



THE CUMORAH FOUNDATION

Resources on LDS Church Growth and Missionary Work

December 2015

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)

- 59. Aba Nigeria South - December 6th, 2015
- 60. Albuquerque New Mexico North - December 6th, 2015
- 61. Calgary Alberta Bow River - December 6th, 2015
- 62. Las Vegas Nevada Sky Canyon - December 6th, 2015
- 63. Tuscon Arizona South - December 6th, 2015
- 64. Katoka DR Congo - December 13th, 2015
- 65. Las Vegas Nevada Shadow Mountain - Dec. 13th, 2015
- 66. Taipei Taiwan North - December 13th, 2015
- 67. Kaohsiung Taiwan North - December 20th, 2015

New Districts

- 29. Divo Cote d'Ivoire - November 22nd, 2015
- 31. Carajás Brazil - November 29th, 2015
- 32. Soubre Cote d'Ivoire - November 29th, 2015

Discontinued Stakes and Districts

- 7. Boise Idaho South Stake

Locations Recently Reached by the Church

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

- Imbé, Rio Grande do Sul, Brazil (94th, 17,661)
- Nova Serrana, Minas Gerais, Brazil (46th, 68,580)
- Tabatinga, Amazonas, Brazil (7th, 36,355)
- Agboville, Cote d'Ivoire (13th, 81,770)
- Man, Cote d'Ivoire (8th, 148,171)
- La Másica, Honduras (N/A, ~30,000)
- Xicohtzinco, Tlaxcala, Mexico (17th, 12,255)
- Smithville, Mississippi (210th, 942)
- Pangakawa, New Zealand (N/A, ~900)
- Hugo, Oklahoma (71st, 5,310)
- Anapog, Philippines (N/A, N/A)
- Luneta La Paz, Philippines (N/A, N/A)

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

- Wauchula, Florida (454th, 5,001)
- Tucupido, Venezuela (N/A, 22,814)

30,000 Congregation Milestone Reached

Sometime early in December, the Church surpassed 30,000 total official congregations for the first time. The number includes sensitive congregations that are not fully reported. The total number of congregations reached 10,000 in 1979 and 20,000 in 1992. While congregational growth has generally persisted since then, a major slowdown occurred in the early 2000s. In recent years, however, congregational growth has slightly accelerated.

Outreach Expansion Continues in Cote d'Ivoire

The Church continues to open multiple new cities in Cote d'Ivoire to missionary work each month. In late 2015, the first branches in Agboville and Man were organized. Agboville is located in the southeastern Agnéby-Tiassa region, whereas Man is one of the westernmost towns with an operating congregation in Cote d'Ivoire. Located in the Dix-huit Montagnes region, Man has a population of around 100,000. 13 cities and towns in Cote d'Ivoire have received initial mission outreach in 2015 – far more than in any year prior.



Two New Stakes in Taiwan



The Church organized its 15th and 16th stakes in Taiwan during December. The Kaohsiung Taiwan North Stake was created from the two previously operating stakes in the city. Another stake was created in Taipei one week earlier. After years of stagnant growth, Taiwan has seen the creation of

four new stakes and eight new congregations in 2015. Missionary reports indicate that congregational growth has largely been made possible by renewed reactivation efforts and leadership training.

New Ward in Maputo, Mozambique



The Church recently organized its ninth ward in Maputo - the capital of Mozambique where the first stake was organized in February 2015. Steady congregational growth signals lasting progress with reversing stagnant LDS growth trends that persisted in Mozambique from the mid-2000s to the early 2010s. Mission leaders have placed increased emphasis on teaching, baptizing and retaining full families in recent years.

New Ward in Peru



The Church organized a new ward in Lima, Peru last Sunday - the first new ward to be created in Peru in over a year. This development may signal a reversal to the recent trend of congregation consolidations that has persisted since 2012. The Church reported 788 congregations in 2011 and

currently reports 764 congregations. LDS membership has increased by over 50,000 during this period, suggesting significant problems with member inactivity and convert attrition.

