



# THE CUMORAH FOUNDATION

Resources on LDS Church Growth and Missionary Work

July 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)

27. Valparaíso Chile West - July 5th, 2015
28. Liberia Costa Rica - July 19th, 2015
29. Cartago Costa Rica - July 26th, 2015
30. Guapiles Costa Rica - July 26th, 2015
31. Tagbilaran Philippines - July 26th, 2015

### New Districts

13. Samara Russia - June 7th, 2015
17. Moscow Russia North - June 28th, 2015
18. Nochixtlan México - July 12th, 2015
19. Moscow Russia South – July 19th, 2015
19. Pointe-Noire Republic of the Congo – July 19th, 2015
20. Ondo Nigeria – July 26th, 2015

### Discontinued Stakes and Districts

3. Portland Oregon East Stake
7. Bintulu Malaysia District
8. Odessa Ukraine Tsentralny District

### Locations Recently Reached by the Church

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

- Padre Bernardo, Goias, Brazil (68<sup>th</sup>, 10,786)
- Pica, Chile (N/A, N/A)
- Azaguié, Cote d'Ivoire (N/A, ~20,000)
- Duékoué, Cote d'Ivoire (30<sup>th</sup>, ~47,000)
- Assin Edubiase, Ghana (N/A, N/A)
- Morazan, Honduras (31<sup>st</sup>, 11,076)
- Rio Abajo, Honduras (177<sup>th</sup>, 2,055)
- San Marcos, Honduras (38<sup>th</sup>, 8,821)
- Iyalu Ibere, Nigeria (N/A, N/A)
- Minhsiung, Taiwan (N/A, 71,903 [district pop])

### 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)

- Tuskegee, Alabama (65<sup>th</sup>, 9,865)
- Rendsburg, Germany (N/A, 27,325)
- Tunayac, Guatemala (N/A, N/A)
- Uros Titicaca, Peru (N/A, N/A)
- Kyle, South Dakota (86<sup>th</sup>, 846)

### New Stake in the Philippines

The Church organized its first stake on the island of Bohol in the Philippines on July 26<sup>th</sup>. It appears that approximately half of the branches in the former Tagbilaran Philippines District became wards although official information is still unavailable. Bohol Island has a population of approximately 1.3 million. The organization of the new stake suggests an ongoing reversal to stagnant congregational growth trends and difficulties in leadership development. There are now 94 stakes and 78 districts in the Philippines.



### Three New Stakes in Costa Rica

The Church has recently created three new stakes in Costa Rica. The new stakes are located in Cartago, Guapiles, and Liberia. The simultaneous creation of three stakes in the country within a week is relatively rare and in Costa Rica's case constitutes one of the most visible positive growth developments in Central America within

the last few years. It appears that the creation of new congregations is forthcoming in the immediate future, suggesting that improved convert retention, member activity, and leadership development are occurring. The Costa Rica San Jose Mission was also divided this month, indicating that more full-time Missionaries may soon be assigned to the country.



### Rapid Outreach Expansion continues in Cote d'Ivoire

Rapid and accelerating outreach expansion continues in the West African country of Cote d'Ivoire, as evidenced by several developments during the month of July. Late in June, the Church organized four new wards in the Abobo East Stake, increasing the total number of wards in the stake to 12. The stake was created in late 2014. Outreach expansion also continues into formerly unreached areas. Branches were created in the cities of Azaguié and Duékoué, increasing the number of cities that have had the first LDS branch organized to seven since January 2015. Also, two new branches were created in the city of Abengourou, where the Church established its first branch last March. Overall, the Church in Cote d'Ivoire has experienced one of the fastest and most spectacular outreach expansions of the worldwide Church within the last few years.



### Progress in Freetown, Sierra Leone

For the first time since 2012, the Church has organized a new ward in Freetown, Sierra Leone's capital city. There are now nine wards in the Freetown Stake, the only stake in the country. While other parts of the country have seen outreach expansion and the creation of new branches in recent months, growth in Freetown appeared less significant. Nonetheless, the creation of the new ward is a major accomplishment given the withdrawal of full-time Missionaries from the country due to the Ebola outbreak in 2014.



