



THE CUMORAH FOUNDATION

Resources on LDS Church Growth and Missionary Work

June 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)

- 18. Betim Brazil - June 7th, 2015
- 19. Abak Nigeria - June 14th, 2015
- 20. Ubon Thailand - June 14th, 2015
- 21. Valparaiso Brazil - June 14th, 2015
- 22. Rexburg Idaho YSA 10th - June 14th, 2015
- 23. Hualien Taiwan - June 21st, 2015
- 24. Olavarría Argentina - June 21st, 2015
- 25. Port Vila Vanuatu - June 21st, 2015
- 26. Mabopane South Africa - June 28th, 2015

New Districts

- 13. Agona Ghana - June 21st, 2015
- 14. Rostov-na-Donu Russia - June 21st, 2015
- 15. ABC [Aruba-Bonaire-Curacao] - June 28th, 2015

Discontinued Stakes and Districts

None reported in June 2015

Locations Recently Reached by the Church

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

- Japaratinga, Alagoas, Brazil (84th, 3,308)
- Cristalina, Goiás, Brazil (31st, 32,131)
- Tangará da Serra, Mato Grosso, Brazil (6th, 74,077)
- Paracatu, Minas Gerais, Brazil (41st, 73,772)
- Mandirituba, Parana, Brazil (210th, 5,190)
- Fungurume, DR Congo (78th, 28,938)
- Huaquillas, Ecuador (26th, 47,706)
- Port St. Lucie, Florida (9th, 164,603)
- Stratford, New Zealand (56th, 5,650)
- Lumbia, Philippines (N/A, N/A)
- Dakar, Senegal (1st, 2,396,800)
- Tortosa, Spain (N/A, 33,932)

Locations Recently Closed by the Church

Cities where the only ward, branch, or group 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

- Greenville, Alabama (80th, 8,135)
- El Cercado, Dominican Republic (N/A, N/A)
- La Peñita, Nayarit, Mexico (18th, 9,102)
- Trakan, Thailand (N/A, 9,082)

First Stake Created in Vanuatu

The Church has recently organized its first stake in the Pacific island nation of Vanuatu. Information about which of the seven original district branches that have become wards in the new Port Vila Vanuatu Stake is currently unavailable. The creation of the Port Vila Vanuatu Stake had been delayed for several months after Cyclone Pam struck the islands earlier this year, causing significant destruction. Missionaries report unprecedented membership growth in the country within the last few months, fueling the potential for more congregations to be created in the near future.



First LDS congregation created in Port St. Lucie, Florida

The Church has recently organized a branch in Port St. Lucie, Florida. With a population of 160,000, Port St. Lucie had been the largest city in the United States without an LDS congregation operating.

Mission Leaders Visit Senegal

Senior Missionaries report that an exploratory visit has recently occurred to Dakar, Senegal. While this West African nation has never had full-time missionaries assigned, a group of foreign members currently meets in the city for Sunday services. No native Senegalese members appear to attend the group. Prospects for future mission outreach in Senegal appear favorable due to widespread religious freedom and a sizable population. The predominantly Muslim population has appeared responsible for delays in the Church exploring opportunities to assign missionaries.



Sacrament Meeting held in Sao Tome and Principe

In March, the Mission President of the Angola Luanda Mission, his wife, and a small number of native members living in Angola visited the islands of Sao Tome and Principe and held a sacrament meeting. Around a dozen people were in attendance. The Church has never maintained an official presence or assigned missionaries to this country of 180,000. Prospects appear highly favorable for growth due to widespread religious freedom, a predominantly Christian population, and recent LDS successes proselytizing Portuguese-speaking African nations.



The Church in Hong Kong Continues to Reverse Stagnant Growth Trends

The Church organized two new wards in Hong Kong this month. This development indicates a continuation of recent trends to overcome low member activity rates, poor convert retention, and difficulties in leadership development. The Church once operated 41 congregations in Hong Kong but discontinued nine of these units in the 2000s and early 2010s. Since 2012, seven new congregations have been organized, bringing the total number of wards and branches to 39.



Church Removes Missionaries from Burundi

Senior missionaries serving in the Democratic Republic of the Congo Lubumbashi Mission report that the recent outbreak of civil unrest in the central African nation of Burundi has necessitated the removal of full-time missionaries from the country. The Church has maintained a small but rapidly-growing presence in Burundi. Only Africans, mostly from the DR Congo, serve in the DR Congo Lubumbashi Mission. Members of the branches in the country plan to continue to teach and baptize investigators until full-time missionaries return to Burundi.



Third Stake Created in Thailand

The Church recently created a new stake in the city of Ubon, Thailand. There are now three stakes in the country, with the Ubon Stake being the first stake outside of the Bangkok area. Five of the nine branches in the former Ubon District became wards. The Church has experienced rapid nominal and active membership growth in Thailand in the past couple of years and a temple was recently announced for Bangkok. Members and Mission leaders report plans to organize two more stakes and several new congregations in the country within the next couple of years.



New District Created in Russia

The Church recently organized a third district in Russia. The Rostov-na-Donu Russia District was organized from five branches that previously pertained to the Russia Rostov Mission. Within recent years, the Church in Russia has experienced difficulties maintaining districts due to low member activity rates and few convert baptisms. Consequently the number of districts has declined from 15 in 2009 to two in late 2014 (Saratov and Novosibirsk), although two districts became stakes during this period (Moscow and St Petersburg). It appears that the Church currently only operates districts in Russia if there are realistic prospects for these districts to mature into stakes in the medium-term future. Therefore, it appears likely that the new district in Rostov indicates significant progress in baptizing and retaining new converts and local members taking on leadership responsibility.



