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.

Uganda

Population: 35.92 millions (#36 out of countries)

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Geography

Area: 241,038 square km. Landlocked in East Africa, Uganda borders South Sudan, Kenya, Tanzania, Rwanda, and the Democratic Republic of the Congo. Several large lakes surround Uganda, the largest being Lake Victoria to the south. Lake Edward and Lake Albert straddle the Congolese border and Lakes Kwania and Kyoga occupy a substantial amount of area in the center of the country. The Victoria Nile and Albert Nile Rivers flow between several of the large lakes. Topographically, Uganda consists primarily of plains and plateaus. The climate in Uganda is tropical with a dry season lasting between November and February. Agriculture is productive in Uganda, resulting from the fertile soil found throughout the country. Environmental issues include loss and destruction of wetlands, deforestation, overgrazing, soil erosion, and wildlife poaching. Uganda is divided into 80 administrative districts.

Population: 34,612,250 (July 2011)

Annual Growth Rate: 3.576% (2011)

Fertility Rate: 6.69 children born per woman (2011)

Life Expectancy: 52.17 male, 54.33 female (2011)

Peoples

Baganda: 16.9%

Banyakole: 9.5%

Basoga: 8.4%

Bakiga: 6.9%

Iteso: 6.4%

Langi: 6.1%

Acholi: 4.7%

Bagisu: 4.6%

Lugbara: 4.2%

Bunyoro: 2.7%

Other: 29.6%

No ethnic group in Uganda makes up a large percentage of the population. The largest ethnic group is the Baganda, comprising 16.9% of the population. Ethnicity percentages were provided by the 2002 census.

Languages: English is the national and official language of Uganda and is used in government and education. Arabic and Swahili speakers are also present due to Uganda's geographic position between East Africa and North Africa. Many Baganda speak Ganda and reside between Kampala and the Tanzania-Uganda border. A total of 43 languages are spoken. The most widely spoken native language is Luganda [Ganda]. Languages with over one million native speakers in include Luganda (4.13 million), Nyankore (2.33 million), Soga (2.06 million), Chiga (1.58 million), Teso (1.57 million), Lango (1.49 million), Acholi (1.17 million), and Masaaba (1.12 million).

Literacy: 66.8% (2002)

History

Named from the Buganda Kingdom in southern portion of the country, Uganda was ruled by several local African kingdoms for centuries prior to the arrival of Arab traders in the 1830s and the British searching for the source of the Nile River in the 1860s. Protestant missionaries arrived in 1877 and Catholic missionaries shortly followed thereafter in 1879. The Kingdom of Buganda became a British protectorate in 1894 and Uganda attained self-rule in 1961. Uganda achieved independence from the United Kingdom in 1962. Interethnic conflict and controversies surrounding local kingdom and tribal representation and self-rule culminated in political instability during the 1960s, resulting in Ugandan president Milton Obote suspending the constitution and consolidating all government power. In 1971, a coup overthrew the government and established Idi Amin Dada as president. Serious human rights violations occurred in the 1970s during Dada's rule as ethnic groups which supported the previous president were targets of violence and discrimination. With assistance from Ugandan rebels, armed forces in Tanzania launched an offensive against Dada following his incursion into Tanzanian territory which ultimately resulted in the removal of Dada from power despite backing from Libyan forces. Other nations in the past have sought to influence Ugandan government, politics, and economics, including China, and the Soviet Union. Intense fight and insurrections occurred in the early 1980s.[1] President Museveni came to power in 1986 and brought greater stability and peace to the region. Instability in the north has continued as a result of the Lord's Resistance Army (LRA), which opposes the Ugandan government. Civil war in the north displaced many from their homes and caused untold suffering and hardship. In 2009, severe drought devastated many areas of the north which has experienced decreasing violence and political instability in recent years.

Culture

Due to the large number of ethnic groups, culture in Uganda varies for each ethnic group. Ugandans are generally religious and many mix some of their indigenous beliefs with Christianity. Cuisine shares many similarities with East African, Arab, and Indian foods and dishes and commonly utilizes beans, meat, nuts, and vegetables. Polygamy is widespread and legal. Alcohol consumption rates are high compared to the world average.

