them descendants of the original pioneers, and the area was still a major supplier of fresh fruits to other parts of Mexico. The Church schools in Mexico are bilingual, with the Juárez Academy a regional center of culture and learning (see academies). A striking number of Church leaders have roots in the Mexican colonies. The area also produces a high number of Spanish-speaking missionaries and mission presidents, whose work has extended beyond Latin America to Spain and the Spanish-speaking population worldwide.

While visiting Colonia Juárez on November 11, 1989, Carlos Salinas de Gortari, the president of Mexico, commended the LDS colonists in Mexico in these words:

We appreciate your dedication, honesty, sobriety, and respect for law. You have contributed to the elevation of the regions where you live together, work and labor intensely, and with this you also elevate the level of our nation. You have incorporated new technology, more efficient productive processes, and have shared your knowledge and experience with the rest of your fellow citizens, adding generosity to the characteristics that distinguish you. We know that you are a good people who do good [transcribed and translated by Guillermo Toscano Arrambí, on file at Juárez Academy].

BIBLIOGRAPHY
Romney, Thomas Cottam. The Mormon Colonies in Mexico. Salt Lake City, 1938.

SHIRLEY TAYLOR ROBINSON

MEXICO AND CENTRAL AMERICA, THE CHURCH IN

MEXICO
The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints first sent missionaries into Mexico in 1875. It had long been a hope of Church leaders to teach the gospel to these descendants of the Book of Mor-
mon peoples, and to show them the sacred record of their ancestors. President Brigham Young also looked at Mexico as a possible place of refuge for the Saints in the event of further persecution from the United States government. The Church established colonies in northern Mexico in 1885. Though Church growth in Mexico, and later in Central America, was sporadic and beset with political difficulties, the deep roots of nearly a century began to produce abundantly in the 1970s, so that by the end of 1990 the Church had twenty-seven missions and hundreds of stakes and wards serving approximately a million members in these areas. There are also temples in both Mexico City and Guatemala City.

**First Missionaries.** The first LDS missionaries sent to Mexico in 1875 included Daniel W. Jones, his son Wiley, Anthony W. Ivins, James Z. Stewart, and Helaman Pratt. This group was also to scout out good colonizing areas in the southwestern United States and northern Mexico. Though they recorded no baptisms, the missionaries found many possible sites for the Saints to settle, the most promising being in Chihuahua, Mexico.

From Chihuahua the group also mailed a booklet, *Troxos Selectos del Libro de Mormon* (selections from the Book of Mormon), to well-known citizens and government officials. The selections had been translated by Melitón González Trejo and Daniel W. Jones. Meanwhile, a second group of missionaries, called in September 1876, left for Mexico directly following the October general conference. This group was composed of two of the original missionaries, Stewart and Pratt, and four new ones—Stewart’s brother Isaac, George Terry, Louis Garff, and Melitón G. Trejo. They separated in Tucson, Arizona, with Pratt and Trejo going south to Hermosillo, Sonora, Mexico, where the first five baptisms in Mexico occurred in 1877. The other four missionaries were not so fortunate as they were driven from the country by the warring Yaqui Indians.

Two of the booklets mailed by the first expedition fell into the hands of two influential citizens who wrote for more information: Ignacio Manuel Altamirano and Dr. Platón Rhodakanaty (also spelled Rhodacanaty). Dr. Rhodakanaty studied the materials with several of his friends, and when

Elder Moses Thatcher, of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles, and other missionaries arrived in Mexico City in November 1879, they soon baptized him and his study group. Within a week Thatcher organized the Mexico City branch and appointed Rhodakanaty as branch president, with Silviano Arteaga and Jose Ybarola serving as his counselors.

Thatcher dedicated Mexico for missionary work on January 25, 1880, but because many of the original members left the Church, he rededicated the land and mission on April 6, 1881, from the rim of the volcano Popocatepetl—which has great historical significance to Mexico’s Indian people. He formed a second branch that August in Ozumba, a small town nestled at the base of Popocatepetl.

