



# THE CUMORAH FOUNDATION

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

September 2019

## 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)

- 42. Iba Philippines - September 1st, 2019
- 43. Santa Lucia Cotzumalguapa Guatemala - September 8th
- 44. Austin Texas West - September 15th, 2019
- 45. Bo Sierra Leone East - September 15th, 2019
- 46. Gadsden Alabama - September 22nd, 2019
- 47. Kolwezi DR Congo - September 22nd, 2019

### New Districts

*None reported in September 2019*

### Discontinued Stakes and Districts

*None reported in September 2019*

### Locations Recently Reached by the Church

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

- Akoasi, Ghana (N/A)
- Tetela del Volcán, Morelos, Mexico (27<sup>th</sup>, 10,199)
- Ariam, Nigeria (N/A)
- Graniteville, South Carolina (147<sup>th</sup>, 2,614)

### 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)

- Sylacauga, Alabama (52<sup>nd</sup>, 12,749)
- Granadero Baigorria, Argentina (N/A, 36,994)
- Villa La Angostura, Argentina (N/A, 11,063)
- Padre Bernardo, Goias, Brazil (68<sup>th</sup>, 10,786)

### New Record for Stake Growth Set in Bo, Sierra Leone

Last Sunday, the Church organized its third stake in the city of Bo, Sierra Leone. The Bo Sierra Leone East Stake was created from the Bo Sierra Leone East District and one ward from the Bo Sierra Leone West Stake (Sewa Road). Local members report that the new stake includes the following seven wards and three branches: the Barracks, Kendeyella, Lewabu, Messima, Sewa Road, Sheriff Town, and Torkpoi Town Wards, and the Mendewa, New England, and Pujehun Branches. Three new units were organized in the stake at the time of its creation – an unusual occurrence, especially from a district that advances into a stake.



No other city in the world, where no stakes have ever previously operated, has had so many new stakes organized in so short of a period of time as Bo. The Church in Bo organized its first three stakes within an approximately 22-month period. The percentage of members of the Church in the population is estimated at 3.5% given the number of congregations in the city before the Bo Sierra Leone East Stake was organized (20) multiplied by the average number of members per ward or branch in Sierra Leone as of year-end 2018 (308) and the city's population of approximately 175,000 in 2015. Bo is also unique as it is likely the city with the highest percentage of Latter-day Saints in the population of any city with 100,000 or more people on the Afro-Eurasian landmass. Even more interesting, Sierra Leone is also the

country with the highest percentage of members in the general population among continental African countries, and is the country in Africa with the smallest percentage of Christians in the population with at least one mission headquartered within the country. Lastly, Bo is also unique in that many, if not most, members speak Mende as their first language. In fact, eight of the 20 original congregations in Bo are designated as Mende-speaking on the Church's meetinghouse locator website. There are 17 meetinghouses in Bo that provide high-penetrating outreach and access to the Church in the city. With the most members of the Church in Sub-Saharan Africa with only one mission, Sierra Leone appears highly likely to have a second mission organized soon, and Bo appears the most likely candidate for the headquarters of a second Sierra Leonean mission.

### First Portuguese-Speaking Branch Created in Idaho, First French-Speaking Branch Created in Arizona

The Church in the western United States has made new progress with the establishment of branches that hold church services in languages that previously have had no specialized congregations in the region. During September, the Church organized its first Portuguese-speaking branch in Idaho in the Nampa Idaho South Stake. Also during the month, the Church created its first French-speaking branch in Arizona in the Glendale Arizona Stake. The establishment of branches that service speakers of additional languages may indicate greater emphasis from church leaders to meet local language needs among members, efforts to better proselyte immigrant groups, and/or increases in the number of converts who speak these languages in these locations. For example, the French-speaking branch in Glendale, Arizona is primarily comprised of Black African members from Francophone Sub-Saharan Africa.

### Congregation Consolidations and Closures in Argentina

Approximately one dozen wards and branches in Argentina have closed since January, most of which have been wards, and half of discontinued units were in the city of Rosario. Only two new congregations (both branches) have been organized in Argentina since January. The Church in Argentina struggles with extremely low member activity rates. The number of active members appears as low as 10-15% of Church-reported membership. This has been a chronic issue for the Church in Argentina, albeit there have been some minor improvements with activity rates in certain areas of the



country. Nevertheless, this year's consolidation of approximately one dozen congregations signals ongoing challenges with the establishment of units with an adequate number of active members to properly function, and difficulties with the rectification of long-term problems with member inactivity and convert attrition. Despite these challenges, the announcement of two new temples for Argentina since 2018 indicates some improvements with maturation in membership and leadership. However, the announcements of these temples do not appear indicative of significant increases in the number of active members based upon the most recent reports available from local members and returned missionaries.

### New Stake in Alabama

The Church organized its eighth stake in Alabama during September. The Gadsden Alabama Stake was organized from congregations that were primarily assigned to the Birmingham Alabama Stake prior to the new stake's creation. The Church has experienced slow growth in Alabama during the past 35 years. Of the eight stakes in Alabama, only two have been organized after 1986.

### Second Ward Created in Wichita Falls, Texas

The Church organized its second ward in Wichita Falls, Texas during September. The new ward, the Lake Wichita Ward, pertains to the Lawton Oklahoma Stake. Prior to the creation of the new ward, Wichita Falls was one of the most populous cities in the United States with only one ward. The Church also created a military branch in Wichita Falls in 2018 for members of the Church on Sheppard Air Force Base to the north of Wichita Falls.

### Rapid Stake Growth Continues in the Philippines Olongapo Mission

The Church has reported unprecedented growth in the number of stakes in the Philippines Olongapo Mission since 2017 as the number of stakes has increased from one to five. All four stakes organized since 2017 within the mission were organized from single districts that advanced into stakes. Some of these districts have operated for over 35 years. The Church in the Philippines continues to experience steady progress with districts in many areas of the country maturing into stakes due to increases in the number of active, full-tithe paying Melchizedek Priesthood holders. As a result, the number of stakes in the Philippines since 2012 has increased from 85 to 114 and the number of districts has decreased from 84 to 63. Filipino members report of many additional districts that are likely to become stakes in the foreseeable future.



# UPDATED RESOURCES

## REACHING THE NATIONS COUNTRY PROFILES

We continue to update the country profiles for our comprehensive work, *Reaching the Nations: International Church Growth Almanac*. The following country profiles were updated and posted on our website, [www.cumorah.com](http://www.cumorah.com), during September 2019. We will continue to update additional country profiles in the coming months, with the goal to release the next edition of the almanac in late 2020:

- [Cambodia](#)
- [Indonesia](#)
- [Malaysia](#)
- [Singapore](#)
- [Sri Lanka](#)
- [Thailand](#)