Economy

GDP per capita: $1,200 (2010) [2.53% of US]

Human Development Index: 0.422

Corruption Index: 2.5

Due to instability and low levels of development, abundant natural resources have not been utilized and developed such as

cobalt, copper, oil, and abundant farmland and productive soils. Since the beginning of President Museveni's rule Uganda has taken several steps to reform the economy by trying to lessen inflation and increase wages for Ugandans. Uganda's landlocked position in East Africa makes it less able to trade and interact with the rest of the world. Economic growth continues to occur although a third of Ugandans live below the poverty line. Agriculture employs 82% of the labor force and constitute 23.6% of the GDP whereas services employ 13% of the labor force and generate 51.9% of the GDP. Coffee, tea, cotton, tobacco, cassava, potatoes, corn, grains, flowers, poultry, beef, goat and goat milk are common agricultural products. Industry employs 5% of the labor forc and generates 24.5% of the GDP. Major industries are generally agriculturally-based and include sugar, tobacco, cotton-made clothes, cement, and steel. Kenya, Sudan, India, and the United Arab Emirates are the primary trade partners.

Corruption is perceived as widespread and a serious barrier to economic growth. Insurrections and ethnic conflict have promoted corruption and criminal activity.

Faiths

Christian: 83.9%

Muslim: 12.1%

Other: 3.1%

None: 0.9%

Christians

Denominations Members Congregations

Catholic 13,562,845

Anglican 11,620,671

Pentecostal 1,489,000

Seventh Day Adventists 209,532 817

Jehovah's Witnesses 5,271 113

Latter-day Saints 9,024 21

Religion

Most Ugandans are Christian (84%) and approximately half of whom are Catholic. Anglicans are the largest Protestant group, claiming 36% of Christians. Other major Christian groups include evangelicals, Pentecostals, and Orthodox Christians. Catholics are most prominent in the northern and West Nile regions. Islam is practiced by 12.1% of Ugandans and Iganga District in the east has the highest percentage of Muslims.[2] Those following other religions constitute 3.1% of the population and those with no religion consist of 0.9% of Ugandans.

Religious Freedom

Persecution Index:

The constitution protects religious freedom which is upheld by the government. Political parties are no permitted to be based on religion. Several local, non-traditional Christian groups are deemed as cults by the government and subject to government surveillance. There have been no issues of the government denying visas to foreign missionary groups entering the country. [3] Some Christian denominations persecute or distance themselves from smaller, newly arrived denominations.

Major Cities

Urban: 13%

Kampala, Kira, Gulu, Lira, **Mbarara**, Mbale, Jinja, Nansana, Masaka, Entebbe

Cities in **bold** have no LDS congregation.

Nine of the ten largest cities have an LDS congregation. Eight percent of the national population resides within the ten most populous cities.

LDS History

Expatriate members were the first members to reside in Uganda, holding church meetings as early as the 1960s. The first Ugandan members joined the Church in Europe and returned back to their home country. A couple serving for a USAID program began holding meetings in the spring of 1990 and invited those around them to attend meetings. Later that year the first baptism in the country occurred as a result of an LDS pen pal from Denmark sharing the gospel with a Ugandan named Mugisa James Collins.[4] The first LDS missionaries were a senior couple who arrived in December 1990. A second senior missionary couple arrived in the spring of 1991.[5] Official recognition of the Church occurred in early 1991. Uganda was included in the newly-organized Kenya Nairobi mission in the summer of 1991. The Kenya Nairobi Mission also included at the time Tanzania. Elder James E. Faust, then of the Council of the Twelve, dedicated Uganda in addition to Kenya and Zimbabwe for missionary work in October 1991.[6] Seminary and institute commenced in 1992.

The Uganda Kampala Mission was organized in 2005 by a division of the Kenya Nairobi Mission and also included Ethiopia. The new mission allowed greater emphasis on Uganda and Ethiopia and significantly increased the number of missionaries serving in Uganda. The LDS Church in Uganda has facilitated the introduction of the Church to additional nations in the region in recent years as in 2008 Rwanda was assigned to the Uganda Kampala Mission. In the late 2000s and early 2010s, Djibouti and Sudan were assigned to the mission and for the first time since the early 1990s additional cities in Uganda were opened for missionary work (Gulu, Mbale, and Lira).

