



Reaching the Nations International Church Growth Almanac

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.



Ethiopia

Population: 96.63 millions (#14 out of countries)

By David Stewart and Matt Martinich

Geography

Area: 1,104,300 square km. Landlocked in East Africa, Ethiopia borders Kenya, Sudan, Eritrea, and Somalia. Ethiopia constitutes a portion of the Horn of Africa, and terrain primarily consists of the Ethiopian Highlands, which includes some mountains as tall as 4,500 meters. The Great Rift Valley runs through the center of the country, and several large lakes occupy highland areas. A tributary to the Nile River, the Blue Nile, originates in the Ethiopia Highlands. Climate varies from cool temperate conditions on high plateaus and mountains to hot tropical to semi-arid conditions in lower elevation areas. Temperate climate occurs in most areas, creating ideal agricultural conditions. Flora includes woodlands, forests, savannahs, and steppes. Jungle and tropical rainforest occupy plains in the west. Earthquakes, volcanoes, and drought are natural hazards. Environmental concerns include overgrazing, deforestation, soil erosion, desertification, and pollution. Ethiopia is administratively divided into nine states and two self-governing administrations.

Peoples

Oromo: 34.9%

Amara: 27.9%

Tigrinya: 7.3%

Sidama: 4.1%

Welaita: 3.0%

Guragie: 2.8%

Somalie: 2.7%

Hadiya: 2.2%

Affar: 0.6%

Other: 14.5%

Ethiopia's population consists of a rich diversity of ethnic groups. The Oromo and Amhara live in the central areas of the country and constitute the largest percentages of the population at 34.9% and 27.9%, respectively. The Tigrinya live in northern areas, whereas the Somalie live in the southeast. Most other ethnic groups live in south central or west central areas.

Population: 108,113,150 (July 2020)

Annual Growth Rate: 2.56% (2020)

Fertility Rate: 4.14 children born per woman (2020)

Life Expectancy: 65.5 male, 59.7 female (2020)

Languages: Amharic (32.7%), Oromo (31.6%), Tigrigna (6.1%), Somaligna (6%), Guaragigna (3.5%), Sidamigna (3.5%), Hadiyigna (1.7%), other (14.8%). Amharic, English, and Tigrigna are national or official languages. Eighty-five different languages are spoken. Languages with over one million speakers include Oromo languages (37.1 million), Amharic (31.8 million), Sidamo (4.3 million), Somali (3.96 million), Tigrigna (3.22 million), Sebat Bet Gurage (2.2 million), Afar (1.8 million), Hadiyya (1.8 million), Gamo (1.6 million), Gedeo (1.4 million), Wolaytta (1.23 million), Kafa (1.2 million), and Silt'e (1 million). Languages with between 500,000 and one million speakers include Hadiyya, Kambaata, Dawro, and Awngi.

Literacy: 51.8% (2017)

History

Home to one of the world's oldest civilizations, Ethiopia has been populated for millennia. Various Old Testament prophets alluded to Ethiopia, and the conversion of an Ethiopian eunuch by the Apostle Philip is recorded in the Book of Acts. Ethiopia became the second nation after Armenia to adopt Christianity as a state religion in the fourth century AD. Islam spread to the region shortly after its founding in the seventh century. Ethiopia maintained its autonomy and sovereignty until the 1936 Italian invasion. Italy withdrew by 1941 due to Ethiopian resistance groups and British intervention. A communist one-party state overthrew the emperor of Ethiopia in the mid-1970s and maintained rule for fifteen years. During this time, Ethiopia temporarily lost the Ogaden region to Somali forces. In the mid-1980s, a severe drought and famine due to low rainfall, political instability, and poor government management severely affected millions. Eritrea gained independence in 1993, and a border war with Ethiopia occurred between 1998 and 2000. Ethiopia has experienced rapid population growth over the past several decades and remains one of the poorest nations in the world. Civil strife and border conflicts with Eritrea, Somalia, and Sudan continue to destabilize the region. In late 2020, an armed conflict began in Tigray between the Tigray People's Liberation Front and the federal government.

