



THE CUMORAH FOUNDATION

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

July 2023

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)

25. México City El Lago - July 2nd, 2023
26. Ponta Grossa Brazil North - July 2nd, 2023
27. Curitiba Brazil Campo Comprido - July 16th, 2023
28. Jaraguá do Sul Brazil - July 16th, 2023
29. Nsit Ubium Nigeria - July 16th, 2023
30. Gramado Brazil - July 23rd, 2023

New Districts

None reported in July 2023

Discontinued Stakes and Districts

11. Salt Lake Jordan Stake
12. Hong Kong China Kowloon East Stake
13. Hong Kong China Lion Rock Stake

Locations Recently Reached by the Church

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

- Allada, Benin (47th, 23,287)
- Pahou, Benin (N/A, ~15,000)
- Filadelfia, Costa Rica (N/A, 5,059)
- Masagua, Guatemala (99th, 16,797)
- Cherengani, Kenya (N/A, N/A)
- Grayling, Michigan (316th, 1,867)
- North Myrtle Beach, South Carolina (32nd, 18,808)

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

- Port Dunford, South Africa (N/A, N/A)

Missionary Numbers Increasing

The following was provided from the ldschurchgrowth.blogspot.com [post from July 2nd, 2023](#) regarding recent developments in the number of members serving full-time missions:

The Church News recently published articles regarding comments Elder Cook of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles made during the recent 2023 New Mission President seminar in regard to recent missionary developments in the global Church. These included:

- *The number of full-time, proselytizing missionaries serving worldwide increasing from 57,000 in April 2022 to 67,800 in early June 2023 (click [here](#) for article). This time frame was provided because President Nelson reemphasized the need for young men to serve full-time missions in April 2022 in General Conference. The last time the Church had this many members serving full-time missions was in 2016 when there were 70,946 full-time missionaries serving at the end of the year (which was at the tail-end of the double-cohort of full-time missionaries caused by the lowering of the minimum age for missionary service). There were approximately 67,000 or fewer full-time missionaries serving between 2017 and 2022.*
- *The number of full-time, proselytizing missionaries serving worldwide is anticipated to*

reach as high as 72,000 by the end of 2023 (click [here](#) for article). This increase has occurred even though there is a smaller demographic of mission-aged young adults in the Church (which is supported by historical children-of-record annual increase numbers, which did not surpass 100,000 until 2008), suggesting an increasing percentage of young single adults serving full-time missions. Although it is unclear what the current percentage of young men serving full-time missions is, "Researchers found that in the early 1940s approximately five percent of young men served missions and that this statistic increased to 20% in the late 1940s and 30% in the early 1960s. Between the early 1960s and early 1980s the percentage of young men serving missions varied from 25-35% and was 32% in 1981 (click [here](#) for reference).

- Recently, the number of weekly mission applications received that require processing by apostles for mission assignment has increased from approximately 150-200 to up to 300. Typically, two apostles complete the weekly processing and assignment of mission applications. However, as many as four apostles have been required to complete this weekly task due to the influx in applications (click [here](#) for article).
- Convert baptisms for the worldwide Church were up 25% during the first quarter of 2023 compared to the first quarter of 2022 (click [here](#) for article). If this rate continues for the rest of the year (i.e., if there are 25% more convert baptisms in 2023 compared to 2022), there would be 265,215 convert baptisms for the year - the highest reported by the Church since 2014 when there were 296,803 convert baptisms.

It is unclear what particular age/gender demographics or world regions are driving recent increases in full-time missionaries serving and higher numbers of convert baptisms than what has been seen in recent years. It will likely take years before we begin to see congregational growth rates and the creation of new stakes accelerating if these recent trends are continued. The increase in convert baptisms is unsurprising given missions have returned to "business as usual" with strategies that often result in the greatest growth of the Church, especially with the opening of previously unreached cities to proselytism and creating new congregations in these locations (which primarily occurs in Africa, the Philippines, and Latin America). Moreover, increases in full-time missionaries serving should produce higher numbers of convert baptisms. However, the most interesting and positive development with these few statistics shared by Elder Cook is that the percentage of young single adults serving full-time missions appears to be increasing - something that could have some major long-term impacts on general church growth trends, particularly those in regard to

natural increase. Moreover, if these trends are sustained, we will likely see many new missions organized in 2024 to help accommodate this increase, and it appears most likely that these mission resources will be allocated to more productive areas rather than creation new missions in less productive areas with greater preexisting Church infrastructure (which occurred in many areas of the world in 2013 when huge increases in the numbers of full-time missionaries serving required a fast solution to find a place to put them all).

Two Stakes Discontinued in Hong Kong

The Church discontinued two of the six stakes in Hong Kong, and the stakes have been realigned into four stakes. The Church previously operated four stakes in Hong Kong prior to the creation of two new stakes in 2016 (although one of these stakes was a reinstatement of a stake discontinued in 2006). Nine wards were discontinued as part of the reorganization. There are now 21 wards in Hong Kong - the fewest number of wards in Hong Kong since prior to 1987. Church membership has been in decline in Hong Kong since 2020. It is unclear how much of this decline (the Church has historically experienced slow membership growth or stagnant membership growth during the past couple decades in Hong Kong) is attributed to tightening political freedoms in this special administrative region of China during the past few years. However, there was a major emphasis by the Asia Area Presidency in the mid-2010s to create smaller wards which resulted in the reinstatement of a previously closed stake and the creation of a sixth stake in 2016. Member activity rates in Hong Kong have numbered among the lowest in the world, with 12-14% of membership regularly attending church in the late 2010s.



Four New Stakes Created in Brazil



The Church has recently created four new stakes in Brazil after approximately two years no new stake creations in the country. All four of the new stakes were created in southern Brazil. Local members report that some missions in the area have set all-time monthly records for convert baptisms.

However, there have been few new wards or branches organized in southern Brazil during the past few years. Nevertheless, the creation of additional stakes in southern Brazil appears likely due to a slow and steady growth in the number of congregations, particularly in Curitiba.

Rapid Outreach Expansion in Western Kenya

The Church has experienced rapid national outreach expansion in western Kenya where new branches have been organized in several cities where no official congregations have ever operated. In 2023, branches have been created thus far in Bomet, Cherangani, Kakamega, Nakuru, and Oyugis—none of which previously had branches organized. Also, a third branch was recently created in Kisumu. Due to the presence of three districts, rapid growth in the number of congregations in the area, and distance from mission headquarters in Nairobi, Eldoret appears to be a likely candidate for the creation of a second mission in Kenya.

The Church in Kenya has experienced a significant acceleration in membership growth since 2020. Church membership increased by 9.1% between year-end 2019 and 2021 and by 9.6% during the year 2022. In contrast, the Church reported annual membership growth rates of 2-4% from 2013 to 2019.



New Wards Created in Benin and Rapid Growth in Central and Northern Benin

Rapid growth continues in the West African nation of Benin where several new wards have been created in the Cococodji Benin Stake (organized from a district in June 2021). There are now 11 wards and one branch in the stake, and it appears likely that a third stake will be



created soon in the Cotonou metropolitan area. The Church organized its first official congregation in Benin in 2005 in Cotonou. The Benin Cotonou Mission was organized in 2011. Rapid growth continues in the Bohicon Branch and nearby member groups. Local members report a combined sacrament meeting attendance of 300 for the Bohicon Branch and member groups in central and northern Benin, of which approximately 20% are not baptized members of the Church.