Membership Growth

LDS Membership: 9,024 (2010)

In October 1990, LDS leaders reported there were 32 members in Uganda.[7] Attendance in the country's sole branch averaged around 30-35 people each Sunday in the spring of 1991.[8] Membership increased to 800 in 1993, 1,700 in 1997, and 2,598 in 2000.

Slow membership growth rates occurred during the first half of the 2000s and were followed by rapid membership growth rates. Membership increased to 3,089 in 2002, 3,788 in 2004, 4,358 in 2006, 6,919 in 2008, and 9,024 in 2010. Annual membership growth rates in the 2000s ranged from a high of 47.2% in 2008 to a low of 3.5% in 2005 but generally ranged from 10-20%. In 2010, one in 3,836 was LDS.

Congregational Growth

Wards: 6 Branches: 15 Groups: 2

The first branch was organized in 1990. The number of branches increased to six in 1993, seven in 1997, and 12 in 2000. Two districts were operating in Kampala and Jinja by 1993. The number of branches increased to 14 in 2003, 16 in 2008, and 18 in 2009. The Church's presence was limited to Kampala and its surroundings, Jinja, and Entebbe until 2008. A group began meeting in Gulu in early 2008, became a branch in mid-2008, and was assigned full-time missionaries in the spring of 2009. In late 2008, Mbale was opened for missionary work and a group began functioning. A group was created in Lira in mid-2009 and became a branch in early 2011. In the fall of 2009, a branch was created on the Kenya side of the Uganda-Kenya border town of Busia which may have contributed to Busia, Uganda opening for missionary work in late 2011.

In 2010, the Kampala Uganda Stake was organized and included six wards and five branches in the Kampala area. In late 2011, there were six branches in the Jinja Uganda District and mission branches were operating in Gulu and Lira. In 2011, the first branches were organized in Masaka, Mbale, and Njeru and home groups began meeting in Busia and Iganga.

Activity and Retention

The average number of members per congregation increased from 133 in 1993 to 217 in 2000 and 501 in 2010. 417 were

enrolled in seminary and institute during the 2009-2010 school year. Missionaries in 2009 reported short-term convert retention to be 88% as defined by attending church meetings at least once a month. The mission president reported in late 2008 that sacrament attendance had increased dramatically that year resulting in the Church purchasing land for three new chapels in Uganda. Missionaries reported that sacrament attendance for the Uganda Kampala Mission was over 1,500 people for the first time in the middle of 2009. Considering that combined membership for all the nations in the Uganda Kampala Mission was between 7,500 and 8,000 at the end of 2008, these figures indicate that Uganda experiences some of the lowest member activity rates in Africa. Missionaries reported in 2008 and 2009 that most branches had fewer than 100 attending sacrament meeting regularly, indicating that many of the converts baptized during years of rapid membership growth were likely not retained. Missionaries reported that the Kololo Branch had as 1,000 individuals on the records with about 150 attending meetings weekly in 2009. 140 attended church services in Gulu in early 2011. 1,500 attended a meeting with Elder Holland in the late 2000s. When a new meetinghouse was dedicated for the Mukono Branch in the Kampala Uganda District in 2002, there were 900 visitors and 142 in attendance the Sunday of the dedication.[9] 1,000 attended the conference to organize the Kampala Uganda Stake in 2010.[10] Nationwide active membership is estimated at 2,500, or 20-25% of total church membership.

Language Materials

Languages with LDS Scripture: Arabic, English, Swahili

All LDS scriptures and many church materials are available in Arabic and Swahili. Gospel Principles and the Testimony of the Prophet Joseph Smith are available in Luganda.

Meetinghouses

The first church-built chapel was dedicated in 1997 for the Kololo Branch and a second was dedicated in 1998 in Jinja. A new meetinghouse was dedicated for the Mukono Branch in the Kampala Uganda District in 2002.[11] Most congregations meet in renovated buildings or rented spaces.

Health and Safety

HIV/AIDS infects 6.5% of the adult population. The risk for infectious disease is very high for hepatitis A, typhoid fever, malaria, plague, African trypanosomiasis (sleeping sickness), schistosomiasis, and rabies. Standards of living are low.

