



THE CUMORAH FOUNDATION

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

June 2022

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)

15. Nealtican México South - June 5th, 2022
16. Oaxaca Mexico Brenamiel - June 5th, 2022
17. Akamkpa Nigeria - June 12th, 2022
18. Gagnoa Cote d'Ivoire - June 19th, 2022
19. Lagos Nigeria Ikorodu - June 19th, 2022
20. Lagos Nigeria Ikotun - June 26th, 2022

New Districts

3. Moriba Town Sierra Leone - June 26th, 2022

Discontinued Stakes and Districts

6. Concord California Stake
 7. Gosford Australia Stake
 8. Hayward California Stake
 9. Lichfield England Stake
-
3. Divo Cote d'Ivoire District

Locations Recently Reached by the Church

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

- Santa Ana Nextlalpan, Estado de Mexico, Mexico (97th, 16,596)
- Ifo, Nigeria (N/A, ~750,000)
- Umu Egwu, Nigeria (N/A, N/A)
- Montevista, Philippines (N/A, 46,558)
- Nyamata, Rwanda (12th, 17,076)
- Gbangbatok, Sierra Leone (N/A, N/A)
- Yilan, Taiwan (21st, 95,395)
- Banjul, The Gambia (1st, 1.05 million)
- Avon, Utah (246th, 390)

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

Updates for June will be published in the July Newsletter

First Official Branch Organized in The Gambia

The Church organized its first official branch in The Gambia in the capital city of Banjul on [June 10th, 2022](#). As noted earlier this year, the first convert baptisms in the country were performed in February when 12 new converts joined the Church and Church membership increased from 12 to 24. Furthermore, Apostle Elder D. Todd Christofferson dedicated the West African nation of The Gambia to missionary work on February 24th. The Gambia is now assigned to a mission for the first time (Cote d'Ivoire Abidjan West Mission), whereas previous Church activity fell directly under the Africa West Area Presidency. The Church has steadily expanded into previously unreached West African nations within the past decade. Provided with the year the first branch was organized, these nations include Senegal (2016), Guinea (2017), and Mali (2017). However, only the Church in Senegal has experienced



significant growth as there are now four branches in the country, whereas there remain only one branch each in Guinea and Mali. There remain six additional nations without an official ward or branch of the Church in the Africa West Area, including Burkina Faso, Chad, Guinea-

Bissau, Mauritania, Niger, and Western Sahara (occupied by Morocco). Of these remaining unreached nations, there is a member group in Burkina Faso, but there does not appear to be any member groups in other nations. Burkina Faso, Chad, and Guinea-Bissau appear most likely to have an official Church presence established within the foreseeable future given a history of small numbers of Latter-day Saints in these nations and adequate religious freedom to permit Church operations.

Stake Discontinued in the United Kingdom for the First Time

The Church in the United Kingdom discontinued a stake for the first time in Church history. The Lichfield England Stake was originally organized in 1977 and was discontinued in June. The stake had eight wards prior to its discontinuation, and there were two wards in the former stake that were also discontinued. Retained wards in the stake were reassigned to the neighboring Birmingham England Stake and the Coventry England Stake. It is important to note that each of these two stakes had only five wards and one branch prior to the closure of the Lichfield England Stake. Thus, the discontinuation of the stake appeared prompted to strengthen these two stakes as there were enough wards in the Lichfield England Stake to continue to operate even after two wards were closed. One ward in the Birmingham England Stake was closed as part of the stake realignment. Only one other ward had closed in the Birmingham England Stake within the past decade (Sheldon). In 2001, there were five wards and two branches in the Birmingham England Stake, seven wards and one branch in the Lichfield England Stake, and six wards and two branches in the Coventry England Stake. Thus, there has not been a significant decline or change in the number of congregations in the Birmingham/Coventry area during the past two decades until the closure of three wards and one stake in June 2022. It is possible that these changes may be due to preparations to free more leadership to staff the future Birmingham England Temple. However, it appears that the greatest contribution to the decision to close the stake has been essentially stagnant membership growth rates combined with probable decreases in member activity in the area during the past couple decades. Nevertheless,



the number of active members in several wards within the area were representative for most of the British Isles as of the mid-2010s.

