



# THE CUMORAH FOUNDATION

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

March 2020

## 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)

5. Abidjan Cote d'Ivoire Selmer - March 1st, 2020
6. Winder Georgia - March 1st, 2020
7. Nampa Idaho YSA - March 8th, 2020

### New Districts

*None reported in March 2020*

### Discontinued Stakes and Districts

1. Granada Hills California Stake

### Locations Recently Reached by the Church

(city population rank, most recent population estimate)  
precise population data from [www.citypopulation.de](http://www.citypopulation.de)

- São Caetano, Pernambuco, Brazil (46<sup>th</sup>, 24,958)
- Pariquera-Açu, São Paulo, Brazil (322<sup>nd</sup>, 12,661)
- Mairinque, São Paulo, Brazil (175<sup>th</sup>, 34,690)
- Tiassale, Cote d'Ivoire (67<sup>th</sup>, 20,057)
- La Huerta, Jalisco, Mexico (92<sup>nd</sup>, 7,891)
- Chester, South Carolina (88<sup>th</sup>, 5,607)

### 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.*

(city population rank, most recent population estimate)  
data from [www.citypopulation.de](http://www.citypopulation.de)

*None reported in March 2020*

### Coronavirus Continues to Significantly Disrupt Missionary Work and Church Operations

The Church reported [many announcements during March](#) due to the spread of the coronavirus. All of the Church's 154 temples in operation that are not undergoing renovation have temporarily closed. The Church has cancelled all Sunday meetings worldwide for all wards and branches. No stake or district conferences will occur until further notice. The Church has sought to return all full-time missionaries to their home countries and have these missionaries become reassigned to a mission within their home country. The Church also [announced on March 31<sup>st</sup>](#) that missionaries from the United States and Canada had the option to be released from their missions and restart their missions 12-18 months later, or wait to be reassigned to a mission within their home country. General Conference plans have also been significantly altered to avoid any large meetings of congregants.

It is unclear how long the current pandemic will severely limit Church operations, but recent trends suggest it may be many months until normalcy in the missionary program and the creation of new units is reestablished. There were multiple stakes scheduled to be organized in late March or April, and these plans have appeared to be suspended until the Church resumes normal Church operations that permit large meetings. Convert baptismal services continue to occur in many areas of the world, although mission leaders indicate that there are restrictions on the number of people who attend such services. In areas where no full-time missionaries are assigned anymore, local members and leaders have undertaken the responsibility to teach, prepare, baptize, confirm, and mentor new converts. Click [here](#) to read an analysis of the

potential impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on church growth trends.

### Stake Discontinued in California

The Church recently discontinued the Granada Hills California Stake. The stake was organized in 1936 and is one of the first stakes created in southern California. The closure of the stake was primarily attributed to decades of active members who have moved away from the area in search of more affordable housing and neighborhoods with demographics more typical of traditionally Latter-day Saint White members. Few convert baptisms and convert retention/member activity challenges have also appeared to affect the eventual decision to discontinue the stake. The stake had seven wards at the time it was discontinued, four of which were reassigned to the Canoga Park California Stake (previously had five wards and one branch) and three of which were reassigned to the North Hollywood California Stake (previously had six wards). Thus, additional wards will likely be closed in the affected area within the near future. Additional stake consolidations in California appear highly likely as the number of congregations (wards and branches) in the state have decreased by more than 100 within the past decade. The Church in California has struggled with long-term Latter-day Saint emigration which has appeared primarily influenced by high costs of living/real estate. For example, Church membership in California has been relatively unchanged for the past 20 years at approximately 750,000. In contrast, the state population has increased by approximately six million to 40 million today. This discrepancy in Church membership growth versus population growth indicates the Church's challenges in California with attracting and retaining more members from non-White populations, difficulties with establishing the Church more among individuals and not just member families, and the barriers of growing the Church when a steady stream of active members leave the state.



### New Branches Organized in Tete, Mozambique

As reported last month, the Church in Mozambique continues to experience rapid growth. In March, the Church organized three new branches in the large city of Tete. The Church organized its first branch in Tete in 2005, and no additional branches had been organized in the city until this month when the three new branches were created. The organization of a district in the city appears imminent given the number of branches in the city and the city's distance from other wards and branches in the country. Tete will likely be assigned to the Mozambique Beira Mission when the mission is organized in July. There are three stakes and two districts in Mozambique.



### Progress in Senegal

The Church in Senegal has continued to make significant progress even though the first branch of the Church was created only back in 2016. Mission leadership report that additional missionaries have been recently assigned to Senegal, although these missionaries have appeared to have since been evacuated due to the COVID-19 pandemic. Converts have also joined the Church from the city of Saint-Louis on the northern border with Mauritania. There are now dozens of individuals who are interested in learning about the Church, including many who have requested baptism. Church membership in Senegal as of year-end 2018 was 108 organized in two branches.

