



THE CUMORAH FOUNDATION

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

May 2019

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)

- 15. Calgary Alberta YSA - May 5th, 2019
- 16. Camarin Philippines - May 5th, 2019
- 17. Chulac Guatemala - May 5th, 2019
- 18. Umuahia Nigeria South - May 12th, 2019
- 19. Orem Utah 2nd Stake – May 19th, 2019

New Districts

- 11. Danané Cote d'Ivoire - April 28th, 2019

Discontinued Stakes and Districts

- 3. Guaranda Ecuador District

Locations Recently Reached by the Church

(city population rank, most recent population estimate)
precise population data from www.citypopulation.de

- Hazel Green, Alabama (146th, 3,630)
- La Portada, Cuba (N/A, N/A)
- Tweapease, Ghana (N/A, N/A)
- Mirebalais, Haiti (36th, 15,562)
- Kwa Ibo, Nigeria (N/A, N/A)
- New Bataan, Philippines (N/A, ~47,000)
- Magburaka, Sierra Leone (7th, 23,136)
- Anna, Texas (267th, 8,249)
- Winnie, Texas (503rd, 3,254)

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

- Peribán de Ramos, Michoacan, Mexico (26th, 15,434)

Congregational Growth in the United States Returning to Historical Averages



The Church in the United States has reported a net increase of more than 50 wards and branches thus far in

2019, suggesting a change to the trend of lower-than-normal net increases for the number of wards and branches in the United States that has persisted for several consecutive years. The Church appears on track in 2019 to replicate congregational growth trends comparable to most years during the past decade as the Church generally reports a net increase of 100-150 wards and branches per year. In addition to increases in active membership, many factors go into play in the United States regarding the creation or discontinuation of congregations. Notable examples include real estate prices affecting meetinghouse construction, geographical redistribution of active membership due to moving, policies that favor or deter the creation of specialized congregations for specific languages or people groups (i.e. young single adults), creating new congregations to try to jumpstart reactivation efforts among inactive/less active members, reducing travel times for members to the nearest meetinghouse, and meetinghouse space optimization.

See below for historical numbers regarding the net increase of congregations in the United States during the past decade:

- 2018 +49
- 2017 +0
- 2016 +65
- 2015 +142
- 2014 +152
- 2013 +124
- 2012 +114
- 2011 +27
- 2010 +126
- 2009 +112

Rapid Congregational Growth in Benin City, Nigeria Continues

The Church in Benin City, Edo State, Nigeria continues to report rapid congregational growth. Since the beginning of 2019, the Church in Benin City has organized new congregations at almost the rate of one per week. Since January, 16 new congregations (4 new wards, 12 new branches) have been created – an increase of 20% in less than six months. The 82 congregations in the eight Benin City stakes provide the most penetrating outreach by the Church in any city in Africa with more than one million inhabitants as the average ward or branch has 19,634 people within its boundaries. To contrast, other major cities in Sub-Saharan Africa with a significant Church presence have a much smaller Church presence such as Abidjan, Cote d'Ivoire (one congregation per 47,391), Accra, Ghana (one congregation per 52,105), and Kinshasa, DR Congo (one congregation per 148,148). Even more impressive, the Church in Benin City organized 14 new congregations (4 wards, 10 branches) in 2017 alone, indicating a trend to organize dozens of new congregations in the city. These findings indicate substantial increases in active membership, efforts to reduce travel times for church, and proactive measures to “plant” congregations in areas to spark greater growth. Benin City is now the metropolitan area outside of the Americas with the most stakes and congregations without a temple planned or dedicated. Despite this significant growth, there remains many opportunities for additional expansion of the Church in lesser-reached and unreached areas of Benin City, particularly on the eastern side of the city where some urban areas are not located within the boundaries of stakes.



Second Q'eqchi'-Speaking Stake Organized

The Church created its second Q'eqchi'-speaking stake in Guatemala on May 5th from the Chulac Guatemala District. The Church organized its first Q'eqchi'-speaking stake in 2017 in Senahu – a town nearby Chulac in the highlands of north-central Guatemala. Although Q'eqchi' speakers have lived in other stakes, such as the Cobán Guatemala Stake, these two stakes are the first stakes to be essentially entirely comprised of Q'eqchi' speakers. There are now 50 stakes and 13 districts in Guatemala.



Branch Advances into a Ward in Sweden

For the first time in over 15 years, the Church in Sweden organized a new ward from a branch. There has been no increase or decrease in the number of wards in Sweden since 2003. The new ward is the Kristianstad Ward in the Malmö Sweden Stake. At most recent report, the Kristianstad Branch had 40 active members in the mid-2010s. The number of active members in Sweden has appeared stable during the past two decades based upon dozens of reports from returned missionaries although the nationwide member activity rate is only 30%. Approximately 40-50% of new converts remain active one year after baptism although in recent years many, if not most, converts are not native Swedes. There are now 25 wards and 15 branches in Sweden.



New Branch Created in Cuba



The Church in Cuba organized a new branch, bringing the total number of branches in the Havana Cuba District (organized in 2017) to four. The new branch is the La Portada Branch, which is located in the small town south of Cotorro. There are now three ordinary branches that meet for Church services (Cotorro, Havana, La Portada) and one district branch that administers to members who live outside of the Havana area. The Church in Cuba reported significant growth in 2018 as membership increased 242 to 357 (a 47.5% increase in one year). Cuba is not assigned to a mission and is directly administered by the Caribbean Area.

Congregational Growth Accelerates in Bolivia

The Church in Bolivia has regularly organized new wards and branches thus far in 2019. Since the beginning of the year, four new wards and two new branches have been created, and no congregations have been discontinued. There are now approximately 263 congregations in the country – the highest number ever reported. Membership growth rates have slightly increased every year since 2016 albeit they remain low at 2.20%. Prospects appear favorable for the announcement of two additional temples in Bolivia within the foreseeable future in La Paz/El Alto (nine stakes in the metropolitan area) and Santa Cruz (10 stakes in the metropolitan area). Currently there is only one temple in the country located in Cochabamba.



New District Organized in Cote d'Ivoire



The Church organized the Danané Cote d'Ivoire District from missions branches in the Cote d'Ivoire Yamoussoukro Mission on April 28th. The new district includes the following three branches: the Danané 1st, Danané 2nd, and Mahapleu Branches. The new district is the

Church's third new district organized in Cote d'Ivoire in 2019, and all three of these new districts are located in the Montagnes District, where the Church operated no districts before 2019. Missionaries report plans to organize additional branches and districts in the Cote d'Ivoire Yamoussoukro Mission. Likely locations for future districts include Issia, Meagui, Saioua, Sinfra, and villages in rural communities nearby Daloa and Yamoussoukro. There are now 14 stakes and 15 districts in Cote d'Ivoire. In contrast, the Church in Cote d'Ivoire reported only three stakes and one district in 2009.

UPDATED RESOURCES

REACHING THE NATIONS COUNTRY PROFILES

We continue to update the country profiles for our comprehensive work, *Reaching the Nations: International Church Growth Almanac*. The following country profiles were updated and posted on our website, www.cumorah.com, during May 2019. We will continue to update additional country profiles in the coming months, with the goal to release the next edition of the almanac by 2020:

- [Denmark](#)
- [Guam](#)
- [Marshall Islands](#)
- [Northern Mariana Islands](#)
- [New Caledonia](#)
- [Palau](#)
- [Tuvalu](#)