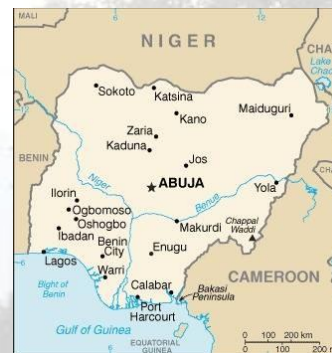
New Stake in Cote d'Ivoire

The Church organized a new stake from the Gagnoa Cote d'Ivoire District and the Divo Cote d'Ivoire District. Mission leadership has prepared members in these districts for at least a couple years for prospects to merge to form a stake in this region of Cote d'Ivoire where no stakes have ever operated. Gagnoa is now the third city outside of the Abidjan metropolitan area to have a stake after Yamoussoukro (first stake organized in 2015) and Daloa (first stake organized in 2017). Prospects appear favorable for Divo to become its own stake in the foreseeable future given four of the branches in the city became wards when the new stake was organized. There are now 18 stakes and 15 districts in Cote d'Ivoire. In contrast, there were only five stakes and one district in Cote d'Ivoire as of year-end 2012.



Two New Stakes Created in Lagos, Nigeria

The Church in Lagos, Nigeria organized two new stakes during the month of June, increasing the number of stakes in Lagos from six to eight. The Church in Lagos has experienced rapid congregational and stake growth during the past decade. In contrast, the Church in Lagos generally experienced moderate growth rates for the first three decades of an official Church presence in the city (the first stake was organized in 1997). In 2012, there were only three stakes in Lagos. One additional stake appears likely to be organized in Lagos within the immediate future as there are 11 wards in the Lagos Nigeria Yaba Stake. Furthermore, the Church also organized its first branch in the city of Ifo located on the northernmost area of Lagos within the past month where there are at least 750,000 inhabitants. Lagos is the most populous metropolitan area in Sub-Saharan Africa with approximately 20.7 million people as of early 2022. There remain no updates on the Lagos Nigeria Temple which was announced in October 2018.



First District Created in Sierra Rutile area of Sierra Leone

After many years of careful preparation by mission leadership in the most remote and sparsely populated rural area with a Latter-day Saint presence in Sierra Leone, the Church organized the Moriba Town Sierra Leone District with five branches and two member groups. Often referred to as Sierra Rutile, the Church has rapidly grown in Imperri chiefdom (where all but one branch operate in the new district) where there were approximately 33,400 inhabitants as of 2015. Furthermore, the creation of the new district also coincided with the first meeting held in the newly build Moriba Town Branch meetinghouse. Additional meetinghouses have also been constructed or are under construction in the district. The church organized its first branches in the current district in 2017. As for additional updates on the Church in Sierra Leone, mission leaders visited the northern city of Kabala to meet with isolated members and explore prospects for future missionary outreach in the city. Also, one new ward and one new branch were also created in Sierra Leone during the past month.



First Branch Organized in Rwanda Outside of Kigali

In a major development, the Church in Rwanda organized its first branch outside of the capital city of Kigali where four branches operate. The new branch functions in the small city of Nyamata which is located south of Kigali and nearby the metropolitan area. The Church in Rwanda has strictly followed a conservative centers of strength policy in regard to limiting missionary work to Kigali and also to English-speakers. However, it appears this policy may have been relaxed more recently, especially given the Church translating materials into Kinyarwanda during the past few years. The Book of Mormon translation in Kinyarwanda is more than halfway complete and available online. The new Rwanda Kigali Mission opens July 1st and will include Rwanda, Burundi, and easternmost areas bordering these countries in the Democratic Republic of the Congo.



Two Stakes Discontinued in California

The ongoing trend of stake consolidations in California continues. During the month of June, two stakes in the

East Bay area closed. The Concord California Stake was originally organized in 1963, whereas the Hayward California Stake was organized in 1956. The decision to discontinue these stakes came as no surprise given they had the minimum number of congregations to function as stakes and that there has been a steady decline in the number of members in the area for decades which has resulted in steady consolidations of wards. There are now 145 stakes in California—down from an all-time high of 162 stakes in 1995.