Culture

Agriculture, Islam, and the Ethiopian Orthodox Church heavily influence daily life and customs. Common cuisine consists of injera—a spongy, flat bread—eaten with vegetables and meat. Pork is not eaten, as it is forbidden by the largest religious groups. A wide array of music from Ethiopia's many ethnic groups abounds. Ethiopia is also known internationally for athletes, particularly in running and soccer. Cigarette and alcohol consumption rates are among the lowest worldwide. Qat, an evergreen shrub grown in some areas of East Africa and the Middle East that has mild narcotic properties, is legal and commonly consumed. Unlike other countries in the Horn of Africa, polygamy is illegal.

Economy

GDP per capita: \$537 (2019) [0.93% of U.S.]

Human Development Index: 0.485 (2019)

Corruption Index: 37 (2019)

Widespread poverty and low literacy present obstacles to efforts to increase economic growth. Ethiopia has one of the lowest income inequalities in the world, but this is primarily due to most of the population employed in agriculture and low levels of economic development. With the majority living in rural areas, 73% of the labor force is employed in the agriculture sector. Past government mismanagement and poor agricultural techniques have resulted in low crop yields and high impact on the land. Due to the loss of Eritrea and direct ocean access, Ethiopia faces limited trade and relies on the port in Djibouti and the de facto state of Somaliland for international trade. The border war in the late 1990s with Eritrea drained much of Ethiopia's available wealth. Despite a recent history plagued by war, severe droughts, and famines, Ethiopia has maintained high levels of economic growth in the past decade, with annual GDP growth rates increasing by over 8% for most years since 2006. Primary industries include food production, textiles, chemicals, metal processing, and cement. China, Sudan, Saudi Arabia, and Switzerland are primary trade partners.

Corruption is perceived as widespread, particularly due to the highly centralized government. Corrupt practices resulting from the privatization process have occurred, such as preferential treatment of state-owned businesses to credit and land leases. Poor law enforcement in many regions has led to human rights violations.^[1] Violence and instability from neighboring countries frequently spill over into Ethiopia. Ethiopia is a transshipment point for qat, heroin, and cocaine. Money laundering is another significant problem due to a poorly developed financial system.

Faiths

Christian: 66.7%

Muslim: 31.3%

Traditional religions: 0.6%

Other: 1.4%

Christians

Denominations – Members – Congregations

Ethiopian Orthodox – 47,353,560

Evangelical – 16,657,376

Catholic – 756,792

Seventh Day Adventists – 207,743 – 1,468

Jehovah's Witnesses – 10,760 – 219

Latter-day Saints – 1,803 – 5

Religion

Forty-four percent (44%) of the population adhere to the Ethiopian Orthodox Church, whereas 31% of the population are Sunni Muslim. Adherents of Evangelical and Pentecostal churches constitute more than one-fifth of the population and have grown significantly over the past half century. Christians form the majority—the vast majority of whom are Ethiopian Orthodox. The Oromo are about half Muslim and half Christian, with half of the Oromo Christians adhering to the Ethiopian Orthodox Church. The majority of Amhara adhere to Christianity, particularly the Ethiopian Orthodox Church. Smaller ethnic groups tend to either belong to various Christian denominations or Islam. Ethiopia's once substantial Jewish population has almost entirely immigrated to Israel.[\[2\]](#)

Religious Freedom

Persecution Index: 39th (2020)