New District Created in the Caribbean

A new district was created on June 28th on the island of Aruba. The ABC District appears to consist of four branches located on the islands of Aruba, Bonaire and Curacao. The Church organized a district in Oranjestad, Aruba in 2004, but discontinued the district in 2009. The reinstatement of the district indicates some progress in convert retention, member activity rates, and leadership development.



District created in Tamale, Ghana

The Church created its first district in northern Ghana on May 31st. The Tamale Ghana District was organized from the four branches currently operating in this predominantly Muslim city. The Church originally organized three member groups to efficiently saturate the city with outreach centers. The Church has experienced moderate to fast growth as evidenced by all three groups becoming branches, a fourth branch being organized, and a district being created. Around 200 active members of the Church currently reside in Tamale.



NEW RESOURCES

CASE STUDIES

Challenging Areas for Future LDS Missionary Activity due to Extreme Ethnolinguistic Diversity

Ethnolinguistic diversity poses significant challenges for LDS Church growth and missionary work. Many peoples require translations of church materials and scriptures into their native language to promote gospel understanding, effective proselytism approaches, and testimony development. Cultural differences between peoples also create challenges for the Church to understand and appropriately respond to societal and cultural norms. Areas of the world where extreme ethnolinguistic diversity exist pose the greatest challenges for LDS growth due to the complexity of language and cultural factors within a particular area or region. These conditions generally require a significant amount of resources and vision to efficiently and effectively proselyte and establish a long-term, self-sustaining LDS presence.

Is the LDS Church Poised to Make Significant Advancements in Global Mission Outreach?

The April 2015 announcement regarding the establishment of the Central Eurasian Mission in July 2015 constitutes one of the most surprising and unprecedented announcements by the Church in recent memory. The new mission will service several countries where no LDS mission has previously operated. The mission will also support one of the largest populations in the world among LDS missions with approximately 150 million people within its geographical boundaries. The significance and scope of this announcement is comparable to advancements in worldwide LDS mission outreach achieved in the 1980s and early 1990s such as the establishment of the Church's first missions in many Sub-Saharan African nations and Eastern Europe.

LDS Outreach among the Acholi of East Africa

The Acholi are a Nilo-Saharan ethnolinguistic group native to a region of northern Uganda and extreme southern South Sudan known as "Acholi land." The LDS Church has maintained a minimal presence in the Acholi homelands since 2008 and has reported moderate growth. This case study reviews the history of the Church among the Acholi people. Church growth and missionary successes are identified. Opportunities and challenges for future growth are analyzed. LDS growth trends among other major ethnolinguistic groups in Uganda are briefly reviewed. The size and growth trends of other missionary-focused Christian groups with a presence among the Acholi are summarized. Limitations to this case study are identified and prospects for future growth are predicted.

Opportunities for Further LDS Outreach Expansion in Ghana

Ghana supports one of the largest populations of West Africa with 25.8 million inhabitants. Most ethnolinguistic groups pertain to the Kwa or Gur divisions of the Niger-Congo language family. Christians constitute a large majority (71%) whereas Muslims comprise a sizable minority (18%). The LDS Church in Ghana has experienced some of the most rapid national outreach expansion in the world within the past five years. No other country has appeared to have as many wards, branches, and groups organized in locations that previously had no reported LDS presence. Recent progress opening additional cities, towns, and villages to the Church has accelerated overall LDS growth trends for Ghana. Conditions remain highly favorable for additional national outreach expansion.

Prospective LDS Outreach in South Sudan

South Sudan is a country in Central Africa inhabited by 11.6 million people. Prominent ethnic groups include the Dinka (35.8%) and Nuer (15.6%). Christians constitute the majority and there are sizable numbers of Muslims and followers of indigenous religions. English is the official language. There are 68 indigenous languages spoken in South Sudan although none of these languages appear to have more than one million speakers. The LDS Church maintained an official branch in South Sudan from late 2009 until early 2015. Although senior missionary couples have been periodically assigned since the organization of the Juba Branch, there have been no young, full-time missionaries stationed in South Sudan despite the government upholding religious freedom, Christians constituting the majority, and abundant English-speaking African missionary manpower within Sub-Saharan Africa.

Stagnant LDS Growth in Croatia

Croatia is located in southeastern Europe and has a population of 4.5 million people. Croats constitute 90.4% of the national population. Serbs comprise the largest ethnolinguistic minority (4.4%) whereas other ethnolinguistic groups (e.g. Bosnian, Hungarian, Slovene, Czech, and Albanian) constitute the remaining 5.2% of the population. Croatian is the official language and is spoken by 95.6% of the population. Most of the population (86%) adheres to the Roman Catholic Church. Sizable religious minorities include Orthodox Christians (4.4%) and Muslims (1.5%). The LDS Church in Croatia has experienced stagnant growth within the past decade as evidenced by no new congregations organized since 2004 and extremely slow membership growth rates.

The Central Eurasian Mission - Taking the Gospel to the Turkic Nations

The Church announced in April 2015 plans to organize a new mission to administer the Turkic nations of Central Asia, Asia Minor, and the Caucasus. Most of these nations were not previously assigned to a mission but rather fell under the direct administration of the Europe East Area. The Church indicated that the new mission would be named the Central Eurasian Mission and have headquarters based in Istanbul, Turkey. Nations to be assigned to the new mission included Azerbaijan, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, Turkey, Uzbekistan, and possibly Turkmenistan. This case study reviews the history of the Church in Turkey, Central Asia, and Azerbaijan. Recent church growth and missionary developments are identified. Opportunities and challenges for the Central Eurasian Mission to achieve growth and expand missionary work are analyzed. Efforts by the LDS Church to open new missions in lesser-reached or previously unreached areas of the world are summarized. Limitations to this case study are identified and prospects for future growth are predicted.