Number of Convert Baptisms Significantly Accelerates in the DR Congo

The Church in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DR Congo) has experienced unprecedented membership growth in recent months. Reports indicate that one mission in the country has had more than 1,000 convert baptisms per month recently and with high convert retention. This rapid growth poses significant challenges for area leadership to meet local needs given the amount of resources needed to properly train new leaders and acquire more meetinghouses. There are also reports that there are plans to create of many new congregations and stakes within the immediate future, particularly in Kinshasa.



National Outreach Expansion in Mindanao, Philippines

The Church in the Philippines Butuan Mission has recently reversed a nearly two-decade long trend of stagnant outreach expansion within the mission. The mission was organized in 2006 and includes eastern Mindanao. Between 2002 and 2018, the Church organized a new ward or branch in only one city or town where no ward or branch operated within the current mission boundaries. However, since 2019, there have been branches organized in four cities or towns where no branches previously operated, including New Bataan (2019), Barobo (2021), Lingig (2022), and Montevista (2022). The Church has grown slowly in the mission since the mission was organized, albeit two districts have since advanced into stakes in 2018 (San Francisco) and Tagum (2021).



Third Branch Organized in Dakar, Senegal

The Church recently organized its third branch in Dakar, Senegal in the Ouakam area of the city. The creation of the new branch comes shortly after the Dakar Senegal District was organized February 2022. There are more than four million people who live in Dakar, and eastern areas of the city appear totally unreached by mission outreach efforts. The Church organized its first branch in Dakar in 2016 (Dakar) followed by a second branch in 2018 (Parcelles). Senegal appears likely to become its own mission in the foreseeable future given its remote location, good prospects for mission outreach expansion, and the need for more resources in neighboring countries with a recent Church establishment. Senegal pertains to the Abidjan Cote d'Ivoire West Mission.



First New Mandarin Chinese-Speaking Branch Organized in Taiwan since 2016



The Church organized a new branch in what was previously the third most populous city in Taiwan without its own ward or branch. The new branch was organized in Ilan and is called the Lanyang Branch. This marks the first time a new Mandarin Chinese-speaking ward or branch has been organized in Taiwan since 2016. The Church in Taiwan experienced a significant contraction in the number of congregations from 2019 until 2021 as the number of official congregations decreased from 117 to 98.

Stake Discontinued in Australia—Second Time in Church History; New Census Numbers for Australia

The Church in Australia discontinued the Gosford Australia Stake in June, marking only the second time a stake has been discontinued in Australia. The only other time the Church has discontinued a stake in Australia was in 2011 when the Sydney Australia Parramatta Stake was discontinued. Interestingly, the Sydney Australia Parramatta and the Gosford Australia Stake both operated in the same approximate geographical area in northern Sydney. The Gosford Australia Stake was organized only back in 2015. The Gosford Australia Stake had five wards prior to its discontinuation, although it used to have six wards prior to the closure of the Toukley Ward. During the past decade, new stakes have been organized in Australia in 2019, 2018, 2016 (2), 2015 (1), 2013 (3), and 2012 (2). Only one district in Australia has been discontinued in the past decade (Mildura in 2015). Also, the Australian government recently released the 2021 census data which indicated the number of self-identified Latter-day Saints decreased between 2016 and 2021 from 60,864 to 57,868. In contrast, official membership totals for Australia increased from 148,862 to 155,383. Thus, these data suggest that the number of active Latter-day Saints may have decreased during this period, albeit it is also possible that fewer less-active or inactive members on Church records may have decreased during this period, as fewer self-affiliated as Latter-day Saints in 2021 versus 2016.



Fourth Branch Organized in Bujumbura, Burundi

The Church organized its fourth branch in Bujumbura, Burundi during the month of June marking the first time a new branch has been organized in Burundi since 2014. The Church in Burundi initially experienced rapid growth upon the reestablishment of the Church in 2010. However, political instability quickly emerged shortly after an official branch was reestablished, and this has since [dramatically slowed membership growth](#). The Church organized its first and only district, the Bujumbura Burundi District, in 2021. As of July 1st, Burundi is now assigned to the newly organized Rwanda Kigali Mission.

