



THE CUMORAH FOUNDATION

Resources on LDS Church Growth and Missionary Work

April 2016

WELCOME!

The purpose of this newsletter is to provide monthly updates on LDS Church growth 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)

22. Queen Creek Arizona Central - April 10th, 2016
23. Reno Nevada Mount Rose - April 10th, 2016
24. Dunedin New Zealand - April 17th, 2016
25. Gilbert Arizona Gateway - April 17th, 2016
26. Tacoma Washington South - April 17th, 2016
27. Cotonou Benin - April 24th, 2016
28. Mbuji-Mayi DR Congo - April 24th, 2016

New Districts

10. Três Rios Brazil - April 17th, 2016

Discontinued Stakes and Districts

2. Magna Utah Central Stake
3. Moscow Idaho University Stake

Locations Recently Reached by the Church

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

- Villa Parque Santa Ana, Argentina (N/A, 2,491)
- Araxá, Minas Gerais, Brazil (29th, 92,230)
- Arvin, California (347th, 19,304)
- Cara Sucia, El Salvador (N/A, N/A)
- Akuse, Ghana (N/A, N/A)
- Los Amates, Guatemala (N/A, N/A)
- Tezoyuca, Morelos, Mexico (60th, 4,555)
- Poro, New Caledonia (N/A, N/A)
- Tonala, Nicaragua (N/A, N/A)
- Amassoma, Nigeria (N/A, N/A)
- Kwale, Nigeria (N/A, N/A)
- Oyo, Nigeria (32nd, 370,000)

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

- Socorro, Sao Paulo, Brazil (215th, 24,944)
- Aguazul, Colombia (138th, 25,600)
- Dexter, Missouri (107th, 7,864)
- Huntington Station, New York (35th, 33,029)
- Santiago, Peru (N/A, N/A)

2015 Annual Statistical Report Released

The Church reported the following statistics as of December 31st, 2015.

- Membership: 15,634,199 (increase of 261,862 from 2014; a 1.70% annual increase)
- Congregations: 30,016 (increase of 395 from 2014; a 1.33% annual increase)
- Stakes: 3,174 (increase of 60 from 2014; a 1.93% annual increase)
- Districts: 558 (decrease of 3 from 2014; a 0.53% annual decrease)
- Missions: 418 (increase of 12 from 2014; a 3.0% annual increase)
- Convert Baptisms: 257,402 (decrease of 39,401 from 2014; a 13.3% annual decrease)
- Increase of Children on Record: 114,550 (decrease of 1,859 from 2014; a 1.62% annual decrease)
- Full-time missionaries: 74,079 (decrease of 11,068 from 2014; a 13.0% annual decrease)
- Church service missionaries: 31,779 (increase of 1,375 from 2014; a 4.5% annual increase)

The decline in the number of full-time missionaries serving, and the commensurate decrease in the number

of convert baptisms, constitutes the most surprising development in the 2015 statistical report. Decelerating membership growth also occurred during the year. The Church in 2015 experienced its slowest membership growth since 1937 - a mere annual increase of 1.70%.

There are some additional noteworthy findings in the 2015 statistical report. First, the Church reported the largest net increase in the number of congregations, and the highest percentage increase in congregations, since 2005. Second, the Church reported the most commensurate membership and congregational growth since 1998. In other words, the rates of membership and congregational growth were the most similar since 1998. Third, the Church has sustained steady increases in the number of stakes within the past five years (approximately 50-60), whereas the Church reported smaller net increases in the number of stakes in the 2000s (approximately 30-40). As a result, greater "real growth" has appeared to occur in the past year that emphasizes quality instead of quantity.

Four New Temples Announced

The Church announced that four new temples will be constructed in the following locations:

- Quito, Ecuador
- Harare, Zimbabwe
- Belém, Brazil
- Lima, Peru (2nd temple)

The Church later noted that the second temple in Lima, Peru will be named the Lima Peru Los Olivos Temple. Lima will be the first city outside of the United States to have two LDS temples. The announcement of the new temples increases the total number of temples announced, under construction, or in operation to 177. Prior to the announcement, Zimbabwe was previously the nation with the second most Latter-day Saints without a temple.

Church Leaders Report Rapid Stake Growth Worldwide

LDS apostle Elder Jeffrey R. Holland was recently quoted in a meeting with young single adults in the Dallas area in regards to unprecedented growth in the number of new stake creations. This meeting occurred Sunday, April 24th. A video of the conference can be found [here](#). Elder Holland begins to discuss stake growth approximately 54 minutes into the video. Here are some noteworthy quotes:

- "We are in the midst of incredible growth – staggering growth – in the Church. It is the single greatest problem we have."
- "We are reeling under the implications of the growth that we have in this Church."
- "A week ago Thursday we created 15 stakes...the week before it was 12." [in reference to temple meetings at Church Headquarters]
- "We are talking about double-digit stakes every week of our lives."

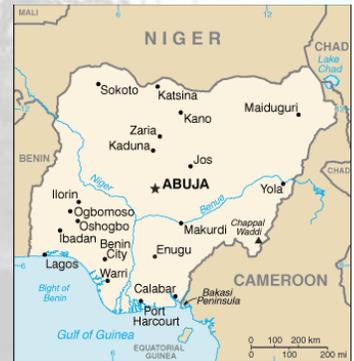
- "It is like a bucking bronco."
- "In the middle of all that occasionally, rarely...we dissolve a stake. That is so unusual...it doesn't happen very often."