The constitution protects religious freedom, which is usually upheld by law and government policies. Abuse of religious freedom is not tolerated, and it is a crime to provoke religious groups against each other. Christian and Muslim holidays are both observed. Religious groups must register with the government to have legal standing and open a bank account. Religious groups must reregister every three years. Nongovernmental organizations (NGOs) face many restrictions, including a limit on foreign funding. Religious groups that wish to perform development work must register these activities under an NGO. Government land is granted to religious groups without cost but can be seized at any time. Orthodox Christians and Muslims generally respect each other's beliefs and practices and coexist peacefully, although there have been some reports of religious violence between Christians and Muslims.[\[3\]](#) Registered religious group must provide annual activity and financial reports that detail proselytism activities and record the names of new members and new leaders, and information about the location of new meetinghouses.[\[4\]](#)

Largest Cities

Urban: 21.7% (2020)

Addis Ababa, **Adama**, **Gondar**, **Debub & Semen Mek'ele**, Hawassa, **Dire Dawa**, **Bahir Dar**, **Dessie**, **Jimma**, **Jijiga**, **Shashamane**, Debre Zeyit, **Sodo**, **Arba Minch**, **Hosaena**, **Harar**, **Dila**, **Nekemte**, **Debre Berhan**.

Cities listed in **bold** have no congregation of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints.

Three of the nineteen cities with over 100,000 inhabitants have a Latter-day Saint congregation. Eight percent (8%) of the national population lives in the nineteen most populous cities.

Latter-day Saint History

The first Latter-day Saints to live in Ethiopia were foreigners working in the embassies in Addis Ababa. The Church conducted numerous small- and large-scale humanitarian projects in Ethiopia before and after a formal Church presence was established. During the mid-1980s, Ethiopia suffered from severe drought and famine. The First Presidency requested members of the Church in Canada and the United States to hold a special fast for those suffering in Ethiopia, Africa and around the world. Eleven million dollars was donated for those affected by the drought.[\[5\]](#)

Ethiopia was included in the Kenya Nairobi Mission in 1991. The first official church meeting in Ethiopia was held in August

1992. The first missionaries arrived in February of 1993. The Church was legally registered with the government in September of that year. Seminary began in 1995. In 1998, Ethiopia was assigned to the Africa Southeast Area. The Book of Mormon was translated into Amharic in 2000. Ethiopia was dedicated for missionary work in November 2004 by Elder Russell M. Nelson.^[6]

Ethiopia was assigned to the newly created Uganda Kampala Mission in 2005. Ethiopia and Uganda were included in the newly formed mission, whereas the Kenya Nairobi Mission retained responsibility for Kenya and Tanzania. The new mission was created so that more attention could be focused on the four nations originally covered by the Kenya Nairobi Mission, which had a combined population of around 165 million people. The new mission also reduced travel demands for mission leaders.^[7] The Church periodically experienced significant reductions in the number of foreign missionaries assigned to Ethiopia in the 2010s. For example, there were only four full-time missionaries serving in Ethiopia in late 2016 due to political unrest affecting visa availability for foreign missionaries.

The Church organized the Ethiopia Addis Ababa Mission from the Uganda Kampala Mission and the Africa Southeast Area in 2020. The new mission included Ethiopia, Eritrea, and Djibouti—the latter two countries previously did not pertain to a mission. In 2020, the Church reassigned Ethiopia to the newly organized Africa Central Area.

Membership Growth

Church Membership: 1,803 (2019)

There were 197 members in 1997. By year end 2000, there were 344 members. During the 2000s, membership steadily grew to 507 in 2002, 612 in 2005, and 874 in 2007. Most years in the 2000s experienced membership growth rates over 10%. The most rapid membership growth occurred between 2009 and 2012. Membership growth dramatically decreased in the 2010s to 0-3% for most years. In early 2017, more than 400 members in the district were young single adults between ages 18 and 30. In 2019, Church membership decreased by 6.7%. In 2019, one in 60,039 was a Latter-day Saint on Church records.