Humanitarian and Development Work

In recent years, the Church completed 31 humanitarian and development projects in Uganda, among which included clean water projects, donating classroom furniture and supplies, agricultural projects, emergency aid donations, neonatal resuscitation training, wheelchair donations, and vocational training.[12] The Church has helped curtail poverty by a wide variety of projects supervised by senior couples serving in the Uganda Kampala Mission. Some projects have aimed at meeting the immediate needs of food and clothing donations to refugee camps on the border with the Democratic Republic of Congo. Others include starting up plantations where local people learn skills needed to produce their own food and crops to sell. Several well-drilling projects are also conducted throughout the country. These programs benefit locals irrespective of religious affiliation. Humanitarian efforts have provided vast opportunities for service among Ugandans. In the United States in October 1990, Church representatives met with Ugandan Ambassador Katenta-Apuli in Salt Lake City and discussed humanitarian and health issues in Uganda.[13]

Opportunities, Challenges, and Prospects

Religious Freedom

The Church has utilized the religious freedom enjoyed in Uganda over the years by increasing the number of missionaries serving in the country. No restrictions limit LDS missionary activities.

Cultural Issues

Poverty and natural disasters afflict many Ugandans but these challenges offer opportunities for LDS humanitarian and development projects. The Church has taken advantage of abundant opportunities to relieve poverty and foster economic self-sufficiency among Ugandans. Although Uganda has a higher GDP per capita than many other African countries, many areas of Uganda are very poor. The traditional custom of paying a dowry for a bride to get married is a burden on young adults

and results in fewer Ugandans marrying. Polygamy is a widespread practice in Uganda and those who participate in a polygamous marriage must make their marriage relationships monogamous and legally recognized before baptisms. Those who have previously participated in a polygamous relationship must be interviewed by a member of the mission presidency before joining the Church. Uganda has moderate levels of literacy notwithstanding low standards of living, providing opportunities for the Church to capitalize on developing local leadership among many who can read and write. Receptivity to the LDS Church has been very high in many areas of the country due to interest in religion and the humble living conditions of most Ugandans.

National Outreach

Less than eight percent of the national population resides in a city with an LDS congregation despite LDS congregations functioning in nine of the ten most populous cities. Uganda has a large population which remains largely unreached by the Church as most live in small towns and villages in rural areas. As of early 2011, there have been no concentrated LDS outreach efforts in rural communities, home to 87% of the national population. All cities and areas are unreached outside of Kampala and its suburbs, Jinja, Entebbe, Busia, Gulu, Iganga, Lira, Mbale, and Masaka.

Since the organization of the Uganda Kampala Mission, national outreach has expanded and considerable progress has occurred as two cities in northern Uganda were opened to missionary work and independent branches were established (Gulu and Lira), branches were established in two additional cities in eastern and western areas (Mbale and Masaka), an additional branch was organized in Kampala for the first time in nearly a decade (Mutungo), and the number of full-time missionaries serving steadily increased. Expansion in national outreach did not occur for over a decade between the early 1990 and mid-2000s due to distance from Uganda to the headquarters of the Kenya Nairobi Mission, few mission resources allocated to East Africa, political instability, and low standards of living. Full-time missionaries serving in Uganda in the late 2000s and early 2010s reported several Ugandans organizing unofficial LDS congregations and contacting friends and family in unreached cities such as Iganga. The Church was first established in northern Uganda through a similar process and over time such instances will likely facilitate the opening of additional cities to missionary work. Senior couple missionaries in early 2011 reported that the fortuitous establishment of an LDS group in the city of Masaka occurred through an investigator meeting with missionaries in Kampala and subsequently moving to Masaka to later coincidentally meet a senior missionary couple performing humanitarian and development work in the area. Full-time missionaries in Kampala accompanied the senior couple during later visits and proselytized the city for a couple days, resulting in dozens of contacts desiring to be taught by the missionaries and attend church meetings. A handful of investigators were baptized and a group was formally established. The Uganda Kampala Mission has undergone considerable stress and logistical challenges due to the spontaneous gatherings of Ugandans desiring to learn about the Church and be baptized while simultaneously providing administrative guidance with full-time missionaries and mission leaders to local members and leaders in five countries, several of which also have unofficial groups of prospective Latter-day Saints awaiting a formal LDS Church establishment and baptism like South Sudan and Ethiopia. Increasing the involvement of local members in expanding national outreach by calling ward and branch missionaries, organizing additional groups and dependent branches in lesser-reached communities in Kampala, and stressing missionary preparation for Ugandan LDS youth and young adults may reduce the administrative burden on mission leaders and take advantage of high receptivity. The organization of additional missions in the area currently administered by the Uganda Kampala Mission appears likely in the near future and would allow for greater mission outreach to occur in Uganda.