Accelerated stake growth in 2016 has been attested by the organization of at least 28 new stakes during the first four months of the year – an average of seven new stakes created a month. If this trend continues, there will be 84 new stakes organized in 2016 – the largest number of new stakes organized in a single year since 1998 when 84 new stakes were organized. If the Church organizes at least 10 new stakes a week (excluding late December and the month of July) for the rest of 2016 per Elder Holland's statement, the Church would organize approximately 300 new stakes during 2016.

Church leaders in other areas of the world have made comments regarding accelerated stake growth. For example, senior missionaries serving in Ghana recently reported that Africa West Area leadership predicts a total of 16 new stakes to be organized in the Africa West Area during 2016.

Rapid Growth in Yenagoa, Nigeria; First Branch Organized in Oyo, Nigeria

The Church doubled the number of branches in Yenagoa, Nigeria from four to eight during the middle of April. Inhabited by 320,000 people, Yenagoa is the most populous city and the administrative capital of Bayelsa State. There are approximately two million people who reside in Bayelsa State where the Ijaw people constitute the majority of the population. In 2009, the Church organized its first branch in Bayelsa State. The Yenagoa Nigeria District was organized in 2013 with four branches. Bayelsa State is administered by the Nigeria Port Harcourt Mission.



The Church in Nigeria also organized its first branch in the city of Oyo. The branch holds worship services in English. With 370,000 inhabitants, Oyo was the 12th most populous city in Nigeria without an official ward or branch and is the 32nd most populous city nationwide. Oyo is located in Oyo State and is administered by the Nigeria Lagos Mission. Oyo is the first major city in western Nigeria to have had its first branch organized since the creation of the first branch in Ikorodu in 2009.

Fourth Stake Created in the Central DR Congo

The Church organized its fourth stake in the central DR Congo last Sunday - the Mbuji-Mayi Democratic Republic of the Congo Stake. Rapid growth has occurred in Mbuji-Mayi within the past decade as the number of branches increased from one to eight within the past decade. A recent fireside in Mbuji-Mayi held with LDS apostle Elder Neil L. Anderson was attended by more than 2,000 members in the area. The Church plans to open its first mission headquartered in the Kasai Region of the Democratic Republic of the Congo this summer with its operations based out of Mbuji-Mayi.



Congregational Growth in Guatemala



Several new wards have recently been organized in Guatemala, possibly signifying a reversal to stagnant congregational growth trends that have persisted within the past 15 years. Since the beginning of 2016, the Church has reported a net increase of three congregations (wards and branches). To contrast,

the Church in Guatemala reported a net decrease of one congregation in 2015. Most new congregations organized in Guatemala within the past few years have been created in Guatemala City or Quetzaltenango. There are currently 424 congregations (266 wards, 158 branches) in the country.

Congregational Growth Continues in Australia

The Church in Australia continues to report positive progress in many areas in regards to church growth. In April, the Church reinstated a second branch in Townsville, organized one Tongan-speaking ward in Melbourne, and organized one Samoan-speaking branch in Brisbane. Congregational growth trends in Australia have held steady at approximately two percent per year since 2012 – nearly the same annual membership growth rate during this period.



New Ward Organized in Mongolia

The Church recently organized a new ward in Mongolia: the Tuul Ward. The new ward is the first new ward to be created in Mongolia since the organization of the first stake, the Ulaanbaatar Mongolia West Stake, in 2009. The Church in Mongolia has experienced essentially stagnant growth within the past six or seven years as evidenced by decelerating membership growth and stagnant congregational growth. Missionaries note that the creation of a second stake in Ulaanbaatar from the Ulaanbaatar Mongolia East District appears likely in the near future.



Rapid Growth Continues in Cote d'Ivoire



Several new congregations were organized in Cote d'Ivoire during April, including the Church's fifth branch in Bouake, sixth branch in San-Pedro, and second branch in Blankro. All five branches in Bouake have been created within the past year, suggesting

that the Church has implemented an effective church-planting strategy for growth in the city. Bouake is the second most populous city in Cote d'Ivoire and is inhabited by 542,000 people. There has been a net increase of 14 congregations in Cote d'Ivoire since the beginning of 2016 – a 11% increase from the number of congregations at the end of 2015.

New Branches Created in Sierra Leone

The Church in Sierra Leone organized its 14th and 15th branches in the second largest city of Bo. The Church in West Africa has appeared to maintain some of its most penetrating outreach within the city of Bo among major cities in West Africa as there is an average of 15,000 people who live within the boundaries of each branch. Five of the branches in the city are designated Mende-speaking, suggesting good progress with the Church reaching the Mende people. There are now 51 congregations (10 wards, 41 branches) in Sierra Leone.



Branch Created in Russia

Last Sunday, the Church created its first branch in Kemerovo, Russia. Located in Siberia, Kemerovo is the tenth branch to operate in the Novosibirsk Russia District. Missionaries have served in Kemerovo for many years where a member group operated. There are now 22 cities in Siberia and the Russian Far East with an official branch.



City Opens to Missionary Work in Brazil

Missionaries serving in the Brazil Goiana Mission report that the first missionaries have been assigned to open the city of Araxá, Minas Gerais to missionary work. A small member group operates in the city with 10-15 members. With nearly 100,000 inhabitants, Araxá was one of the most populous cities in Brazil without an LDS presence.



NEW/UPDATED RESOURCES

STATISTICAL PROFILES

We are currently in the process of updating all of the LDS statistical profiles on cumorah.com to reflect year-end 2015 LDS membership, congregational, and stake/district data. Thus far we have updated most of the country profiles for Africa, Asia, Eastern Europe, and Oceania. We hope to have all of the profiles updated by the end of May.