**Colonists.** By 1885, the U.S. persecution of the Church for polygamy resulted in many Church leaders in the United States going into foreign

← The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints in Mexico and Central America as of January 1, 1991.
countries to find homes for their multiple families, and some of them founded Colonia Juárez in the state of Chihuahua, Mexico. Later colonies were founded at Díaz, Dublán, and also in Pacheco, Oaxaca, Morelos, and San José, Sonora (see MEXICO, PIONEER SETTLEMENTS IN). The American colonists suffered greatly from the political instability in Mexico. Sonora permanently exiled all foreign settlers, and the Chihuahua Saints were evacuated for a time, with the loss of food, possessions, and sometimes lives. However, many of the Saints returned and rebuilt their colonies and had no further trouble.

**MISSION CLOSURES (1889–1946).** The Mexican Mission was closed in 1889 and the missionaries recalled because of the worsening persecution in the polygamy crisis, but it was reopened in 1901 by Elder John Henry Smith, an apostle, and Presidents Anthony W. Ivins and Henry Eyring from the Juárez Stake. Missionary work continued with lengthy interruptions due to the Mexican Revolution and counterrevolutions (1910–1928).

Elder Rey L. Pratt, of the Seventy, presided over the Mexican Mission from 1907 until his death in 1931, but did not live in Mexico much of that time because the missionaries were often banned. When all foreign missionaries were exiled from 1913 until 1921, President Pratt placed Presidents Isaias Juárez, Abel Paez, and Bernabe Parra, the district presidency, in charge of the Church in Mexico, and the work of the mission continued under local leadership. Local priesthood brethren also led the Church from 1926 to 1946, when the Mexican government prohibited foreigners from doing religious work in Mexico. Church membership continued to grow.

1946 TO PRESENT. With its rapid growth in Mexico, and noting the need for education among its members there, the Church established thirty-seven schools in Mexico between 1960 and 1974, most of them elementary schools. The largest, most widely known LDS school in Mexico is its preparatory school, Centro Escolar Benemerito de las Américas, established in 1964.

The Mexican Mission was divided into four missions between 1952 and 1960. In December 1961, Mexico City established its first stake with Harold Brown, an Anglo who was reared in the Mormon colonies, as president. The second stake was organized in 1967 with Agrícola Lozano, a native Mexican, as president. On November 9, 1975, Elder Howard W. Hunter, of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles, organized eleven new stakes in the Mexico City area, among them the Mexico City Zarahemla Stake for the students of Benemérito. From 1976 to 1978 nearly 150 full-time missionaries were called from the membership of this stake. By 1983 Mexico had eight missions, seventy-six stakes, and several hundred thousand members (second only to the United States in membership), and the majority of the missionaries in the country were local Mexicans. Hundreds of the members had been blessed to attend Church schools.

**MEXICO CITY TEMPLE.** On March 21, 1977, President Spencer W. Kimball announced that the Church would build a temple in Mexico City. The Mexico Temple was dedicated on December 2, 1983, by President Gordon B. Hinckley, a counselor in the First Presidency. Its design was a modern adaptation of ancient Mayan architecture, showing respect for the culture and history of Mexico. Harold and Leanore Jespersen Brown were its first president and matron.

**CENTRAL AMERICA**

The expansion of the Church into Central America is more recent than that of Mexico. The first missionary effort beyond Mexico came in 1941, when John (Juan) O’Donnell, who had grown up in the LDS Mexican colonies, was assigned to Guatemala City by the U.S. Department of Agriculture. He
taught the gospel informally in Guatemala for several years and petitioned the Church to send missionaries to what he considered a humble people ready to hear the gospel. In 1947 four missionaries were sent to Guatemala and Costa Rica, as part of the Mexican Mission. On September 7, 1947, the first sacrament meeting was held in Guatemala. Central America was dedicated for preaching the gospel and the Central America Mission was organized on November 16, 1952, by Elder Spencer W. Kimball, then of the Quorum of the Twelve. On August 1, 1965, the Guatemala-El Salvador Mission was divided from the Central American Mission. By 1990 missions had been organized in five Central American countries: Guatemala, Honduras, Panama, El Salvador, and Costa Rica. Guatemala had three missions, and El Salvador opened its second mission in July 1990. In December 1990 the Church had forty-three stakes in Central America.