### LDS Growth Developments in Cameroon

The Church organized two new branches in Douala, Cameroon from the Douala Branch within the past month. There are now four branches in the city. Missionaries report that a fifth branch may need to be organized in the near future due to recent growth in the Bonaberri Branch. The organization of a member district in Douala appears imminent.



### New Stake in Chile

The Church recently created a new stake in the city of Valparaiso. The new Valparaiso Chile West Stake includes five wards that were created from three branches in the original district and one ward from a neighboring stake. The Church in Chile has experienced efforts by local and area leaders to overcome extremely low activity rates that have led to the reactivation of dozens of members in many wards and branches, according to full-time Missionary reports. However, despite initial success in reversing negative congregational growth, challenges appear to persist in large areas of the country. There are now 77 stakes and 19 districts in Chile.



### New District Created in the Republic of the Congo

In July, the Church organized its first member district in the Republic of the Congo outside of its capital, Brazzaville. The Pointe-Noire Republic of the Congo District consists of four branches in the city of Pointe-Noire. Leaders in the Congo Brazzaville Mission have appeared hesitant to expand outreach beyond the two largest cities in the Republic of the Congo due to low living standards in rural areas and historically limited mission resources, leading to a very conservative application of the centers of strength paradigm for the expansion of the Church. There are now two stakes and one district in the Republic of the Congo.



## Additional Cities Open to Missionaries in Cape Verde

Missionaries serving in Cape Verde report that two cities recently had missionaries assigned for the first time: Tarrafal de Sao Nicolau and Pedra Badejo. Sao Nicolau was reopened to missionary work in the latter half of 2014 and a member group was established in Ribeira Brava. The opening of a second town on the island to formal Missionary work within such a short time span indicates that mission leaders are focused on expanding missionary outreach on the island despite few convert baptisms thus far in Ribeira Brava. The city of Pedra Badejo on Santiago Island has a population of around 10,000 and was formerly among the most populous unreached cities in Cape Verde to LDS outreach.



## Outreach Plans for Timor-Leste

We received reports from senior missionaries who visited Timor-Leste (East Timor) on a multi-day visit to the country in March to explore the possibility of LDS-sponsored humanitarian work. On July 1<sup>st</sup>, the country became its own mission area within the Indonesia Jakarta Mission, an administrative step usually taken in connection with the permanent assignment of full-time missionaries. The Church has also reported a need in its Senior Missionary Opportunities Bulletin for a Portuguese-speaking senior missionary couple to be assigned to the country. Timor-Leste supports a predominantly Catholic population of about 1.3 million and has no governmental restrictions on religious freedom.



## New Districts Created in Russia

On July 19<sup>th</sup>, the Church organized another new district in Russia. The Moscow South District was created from five mission branches. The new district is the Church's fourth new district created in Russia in 2015. Two new districts were organized in June: Moscow Russia North and Samara Russia. The decision to organize new districts does not appear to be stimulated from accelerated growth. Rather, this change appears due to changes in area policies and vision for growth. There are now two stakes and six districts in Russia.



# NEW RESOURCES

## CASE STUDIES

### LDS Outreach among Laotians in the United States

The United States has one of the largest Laotian populations in the world. Currently the estimated number of Laotian Americans residing in the United States is approximately 230,000. In the mid-2000s, there were approximately 148,000 Lao speakers in the United States. The most recent census data notes that Lao speakers are primarily concentrated in California (35,153), Texas (11,851), Minnesota (9,687), Washington (8,518), and Tennessee (6,507). Laotians traditionally adhere to Buddhism (60%) and traditional religious practices (33%). A small minority adheres to Christianity (4%) or is nonreligious (3%). The LDS Church has extended Laotian-specific outreach since the 1970s when sizable numbers of Laotian refugees were resettled in the United States. Today Laotians number among the best-reached Southeast Asian peoples by the LDS Church within the United States.