Congregational Growth

Branches: 5 (2020)

The Addis Ababa Branch—the first in the country—was organized in January 1994. Two additional branches were organized in 2001 and 2002 in Addis Ababa and Debre Zeit, respectively. In the spring of 2008, a fourth branch was organized in Awasa. In late 2009, the Addis Ababa Ethiopia District was organized and included all four branches. In 2010, the Gurji Group was formed for Sudanese members in Addis Ababa. In early 2011, a group was formed in Shashemene, and full-time missionaries were assigned to the city. By early 2013, there were two branches (Awasa and Wendo Genet) and three groups in southern Ethiopia. A third branch in Addis Ababa—the Kaliti Branch—was organized in the mid-2010s and was discontinued in 2015. By the late 2010s, all member groups appeared to have closed, and the Church also discontinued the Wendo Genet Branch. In 2020, the Church organized the Ethiopia Addis Ababa Mission Branch to service areas outside of the Addis Ababa Ethiopia District and the Awasa Branch. In 2020, the Addis Ababa Ethiopia District included three branches (two in Addis Ababa, one in Debre Zeit).

Activity and Retention

Two hundred seventy-five attended the dedication of the first church meetinghouse in 2003.^[8] 200 attended the 2004 fireside with Elder Nelson.^[9] In 2006, Ethiopian young women gathered for a young women's conference in Addis Ababa. A total of eighteen women attended from the country's three branches. The young women were taught about the Light of Christ and spent time fellowshiping one another.^[10] In 2007, a conference was held to prepare for young men to serve missions. A total of sixteen young men attended the conference and learned about the importance of proper hygiene, diet, and teaching the gospel.^[11] In July 2009, a conference in Ethiopia was held for youth and young adults to strengthen their testimonies and interact with members throughout the country. About half of the 160 attendees were not Latter-day Saints. Seminary and institute enrollment more than doubled in the late 2000s, indicating progress in augmenting the number of active members. One hundred seven were enrolled in seminary and institute during the 2009–2010 school year. Elder Jeffrey R. Holland visited Ethiopia in August

2009, held a fireside, and met with 350–400 members and missionaries.

The Bekulobet Branch had over fifty active members in 2010. The Megenagna and Debre Zeit Branches each had over one hundred active members at the time. The Awasa Branch consisted of a couple dozen Church attendees. In May 2011, ninety attended the Awasa Branch, ninety attended the Bekulobet Branch, seventy-three attended the Gurji Group, and approximately one hundred each attended the Debre Zeit and Megenanga Branches.

Member activity rates dramatically declined in the 2010s. The number of members who attended district conference widely varied to sometimes reaching only 50% of prior district conference attendance. In early 2018, approximately 175 people attended district conference, whereas in 2019 approximately 160 people attended district conference. In 2018, there were approximately seventy-five people who attended the Debre Zeit Branch, whereas as few as twenty-five members attended the Awasa Branch. The total number of active members in Ethiopia appears no greater than 200, or 11% of Church-reported membership.

Language Materials

Languages with Latter-day Saint Scripture: Amharic.

The Church published the Amharic translation of the entire Book of Mormon in 2000. The Amharic translations of the Doctrine and Covenants and the Pearl of Great Price were published in 2018.^[12] The Church has translated a limited number of gospel study and missionary resources and materials. General Conference addresses and Church magazines are translated into Amharic. The Church has translated the Testimony of the Prophet Joseph Smith and Gospel Fundamentals into Afar and has translated the Testimony of the Prophet Joseph Smith and Gospel Principles into Somali.

Meetinghouses

In 2003, the first Church built meetinghouse was dedicated in Addis Ababa. Housing the Megenagna Branch, the meetinghouse was dedicated by Elder Steven E. Snow of the Seventy, the president of the Africa Southeast Area at the time. ^[13] A second church-built meetinghouse was completed in Debre Zeit in approximately 2010.

Health and Safety

Endemic tropical diseases, poor sanitation conditions, and limited health care infrastructure in many areas present health challenges. In 2019, the estimated HIV/AIDS infection rate for the adult population was 1.1%.