New Branch Organized in Japan



After years of steady congregational decline, the Church in Japan has recently made some progress in reversing negative growth trends. In December, a new branch was created in Sanjo. The new congregation is one of four in the Niigata Japan Stake. A branch had previously functioned in Sanjo, but appears to have been discontinued several years ago. Another new branch was created in November in the Hiroshima area, indicating some

success in reversing congregational decline.

New Stake and Mission in the DR Congo

The Church recently organized its second stake in the Congolese city of Kananga. The Church organized its first stake in Kananga in 2011 and has since achieved rapid congregational growth. Rapid membership growth has continued in the central DR Congo in recent years, and the creation of additional stakes is likely in the foreseeable future. Missionaries serving in the DR Congo reported in late 2015 that a third Congolese mission will be organized in July 2016 with headquarters in Mbuji-Mayi. The Church reported nearly 43,000 members in the DR Congo at year-end 2014.



Stake and District Growth Accelerate

The Church in 2015 has created the largest number of new stakes since 1998. 67 new stakes were organized in 2015. District growth has also significantly accelerated in 2015. The Church has reported at least 32 new districts organized in 2015 - the largest number reported by the Church since 1994 when there was a net increase of 62 districts (and as many as 74 districts may have been organized in 1994). These developments signal a modest improvement in "real growth" trends for the Church. It is important to note that the Church experienced its greatest numerical increases in stakes and districts during the late 1970s and in the 1990s notwithstanding fewer missionaries serving and fewer members of the Church. In the past couple years, stake and district growth has accelerated in Sub-Saharan Africa, Asia, and Oceania, but has slowed or has stagnated in Latin America and Europe.

NEW RESOURCES

CASE STUDIES

Opportunities for LDS Growth in Southwestern Nigeria

There were over 35 million people who resided in the seven southwestern Nigerian states of Lagos (10.7 million), Oyo (6.6 million), Ogun (4.4 million), Ondo (4.0 million), Osun (4.0 million), Ekiti (2.8 million), and Kwara (2.7 million) as of 2011. The LDS Church has maintained a presence in southwestern Nigeria since as early as 1980, but reports official congregations (wards or branches) in only 20% of large and medium-sized cities in the region. This case study examines opportunities for the Church to expand into additional cities within southwestern Nigeria. The history of the Church in the region is summarized. Recent successes expanding outreach are examined. Opportunities and challenges for the Church to achieve growth and open congregations in additional cities are analyzed. Opportunities for LDS national outreach expansion in other regions of Nigeria are reviewed and the growth and size of other missionary-focused Christian groups in the region are summarized. Limitations to this case study are identified and prospects for future growth are predicted.

Prospective LDS Outreach in Northern Nigeria

There were 42.5 million people who resided in the eight northern Nigerian states as of 2011. No LDS presence operates in northern Nigeria notwithstanding a church presence in the country since the late 1970s, a population exceeding 40 million people, and small numbers of Christians who have relocated to the region. This case study reviews the history of the Church in areas closest to northern Nigeria and proselytism efforts targeting peoples native to the region. Opportunities for the establishment of a church presence in the region are examined. Challenges for LDS missionary activity in northern Nigeria are identified. The growth of the LDS Church in other regions of Nigeria is summarized. The growth and size of other Christian denominations with a presence in northern Nigeria is reviewed. Limitations to this case study are identified and prospects for future growth are predicted.

Reversing Stagnant LDS Growth in Samoa

Samoa is located in Polynesia and supports a population of nearly 200,000. The LDS Church numbers among the largest religious groups in the nation. Within recent years, the Church in Samoa has reversed stagnant growth trends as evidenced by the creation of new congregations and new stakes. This case study reviews the history of the Church in Samoa. Recent successes reversing stagnant growth trends are discussed. Opportunities and challenges for sustaining real growth for the Church in Samoa are analyzed. LDS growth trends in neighboring Polynesian nations are compared to the Church in Samoa. A summary of growth trends among other Christian denominations is provided. Limitations to this case study are identified and prospects for future growth are predicted.

Top 10 Encouraging and Discouraging LDS Growth and Missionary Developments in 2015

The 10 most encouraging LDS growth and missionary developments in 2015 are reviewed in this case study. Likewise, the 10 most discouraging LDS growth and missionary developments in 2015 are also examined. Limitations to this case study are identified.