### LDS Outreach among the Hmong in the United States

Native to the mountainous areas of southern China and northern Indochina, the Hmong (Miao) are generally known as the *Miao* in China and *Hmong* in northern Laos, Thailand, Vietnam, and Burma. Both terms *Hmong* and *Miao* can be generally used interchangeably but not all Miao in China pertain to the same ethnic group as the Hmong native to outside of China. The Hmong are among the few ethnic minority groups of Southeast Asia that have received concentrated LDS outreach in immigrant communities in the United States, but have no missionaries or congregations operating in their homeland. Ironically, no other Southeast Asian ethnic group in the United States has as large of a Latter-day Saint community as the Hmong. The Church operated 10 Hmong-speaking congregations (two wards, eight branches) in mid-2015 whereas the Church operated significantly fewer congregations among other prominent Southeast Asian groups in the United States notwithstanding these ethnolinguistic groups possessing similarly-sized or larger immigrant populations than the Hmong.

### LDS Outreach among Vietnamese in the United States

Vietnamese rank as the fifth largest ethnolinguistic minority group in the United States. There were approximately 1.2 million Vietnamese speakers in the United States as of 2008. This case study reviews the history of the LDS Church among the Vietnamese people in the United States. Church growth and missionary successes are identified. Opportunities and challenges for future growth are analyzed. The growth of the Church among other Southeast Asian peoples in the United States is reviewed. The size and growth trends of other missionary-focused Christian groups among Vietnamese Americans are examined. Limitations to this case study are identified and prospects for future growth are predicted.

### Prospective LDS Outreach in Greenland and the Faroe Islands

Denmark administers Greenland and the Faroe Islands although each of these self-governing overseas administrative divisions exhibits a significant degree of autonomy. Approximately 58,000 inhabit Greenland whereas 50,000 inhabit the Faroe Islands. Although widespread religious freedom exists in both Greenland and the Faroe Islands, no official LDS proselytism efforts have occurred in either location. Today there is no LDS presence in neither Greenland nor the Faroe Islands. This case study reviews the history of the Church's administration of Greenland and the Faroe Islands. Opportunities and challenges for future growth are analyzed. The growth of other missionary-focused Christian groups with a presence in Greenland and/or the Faroe Islands is summarized. Limitations to this case study are identified. Prospects for future growth are predicted.

## HASTENING THE WORK OF SALVATION ARTICLES

### [The Need to Retool LDS Missionary Work](#)

This article reviews efforts the Church has taken to improve the efficiency of its missionary program over the past 15 years. However, little to no progress has been achieved despite these modifications to the missionary program. Although Preach My Gospel improved missionary worthiness standards, modest convert retention remains widespread in most areas of the world. Member activity rates have remained constant or have slightly decreased in nearly all countries around the world that support the largest LDS populations. The Church announced the broadcast "The Work of Salvation" to provide guidance on methods to improve missionary work and describe plans for retooling the LDS missionary program. Following the broadcast, the Church launched a new website to provide resources and instruction on improving member-missionary participation and coordination between full-time missionaries and ordinary members, local church leaders, and stake and area leaders.

### [Hastening the Work of Salvation Website](#)

Launched in June 2013, the Hastening of the Work of Salvation website complements the June 23<sup>rd</sup>, 2013 worldwide broadcast on missionary work. The subtitle "a unified effort in conversion, retention, and activation" portrays the central theme of the website for greater consistency and unity among ordinary members, church leaders, and full-time missionaries to improve the effectiveness of the Church's missionary program and to aid these three groups of individuals in fulfilling their missionary duties. Throughout the website the Church has primarily focused on clarifying the roles of each of these three groups in missionary work and has listed the various duties of each church leader whose calling plays a central role in missionary work. The website consists of four primary webpages. Three of these webpages provide information for three separate audiences, namely members and missionaries, ward councils and ward mission leaders, and priesthood leaders (area seventies, stake and mission presidents, bishops, and high councils). The fourth primary webpage contains information regarding the special broadcast, The Work of Salvation, and provides links to the entire broadcast as well as individual talks and video segments. The website has been translated into 26 languages.