Humanitarian and Development Work

Latter-day Saints have carried out at least 138 humanitarian and development work projects in Ethiopia since 1985—most of which have been community projects, emergency response, and clean water projects.^[14] The Church has consistently provided food and education on more efficient agricultural techniques. Food donations of 4,000 tons of wheat were delivered in 2000 for Ethiopia and neighboring Eritrea.^[15] Utah members embarked on a short humanitarian mission to improve drinking water sanitation and deliver eye glasses.^[16] Another shipment of food donations were provided in 2003 in the form of Atmit, a nutrient that is nutritious and easily digested for those suffering from starvation.^[17] Between March and November 2003, the Church provided more than 5,700 tons of Atmit to Ethiopia,^[18] and much of the relief provided was done in conjunction with the Catholic Church.^[19] Another shipment of Atmit was sent to Ethiopia due to worsening drought in 2008.^[20] The Church has also provided millions in Ethiopia with measles vaccinations.^[21] Relations between the Ethiopian government and the Church are strong due to past humanitarian relief.^[22] Local Ethiopian members have also engaged in service projects as a part of the Mormon Helping Hands program. Clean water projects, neonatal resuscitation education, and wheelchair donations have also

occurred regularly.[\[23\]](#)

Opportunities, Challenges, and Prospects

Religious Freedom

Latter-day Saints assemble and proselyte freely in Ethiopia. The Church has experienced some challenges regarding visas and discrimination of missionaries from certain African countries. Humanitarian and development work occur in many areas without government restrictions. Attending the dedication of the first Latter-day Saint meetinghouse in 2003, President Raymond B. Tanner of the Kenya Nairobi Mission offered thanks to the Ethiopian government for allowing missionaries to proselyte in the country, likely as a result of good relationships maintained due to the Church's humanitarian projects.[\[24\]](#) The Church operates independent congregations in only three urban areas. Some religious freedom restrictions may occur in currently unreached areas for missionary activity, primarily in border regions and in the north.

Cultural Issues

Famine, drought, and poverty have severely affected large numbers of Ethiopians. The Church hesitates to conduct missionary work in areas where basic needs are not met, which has limited the growth of the Church in Ethiopia. These conditions have necessitated humanitarian and development projects, which have strengthened ties with the government and in the long term can facilitate national outreach expansion. The influence of Islam and Orthodox Christianity on society presents challenges for missionaries but can be addressed if teaching and mission outreach programs are adjusted to meet these conditions. The Church has not developed teaching approaches or missionary resources tailored to the religious background of Muslims or Orthodox Christians. Consequently, current teaching approaches may not help many Ethiopians obtain a proper understanding of the Latter-day Saint gospel message. Returned missionaries report significant problems with poor receptivity in some areas, including harassment. Low substance abuse rates for alcohol and cigarettes are in harmony with Latter-day Saint teachings. The Church may face challenges with the widespread use of qat.

National Outreach

Mission outreach centers operate in three cities, all of which have over 100,000 inhabitants. Fewer than four percent of Ethiopians reside in areas with access to Latter-day Saint congregations and missionaries, and most of the population in areas with mission outreach centers have generally never heard of the Church and are unaware of its teachings. Additional areas may open to missionary work as Latter-day Saints move to cities without a current Church presence and share the gospel with family and friends living in currently unreached areas. However, the Church's failure to achieve sustainable national outreach is a major barrier to future progress. For example, the Church had closed all its member groups by the late 2010s, and it had discontinued the Wendo Genet Branch after only a few years.

