



THE CUMORAH FOUNDATION

Resources on Church Growth and Missionary Work for
The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints

July 2026

WELCOME!

The purpose of this newsletter is to provide monthly updates on the growth of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints and missionary news stories and present a synopsis of recently completed educational resources and research. We are a privately funded initiative that provides resources online without cost. The Cumorah Foundation is not authorized or approved by The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints or any other group.

CHURCH GROWTH DEVELOPMENTS

New Stakes

(provided with chronological ranking and date of creation)

- 44. Enugu Nigeria North - July 5th, 2026
- 45. Artibonite Haiti - July 12th, 2026
- 46. Kenema Sierra Leone West - July 12th, 2026
- 47. Kpong Ghana - July 12th, 2026
- 48. Fungurume DR Congo - July 26th, 2026

New Districts

None reported in July 2026

Discontinued Stakes and Districts

None reported in July 2026

Locations Recently Closed by the Church

Cities where the only ward or branch was closed; some of these cities may continue to have a dependent unit and/or missionaries assigned.

- Assu, Rio Grande do Norte, Brazil
- Point Fortin, Trinidad and Tobago

Locations Recently Reached by the Church

(Locations where the first ward, branch, or member group was recently organized)

- Bumpeh, Sierra Leone
- Geoma, Sierra Leone
- Mano, Sierra Leone
- Yonni, Sierra Leone
- Panlap, Sierra Leone
- Chachoengsao, Thailand
- Chaiyaphum, Thailand
- Lamphun, Thailand
- Nakhon Sawan, Thailand

NEWS AND UPDATES

Noteworthy Growth Developments in July 2026

Unprecedented Growth and Rural Outreach Expansion in the Sierra Leone Bo Mission

A recent [article](#) from The Church News indicated that the Sierra Leone Bo Mission was anticipated to reach 10,000 convert baptisms by the end of July 2026, only two years after the mission was organized in July 2024. The mission president reported that the mission baptized 2,910 people during its first year and baptized approximately 7,000 people during its second year between the summer of 2025 and the summer of 2026. Baptizing 7,000 converts within a 12-month period is exceptionally rapid growth that has rarely been achieved in the history of the Church. The article reported that two additional stakes and eight branches were expected to be organized in the mission before the end of 2026. The article also provided evidence of strong retention in some recently established congregations, with sacrament meeting attendance in certain newly organized branches reportedly increasing even faster than membership on the records. However, it is unclear whether similar increases in Church attendance are occurring in older branches or established wards in Bo and Kenema based on the information shared in the article. Moreover, it was reported that many new converts assist the full-time missionaries shortly after baptism, begin serving full-time missions as soon as one year later, and subsequently return to serve in branch and ward leadership positions.

The first branch within the present-day boundaries of the Sierra Leone Bo Mission was organized in Bo in 1990. A second city, Kenema, had its first branch organized in 2003. A second city had a branch created in 2003 (Kenema). The Church created its first two stakes in Bo in 2017, the same year that branches began to be established outside of Bo and Kenema for the first time. As a result, the first branches were created in 11 additional cities and towns, including Kailahun (2017), Mogbwemo (2017), Moriba Town (2017), Mosenesie Junction (2017), Moyamba (2017), Pujehun (2019), Tongo (2019), Dia (2021), Matagalemah (2021), Matru (2021), and Segbwema (2023). Since the creation of the mission in 2024, branches have been organized in Bonthe (2025), Dambara (2025), Gbangbatok (2025), Lago (2025), Mokañji (2025), Moyamba Junction (2025), Njala (2025), Njama (2025), and Sumbuya (2025). Additionally, the mission has opened member groups in the following towns and villages: Buedu, Bumpah, Geoma, Mano, Mukongi, San Malen, Serabu, and Yonni.

Recent developments have signaled an important shift in the Church in the geographical area that constitutes the present-day boundaries of the Sierra Leone Bo Mission. The initial focus was on establishing and strengthening centers of strength in Bo and Kenema to organize stakes, which was realized with the first two stakes in Bo in 2017 and the first stake in Kenema in 2019. This first phase of growth took multiple decades to accomplish. Next, the Church opened its first branches and expanded to many of the most populous population centers in southern and eastern Sierra Leone between 2017 and 2023. Since 2024, the Church has continued to saturate the major population centers with additional congregations and rapidly opened new branches and member groups in small towns and villages in rural areas between Moriba Town on the southwest, Moyamba on the northwest, Tongo on the northeast, and Pujehun on the south.