Member Activity and Convert Retention

The LDS Church in Uganda exhibits low member activity rates which appear linked to quick-baptism tactics and many LDS converts joining other churches or returning to their previously-attended churches. Efforts to establish a stake in Kampala may have exacerbated low member activity rates as the creation of additional congregations was postponed to increase the number of active members in established LDS congregations. Distance to church meetinghouses appears to have also contributed to member activity challenges. Emphasis on the unique doctrinal teachings of the LDS Church and the necessity to develop weekly church attendance and habitual personal gospel study habits will be required to improve member activity rates. No noticeable change in the number of members enrolled in seminary and institute may indicate a lack of emphasis on attending Church Education System classes which provide socialization opportunities with fellow Latter-day Saints and an increased understanding of LDS teachings and practices. In recent years, missionaries report that the number of people attending LDS congregations has steadily increased, but this has been well below the rate of increase for nominal LDS membership as indicated by the average LDS congregation in Uganda quadrupling in membership between 1993 and 2010.

Ethnic Issues and Integration

Although the ethnic diversity in Uganda results in the largest ethnic group only constituting 16.9% of the population, little ethnic violence has occurred in Uganda compared to many other African nations and most ethnic conflict is politically based. Some areas of Uganda have several ethnic groups residing in the same city or area and experience ethnic tensions, but ethnic groups are generally geographically separated. Many of Uganda's ethnic groups are unreached by the Church, but the Church's establishment in Kampala and other large cities will likely ameliorate this problem as many different ethnic groups have family connections with larger cities where relatives can join the Church and then introduce the Church to their families and friends.

Language Issues

Uganda's strong emphasis on English as a national language has decreased the need to translate materials into additional

languages. The use of English in church services has also assisted in uniting members of different ethnic groups who speak different languages. As the Church grows in areas of the country outside of the capital and Jinja, additional materials will likely be translated into Luganda and other indigenous languages.

Missionary Service

Many Ugandan members serve full-time missions, but the recent increase in the number of full-time missionaries assigned to Uganda does not appear to have been commensurate with the increase in the number of local members serving missions. Ugandan missionaries commonly serve throughout East Africa and South Africa. Emphasis on seminary and institute attendance may increase the number of local members serving full-time missions.

Leadership

Leadership in the Kampala area has matured to the point that a stake was created in January 2010, but the number of local leaders remains limited and unable to support the organization of additional congregations or turn any of the five branches within the boundaries of the stake into wards as of early 2011. Efforts to consolidate local leadership may have setback the development of additional leadership manpower from new converts. Leadership is likely very limited in northern and eastern Uganda in Gulu, Lira, and Mbale due to the Church's recent establishment in these areas and limited mission training due to the heavy administrative burden of the Uganda Kampala Mission. The mission president living in Uganda has provided Ugandan Church members with additional training and support primarily in the Kampala area. Returned full-time missionaries will provide a significant source of strength and manpower to maintain and increase the number of local church leaders.

Temple

Uganda is assigned to the Johannesburg South Africa Temple district. Temple trips appear to be regularly scheduled on a stake or district level, but travel costs and distances make temple attendance unaffordable and unfeasible for most. A prospective future LDS temple in Nairobi, Kenya would drastically reduce travel time and expenses and may become likely over the medium or long term but at present active LDS leadership in East Africa is too limited to justify the construction of a temple.

Comparative Growth

LDS membership growth in Uganda was representative of the region until the mid-2000s when the Church in Uganda ranked among the most rapidly growing worldwide among countries between 4,000 and 10,000 Latter-day Saints. Congregational growth rates continue to lag behind most African nations and member activity rates are among the lowest in the region. The extent of LDS national outreach and the percentage of members in the population are comparable to most African nations.