Ethiopia's rural population accounts for nearly four-fifths of the national population and is almost totally unreached by Latter-day Saints. There are meaningful short-term opportunities for Latter-day Saints to expand national outreach in several of these areas where there are unofficial groups of prospective members awaiting baptism. A group of Sudanese refugees functioning in the small, far western Ethiopian city of Gambela since 2007. The group had two baptized members and between fifty to seventy people attending Church meetings in 2009. In 2009, missionaries reported that a group of investigators traveled to Debre Zeit from a small village called Leebengadula located a couple of hours away. Due to the remote location of Leebengadula, missionaries taught the investigators in Debre Zeit and did not baptize members from the group until its members developed regular habits of Church attendance and gospel living. Few local Latter-day Saint leaders and missionaries have prevented the establishment of formal mission outreach centers in these locations thus far.

Perhaps the biggest factor that has contributed to the extremely small size of the Church in Ethiopia today is that missions based in neighboring countries administered the Church in Ethiopia until 2020. Missions like the Kenya Nairobi Mission and the

Uganda Kampala Mission have historically serviced several nations at a time and included hundreds of millions of people within their boundaries. In the late 2000s, the Uganda Kampala Mission added Rwanda and Southern Sudan to its jurisdiction. A lack of mission resources allocated to East Africa has significantly restricted the Church's outreach capabilities. Severe member inactivity indicates that the new Ethiopia Addis Ababa Mission will likely prioritize strengthening membership and leadership instead of expanding outreach.

Member Activity and Convert Retention

Member activity rates of less than 15% indicate severe member inactivity and convert retention problems in a nation where many exhibit good participation in religious services. Inconsistent numbers of foreign, full-time missionaries assigned to Ethiopia, combined with difficulties with foreign missionaries to demonstrate competency in teaching the gospel in the Amharic language, have been a major contributor to member inactivity problems today. It was common for missionaries to transfer to and from service in Ethiopia prior to the creation of the Ethiopia Addis Ababa Mission. This resulted in limited time to learn the Amharic language and local culture and costumes sufficiently well to teach effectively. Disrupted missionary service due to political conflict, visa problems, or missionary transfers has appeared to adversely affect the conversion process for prospective members and new converts given the extremely limited size of local priesthood leadership. Conflict between local branch presidency members and members in their congregations has been a source of member inactivity as members become offended or disagree with the decisions made by local Church leadership. One branch in Ethiopia experienced a major decline in Church attendance due to problems with most local members disagreeing with their branch president on administrative matters. Societal persecution of the Church may also adversely impact member activity and convert retention.

Ethnic Issues and Integration

Missionaries have not indicated significant ethnic integration problems in Ethiopia, although this is likely due to the extremely small size of the Church in the country. Potential for future conflict at church is high for some areas if rival ethnic groups meet in the same congregations. However, the Church's outreach is too limited currently to experience greater challenges with ethnic integration, as there are no Latter-day Saints among most ethnic groups.

Language Issues

The large number of indigenous languages spoken in Ethiopia challenges efforts to opening additional areas for missionary work. Amharic is the only language in Ethiopia that has multiple Church materials and Latter-day Saint scriptures translated. Ethiopians without any Church literature translated into their native language make up two-thirds of the population, indicating that the Church has much to accomplish in translating Church materials and scriptures into native languages in the country. The Oromo language may be the most likely language to have some Church materials translated due to the large number of speakers of Oromo who reside in or near areas where the Church is currently established. Low literacy rates in many areas challenge efforts for members to be self-sufficient in learning about the teachings of the church and actively contributing to church administration.

Missionaries struggle to learn and teach about the church in the Amharic language. This has come as a result of no formal Amharic teaching to missionaries before they arrive in the mission field and missionaries transferring to and from Uganda where missionaries teach in English. Missionaries in Ethiopia have historically taught investigators with a Church member who translates from English to Amharic. Teaching with a member present involves local membership in member-missionary work. A lack of language proficiency from missionaries limits teaching to only when members are available to translate and also reduces the scope and efficacy of full-time missionaries' responsibilities to teach in their own words. Missionaries unable to speak Amharic results in communication problems with local members who do not speak English.

