anniversaries have been celebrated by increased temple work.[36] In 2011, six endowment sessions occurred from Tuesday through Friday with three on Saturdays. Some Ghanaian members have grown more casual in temple attendance due to close proximity; otherwise the temple is well utilized, even by members in neighboring nations.

Comparative Growth

Many similarities exist between the history of the Church in Nigeria and in Ghana. Both these nations had unofficial congregations of self-proclaimed members and were the first African nations without a strong white minority to have the Church established immediately following the 1978 revelation extending the priesthood and temple blessings to all worthy members. Although conditions in Nigeria mirrored those in Ghana, these groups of prospective Church members in both countries acted independently of one another and were unaware of each other's presence. Ghana and Nigeria are the African nations with the most widespread rural LDS outreach. In mid-2011, Ghana had the fourth largest number of stakes and was one of only four African nations with two or more LDS missions.

Although Ghana enjoys the highest percentage of LDS members in continental Africa, much progress remains to be achieved, and the percentage of members is much smaller than in Latin America. The Church has functioned in the Dominican Republic for the same amount of time as in Ghana, yet one in 86 Dominicans is a Church member. Other nations with similar membership sizes have more stakes and fewer districts, such as Germany. The Church has appeared more cautious to place more foreign missionaries in Ghana in the past due to health and safety risks and to foster local self-sufficiency. The Church in Ghana and Nigeria has far outperformed Latin America in the realm of convert retention and member activity rates, which have consistently been among the highest in the world and appear to be the best for any nation where most active members are converts, and in full-time missionary service and member-missionary work, as missions in Ghana and Nigeria have provided the great majority of their missionary manpower from their inception.

Christians churches have experienced an explosion of membership in Ghana. Most denominations have memberships in the hundreds of thousands. Although the steady and strong LDS Church growth in Ghana has outpaced most of its neighboring nations, it is only a fraction of what Pentecostal and other Protestant churches have accomplished. Most Christians have gained many members through utilizing local members as missionaries and using few outside resources to enter new areas and begin congregations. The creation of 21 new LDS congregations in 2009 indicates that opportunities for proselytism and greater outreach are materializing.

Future Prospects

Due to rapid growth in congregations and membership, many new stakes will likely be organized in Ghana. The Tema Ghana Stake appears most likely to be split as it is the stake with the most congregations. The other three stakes in the Greater Accra area will likely divided once more branches turn into wards. The Takoradi Ghana Stake will also likely divide soon, which grew from five wards and two branches in 2001 to 10 wards in 2009. The Kumasi Ghana Stake will likely divide into two stakes once additional groups and branches turn into wards.

Additional districts may be organized from the large number of mission branches and isolated branches in stakes and districts. Since these mission branches report directed to the mission president, they require greater attention and resources from the local missions than districts or stakes. Axim and Daboasi both had at least three mission branches clustered around the cities and will likely become the centers of future districts. Districts in Asamankese, Assin Foso and Koforidua will either mature into stakes or divide to create additional districts. The Ho Branch, the only congregation in the Volta Region, may divided to create a second congregation in the near future. Ho may also become its own district once a third branch is organized. A district may be organized in Sunyani once leadership become self-sufficient and the number of active priesthood holders can staff both unit and district leadership.

In late 2009, missionaries began serving in Ghana in greater numbers, especially in the Ghana Cape Coast Mission. Additional

cities may open for missionary work as groups are established from members moving to these locations or learning about the Church and desiring to join. The areas which may see the greatest increases in congregations and outreach are in southern Ghana. Cities likely to be soon reached by the Church in southern Ghana include Dunkwa, Tarkwa, and Saltpond. Other larger cities will likely have congregations in the near future in the central and northern areas, including Tamale and Hohoe. A third mission may be organized in Kumasi since around 30 missionaries served in the city in 2009, many new areas have opened and it is isolated from the rest of the Ghana Cape Coast Mission.

The northern Muslim areas are the most unreached and will require greater effort than other unreached areas for the establishment of the Church. Senior missionary couples may be crucial in the establishment of branches in this area of the country. Those from northern regions who move to areas with a congregation and join the Church will also be vital for outreach in the north.

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