**The Guatemala Temple.** While the Mexico City Temple was being built, plans were already being made to build a temple in Guatemala City. Construction of this temple was completed in three years, and it was dedicated in December 1984, one year after the dedication of the Mexico City Temple. The construction of the temples enables thousands of Mexican and Central American Latter-day Saints to participate regularly in temple ordinances in their own language and without undertaking the long trip to the Arizona Temple in Mesa as they had done before.

In the April 1989 general conference of the Church, the first General Authorities from Mexico
and Central America were called to the quorums of Seventy: Horacio Tenorio from Mexico and Carlos H. Amado from Guatemala. On April 6, 1991, Jorge A. Rojas of Mexico was also called to the Seventy.

BIBLIOGRAPHY


BOANERGES RUBALCAVA

MICHAEL THE ARCHANGEL

See: Adam: LDS Sources; Angels: Archangels

MIDDLE EAST, THE CHURCH IN THE

Political turmoil in the Ottoman empire, two world wars, and restrictions imposed by local governments have challenged the efforts of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints to establish an official presence in the Middle East. Despite these difficulties, the Church has small congregations in several Middle Eastern countries, mostly because of the influx of expatriate (mainly American) Church members working there. Before 1950, Church activities were limited to the Levant (Turkey, Palestine, Lebanon, and Syria), but since then some have also occurred, temporarily at least, in Iran, Egypt, Jordan, Israel, the West Bank, Lebanon, and the Arab countries of the Gulf.

The history of LDS Church activity in the Middle East dates from 1841, when Orson Hyde, an apostle, prayed on the Mount of Olives near Jerusalem for the ingathering of Abraham’s children (especially the Jews) to Palestine, for the building up of Jerusalem, and for the rearing of a temple. LDS missionary work in the Middle East began in 1884, when Jacob Spori opened the Turkish Mission in Constantinople. Branches of the Church, consisting mostly of Armenian and European converts, were eventually established in Aintab, Aleppo, and Haifa, but the mission closed in 1896. It reopened in 1897, but closed again in 1909 because of the increasing political turmoil in the Ottoman empire.

After World War I, the mission was reopened in Aleppo and renamed the Armenian Mission. In 1928 it was headquartered in Haifa, but was closed that December with the sudden death of Joseph Booth, the mission president. It reopened in 1933 as the Palestine-Syrian Mission, but was closed again in 1939 because of World War II. In 1947 the mission was reopened with Badwagan Piranian as president; it was renamed the Near East Mission in 1950 but closed again later that year. From 1950 to 1969, Church activity in the Middle East consisted mostly of small groups scattered in various countries and of a few missionaries from the Swiss Mission assigned to work in Lebanon. In September 1969 a Church group was organized in Jerusalem to accommodate Brigham Young University (BYU) faculty and students involved in a Near Eastern Studies program. Other events included the organization of the Israel District (1977), the dedication of the Orson Hyde Memorial Garden on the Mount of Olives (1979), and the dedication of the BYU Jerusalem Center for Near Eastern Studies on Mount Scopus (1989).

The Church has established a few congregations in other Middle Eastern countries since 1950 as economic expansion, related mostly to the oil industry, has brought an influx of Western workers to the area. A branch of the Church has been operating in Cairo, Egypt, since 1974. The Iran Tehran Mission was organized in July 1975, the first formal mission in the Middle East since 1950, but it was closed in December 1978 with the worsening political situation between Iran and the United States. In 1989, Jordan became the first Arab country to grant formal recognition to the Church, allowing it to establish the Center for Cultural and Educational Affairs in Amman. The governments in these countries have allowed the Church, along with other non-Muslim groups, to hold services and other activities as long as they are unobtrusive and their members respect Islamic laws and traditions, including the restriction against proselytizing among the Muslim populace.