Missionary Service

By mid-2009, fourteen young full-time elders were serving in the country in addition to at least two senior missionary couples. Ethiopia has increased the number of local members serving full-time missions but remains dependent on foreign missionaries to staff its full-time missionary force. In 2009, a zone of missionaries worked in Ethiopia, most of who were in Addis Ababa. A

second zone of only two missionary companionships was organized in Awasa in 2011. However, the number of full-time missionaries assigned to Ethiopia has reached as low as four within the past decade due to visa problems and political instability. Missionary preparation classes for youth and young adults and increasing seminary and institute attendance may increase the number of Ethiopians serving missions, which in the long-term can assist in expanding national outreach and developing local leadership.

Leadership

All four branches have been led by local members for many years. Mission leaders in the late 2010s observed that local leadership is generally stalwart and dedicated but very limited in numbers. Although there are few priesthood leaders, the Church in Ethiopia has been able to operate a district since 2009. Low economic self-reliance and few career opportunities in many areas challenge the Church to develop leadership with the resources and skills to lead their congregations proficiently.

Temple

Ethiopia is assigned to the Kinshasa Democratic Republic of the Congo Temple district. Once completed, Ethiopia will likely be reassigned to the Nairobi Kenya Temple. Few members have been to the temple. Temple trips have begun to occur more frequently but typically members have historically visited the Accra Ghana Temple. Travel to the temple requires significant sacrifice of time and money, resulting in few members who have attended the temple.

Comparative Growth

Ethiopia ranks among the countries in Africa with the longest Church presence with the smallest percentage of the population who are Latter-day Saints on official records. For every 60,000 people there is one Church member—the lowest percentage among African countries in which the Church publishes annual membership data. Membership growth rates over the past decade have been below average for African nations with fewer than 2,000 members. Most African nations that had their initial Church establishment in the early 1990s today have significantly larger church memberships, like Uganda and Kenya, where there are multiple stakes and more than 10,000 members. If the ratio of missions to the national population were consistent with most Latin American countries, Latter-day Saints would operate between twenty and thirty full-time missions in Ethiopia. Member activity rates in Ethiopia appear to be the lowest in all of Sub-Saharan Africa.

Other missionary-oriented Christian denominations operate in Ethiopia, experience rapid growth, and have had a longer presence than Latter-day Saints. Both Seventh-Day Adventists and Jehovah's Witnesses maintain congregations in many areas of the country and each of these denominations have reported steady growth. Other denominations tend to place greater emphasis on opening congregations and teaching their doctrines in areas where there are few to no members of their churches, whereas The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints tends to wait to open additional areas to missionary work until many members reside in a particular area. Much of the reason for the why Latter-day Saints have been less successful at rapidly opening new areas and congregations stems from few missionary resources devoted to the country.

Future Prospects

President Hinckley visited members of the Church from Ethiopia, Kenya, Somalia, Tanzania, and Uganda in Nairobi, Kenya in February 1998 and predicted that the Church would grow in Kenya and surrounding countries. He stated, "Here there are now hundreds, there will be thousands, there will be tens of thousands. This gospel is true; it will spread over the earth."[\[25\]](#)

In 2020, this prediction had yet to be fully realized. The small size of the Church in Ethiopia today comes as the result of the large, rapidly growing population of Ethiopia that has been highly underserved as a result of few missionaries assigned to the country, the relatively short time in which the Church has operated in the country, modest membership growth, and stagnant

congregational growth that has persisted for more than a decade. The newly organized Ethiopia Addis Ababa Mission was desperately needed given Ethiopia's large population, high potential for self-sustaining church growth if consistent outreach is extended, long distance from prior mission headquarters, and few mission resources devoted to the country. However, the outlook for growth appears mediocre in the near-term, as the mission will likely utilize its resources to primarily strengthen existing membership and leadership and develop more effective teaching approaches, including more formalized Amharic language study for foreign missionaries. More significant growth in the medium term appears likely once there are sustained increases in the number of active members in the three Church centers in the country.

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