The concentration of Latter-day Saint congregations in Bo is especially remarkable. The city has approximately 225,000 inhabitants and 30 wards organized into four stakes—one ward for every 7,500 residents. Cumorah Foundation data indicate that, among all cities with at least 200,000 inhabitants in Africa, Asia, Europe, and Latin America, no city has a lower population-to-Latter-day Saint congregation ratio. At year-end 2025, Sierra Leone had 41,775 members in 118 wards and branches, an average of approximately 354 members per congregation. Applying this national average to Bo's 30 wards yields a rough estimate of 10,620 members, or approximately 4.7% of the city's population. Although this is not an official city membership count, it provides a useful indication of the extraordinary scale of the Church's presence in Bo.

This concentration of Latter-day Saints in Bo is even more noteworthy in light of Sierra Leone's religious and historical context. Approximately 77% of Sierra Leoneans are Muslim and 22% are Christian, although the

country is also known for unusually strong tolerance and cooperation between Muslims and Christians. The first official branch of the Church in Sierra Leone was organized in 1988—a decade after the Church was formally established in Ghana and Nigeria—and the first Church meetings in Bo were held in 1990. Thus, in approximately 36 years, Bo has developed from a small group of members to four stakes and 30 wards.

The exceptional nature of this growth is further illustrated by comparison with other internationally organized, missionary-oriented Christian groups. Cumorah Foundation mapping indicates that Jehovah's Witnesses operate approximately 17 congregations within the present-day boundaries of the Sierra Leone Bo Mission. These include four congregations in Bo, four in Kenema, one each in Moriba Town, Moyamba, Njala, and Kailahun, and congregations in five additional eastern communities, including Dia and Buedu. Jehovah's Witnesses retain somewhat broader penetration in portions of far eastern Sierra Leone, where Latter-day Saints currently have only four congregations. However, Latter-day Saints have 30 wards in Bo alone—7.5 times the four Jehovah's Witness congregations in the city and more congregations than Jehovah's Witnesses operate throughout the entire Sierra Leone Bo Mission area.

Nationally, Jehovah's Witnesses reported an increase from 2,340 average active publishers and 42 congregations in 2023 to 2,662 average publishers and 44 congregations in 2025. Seventh-day Adventists reported 53 churches, 75 companies, and 14,417 members in 2023, compared with 54 churches, 74 companies, and 16,306 members in 2025. Thus, the combined number of Adventist churches and companies remained unchanged at 128, although membership increased by approximately 13%. These developments indicate moderate growth among both groups, but little recent congregational expansion compared with the proliferation of stakes, wards, branches, and member groups in the Sierra Leone Bo Mission. It is also important to note that although membership and participation statistics are not directly comparable among these denominations because of differences in how they are reported, recent trends in congregational growth provide a useful point of comparison.

These comparisons suggest that recent Latter-day Saint growth is not merely part of a parallel expansion occurring among all missionary-oriented Christian groups in Sierra Leone. Rather, the Church appears to be experiencing a distinctive period of rapid conversion, congregational multiplication, local leadership development, and rural outreach. Particularly noteworthy is the apparent ability of rapidly growing congregations to develop new missionaries and local leaders needed to sustain additional units. Bo consequently stands as one of the strongest candidates worldwide for a future temple announcement, given its four stakes, unusually high estimated concentration of Latter-day Saints, and substantial growth in surrounding cities, towns, and rural communities.

Over One Hundred Convert Baptisms in Mali; Member Groups Surrounding Bamako Prepare to Become Branches

The Church has experienced unusually rapid growth in Mali in recent months despite no young full-time missionaries being physically assigned to the country. The Church News [reported](#) that 78 converts were baptized in April 2026 and another 36 were baptized in May, while more than 50 additional prospective members were preparing for baptism. All contacts with prospective converts were made by local members, whereas teaching and baptismal interviews conducted by young full-time missionaries occurred remotely through technology. Local priesthood holders performed all baptismal and confirmation ordinances. Forty-five male converts from the April baptisms were ordained to the Aaronic Priesthood the following day, and some of these new priests participated in baptizing converts in May. These developments demonstrate substantial progress with local self-sufficiency and priesthood development despite the absence of a traditional full-time missionary presence in the country.