Most Christian churches with strong missionary programs report rapid growth in Uganda. Jehovah's Witnesses reported 4,701 active members in 107 congregations in 2008. The Seventh Day Adventist Church reported 186,982 members meeting in 806 churches in 2008. Pentecostals have also seen large growth in the last several decades. Unlike the LDS Church, many other missionary-minded Christians have operated in Uganda for decades longer than the LDS Church and adopt more aggressive proselytizing campaigns focused on church planting and utilizing local leadership resources.

Future Prospects

Uganda offers abundant opportunities for LDS Church growth due to widespread religious freedom, increasing government stability, greater numbers of full-time missionaries assigned to the country, a highly receptive population, and excellent opportunities for humanitarian and development projects. Low standards of living, leadership training, administration challenges, and low member activity rates present ongoing obstacles. The organization of a separate mission for Ethiopia appears likely in the near future and would allow for greater numbers of mission resources to be dedicated to Uganda. In early 2011, full-time missionaries reported that the number of missionaries allocated to the Uganda Kampala Mission was significantly increased, which may lead mission and area leaders to permit the opening of additional cities to missionary work. Kampala remains minimally reached by LDS congregations and the prospects for organizing additional congregations in the area appear favorable. A second stake may be organized in Kampala in the next decade pending the maturation of branches into wards and the organization of additional congregations. Additional branches will likely be organized in Gulu in the near future as church attendance has steadily increased and a district for Gulu and Lira may be organized. Branches will likely be organized in Busia and Iganga in the coming years and additional medium-sized cities may open for missionary work such as Kitgum, and Soroti.

[1] "Background Note: Uganda," Bureau of African Affairs, 2 March 2011. http://www.state.gov/r/pa/ei/bgn/2963.htm

[2] "Uganda," International Religious Freedom Report 2010, 17 November 2010. http://www.state.gov/g/drl/rls/irf/2010/148727.htm

[3] "Uganda," International Religious Freedom Report 2010, 17 November 2010.

http://www.state.gov/g/drl/rls/irf/2010/148727.htm

[4] "From a tiny start, Church begins to grow in African nation of Uganda," LDS Church News, 30 March 1991. http://www.ldschurchnews.com/articles/20973/From-a-tiny-start-Church-begins-to-grow-in-African-nation-of-Uganda.html

[5] "From a tiny start, Church begins to grow in African nation of Uganda," LDS Church News, 30 March 1991. http://www.ldschurchnews.com/articles/20973/From-a-tiny-start-Church-begins-to-grow-in-African-nation-of-Uganda.html

[6] "Three nations dedicated in Africa," LDS Church News, 23 November 1991. http://www.ldschurchnews.com/articles/21541/Three-nations-dedicated-in-Africa.html

[7] "LDS leaders, visitors: 'Friendly exchange' dignitaries call at Church headquarters," LDS Church News, 27 October 1990. http://www.ldschurchnews.com/articles/19643/LDS-leaders-visitors-Friendly-exchange-dignitaries-call-at-Church-headquarters.html

[8] "From a tiny start, Church begins to grow in African nation of Uganda," LDS Church News, 30 March 1991. http://www.ldschurchnews.com/articles/20973/From-a-tiny-start-Church-begins-to-grow-in-African-nation-of-Uganda.html

[9] "New meetinghouse in Kenya a symbol, testimony of gospel," LDS Church News, 19 May 2001. http://www.ldschurchnews.com/articles/39890/New-meetinghouse-in-Kenya-a-symbol-testimony-of-gospel.html

[10] Christensen, Erin. "Saints celebrate first stake formed in Uganda." LDS Church News, 6 February 2010. http://www.ldschurchnews.com/articles/58751/Saints-celebrate-first-stake-formed-in-Uganda.html

[11] "New meetinghouse in Kenya a symbol, testimony of gospel," LDS Church News, 19 May 2001. http://www.ldschurchnews.com/articles/39890/New-meetinghouse-in-Kenya-a-symbol-testimony-of-gospel.html

[12] "Projects - Uganda," Humanitarian Activities Worldwide, retrieved 3 May 2011. http://www.providentliving.org/project/0,13501,4607-1-2008-132,00.html

[13] "LDS leaders, visitors: 'Friendly exchange' dignitaries call at Church headquarters," LDS Church News, 27 October 1990. http://www.ldschurchnews.com/articles/19643/LDS-leaders-visitors-Friendly-exchange-dignitaries-call-at-Church-headquarters.html