Growth has increasingly expanded beyond the Bamako Branch into several communities surrounding the capital. In early July, sacrament meeting attendance was 68 in the Bamako Branch, 79 in the Farako-Mountougoula Group, 51 in the Diatoula Group, and 34 in the N'gomi Group, for a combined attendance of 232. Nearly 100 additional prospective members were preparing for baptism at the time. The comparatively high attendance in these member groups—particularly in Farako-Mountougoula, where attendance exceeded the Bamako Branch—suggests that several of these congregations may soon have sufficient membership and local

leadership to become independent branches. The organization of additional branches would likely make possible the creation of the first district in Mali once sufficient local priesthood leadership is developed.

Much of this recent growth has resulted from existing social connections to the Church. Many prospective converts had relationships with Latter-day Saints, inactive or less-active members, or individuals who had attended meetings associated with Elder David A. Bednar's visit to Mali in May 2017. During that visit, [more than 250 people gathered at Tabakoro outside Bamako](#), including only 17 Latter-day Saints but many others who regularly attended worship services with them. Elder Bednar dedicated Mali for the preaching of the restored gospel during the visit, and the Bamako Branch was organized two months later. New converts today are primarily taught in Bambara, although the Book of Mormon is read and informally interpreted from the French translation because no official Bambara translation of the Book of Mormon is currently available. The Church provides a Bambara Bible but does not list a Bambara Book of Mormon translation among its published or in-progress translations.

Temple worship also appears to have played an important role in strengthening the Church immediately before this period of rapid growth. Approximately 30 members from Bamako traveled more than 1,000 kilometers to the Abidjan Côte d'Ivoire Temple in February 2026, with many receiving temple ordinances for the first time. The timing is noteworthy, as the large wave of convert baptisms began shortly thereafter. Mali was also reassigned on July 1 to the newly organized Senegal Dakar Mission, providing a mission headquartered considerably closer to Mali than Abidjan and potentially allowing greater administrative attention to the developing congregations. If current growth continues and the Farako-Mountougoula, Diatoula, and N'gomi Groups become branches, prospects appear favorable for the organization of the first district in Mali in the foreseeable future.

Four New Branches Organized in Thailand

The Church organized four new branches in previously unreached cities in Thailand during the past one to two months. New branches were created in Chachoengsao, Chaiphum, Lamphun, and Nakhon Sawan. Lamphun is the first city in the Chiang Mai area to have its first branch organized since the Lampang Branch was created in 1978. Nakhon Sawan was previously one of the most populous cities in Thailand without a ward or branch. Likewise, the new branches in Chaiphum and Chachoengsao are not only the first branches organized in these cities, but also the first branches ever established in their respective provinces.

The organization of four branches in previously unreached cities within such a short period represents a significant acceleration in national outreach. During the entire 10-year period from 2015 through 2025, the Church organized its first branches in only five cities. This recent expansion follows the creation of the Thailand Bangkok East Mission in July 2024, which increased the number of missions in the country from one to two, as well as the opening of the Thailand Missionary Training Center in Bangkok earlier that year. These developments have substantially increased the Church's missionary infrastructure in Thailand.

Nevertheless, recent expansion into additional cities has not yet translated into accelerated national membership growth. Membership has increased by only approximately 1–2% annually in recent years, and congregational growth has remained particularly slow. The Church operated 39 congregations in Thailand in 2006 compared with only 44 at year-end 2025—an increase of just five congregations in nearly two decades. Official year-end 2025 statistics reported 24,825 members, 44 official congregations, four stakes, two districts, and two missions. Consequently, the recent organization of branches in four previously unreached cities may represent an important change in outreach strategy especially given the range of locations where the branches were organized, although additional time will be needed to determine whether this development results in sustained increases in membership and congregational growth.