SAVIOR

See: Jesus Christ: Names and Titles of

SCANDINAVIA, THE CHURCH IN

At the General Conference of the Church in Salt Lake City on October 6, 1849, Elder Erastus Snow, an apostle, and Peter Olsen Hansen were called to serve missions to Scandinavia. John Erik Forsgren asked that he might also be called to his native Sweden. They were joined by George Parker Dykes, who was already a missionary in England, and these four men formally introduced the Church into Scandinavia. Successful in finding converts from the beginning, the Church has had two very dynamic periods of growth there, from 1850 to 1870, and from 1947 to 1967. Emigration of Church members to the United States was particularly high between 1861 and 1891 and after World War II. By the end of 1990, the Church had over 20,000 members living in seven stakes and 119 wards and branches throughout Scandinavia, served by a temple in Västerhaninge, Sweden. Records show that 57 percent of the LDS converts in Scandinavia have been women and 43 percent men.

EARLY CONVERTS. Hansen arrived first in Copenhagen on May 12, 1850, and immediately visited a Baptist congregation. The first Danish Mormon converts later came from that group. Elder Snow, Forsgren, and Dykes arrived on June 14, 1850.

Forsgren visited his family in Gävle, Sweden, and baptized his brother Peter Adolf Forsgren on July 26, 1850. This was the first LDS BAPTISM in Scandinavia. On August 12, eight men and seven women were baptized at Øresund, near Copenhagen. The first Danish branch of about fifty members was organized in Copenhagen a month later.

Dykes was sent to Ålborg in Jutland in northern Denmark, where he also contacted a Baptist congregation. The first converts in Ålborg included Hans Peter Jensen, a prominent Baptist, who owned an iron foundry employing over one hundred men, and his conversion to the LDS Church became widely known. Within four months the branch in Ålborg included sixty members.

A Norwegian ship’s captain named Svend Larsen first encountered the Church in Ålborg. He was taught by Elder Snow in Brother Jensen’s home, and noted in his diary that an inner voice whispered to him that this was a man of God. Baptized in Ålborg on September 23, 1851, he became the first resident Norwegian to join the Church. Larsen gave important support to spreading the Church in Norway. On September 11, 1851, he brought Hans F. Peterson, the first LDS missionary, to Norway, who baptized master blacksmith John Olsen and his assistant Peter Adamsen on November 26 at Risør. With the help of missionaries from Denmark, the work was extended to Brevik and Fredrikstad. The first convert there was Svend Peter Larsen, a stepson of one of the leading Methodists in Fredrikstad. His wife, Berthine Randine, was baptized four days later. In
spite of mob disturbances and occasional brief imprisonment of the missionaries, the Church grew. The first branch in Norway was organized in Risør on July 16, 1852. During the next six years branches were organized in Fredrikstad, Brevik, Christiania (Oslo), Drammen, Stavanger, Halden, Trondheim, and Bergen.

John Erik Forsgren’s missionary work in Sweden ended quickly as he and Mikael Johnson were deported to Copenhagen. The first highly successful missionary in Sweden was Anders W. Winberg, who began his work in Skåne in April 1852, and organized the first branch in Skönbäck with thirty-six members on April 24, 1852. Soon thereafter branches were established in Malmö, Lomma, and Lund. On June 25, 1853, the Skåne Conference was organized.

The Church was introduced into Iceland by two young Icelanders, Thorarin Halldíasson and Gummundur Gudmundsson, who were baptized in Denmark in 1851 and returned to their homeland to proselyte as instructed by Elder Snow. Benedikt Hanson and his wife were baptized, but when Halldíasson accidentally drowned on a fishing trip, no one was left with priesthood authority to baptize in Iceland. On April 10, 1853, Johan P. Lorenzen of the Copenhagen Branch arrived to continue the missionary work. He organized a branch in Iceland on June 19, 1853. The Church had only moderate success in Iceland.

Thus by 1853 the Church had gained a foothold in all the Scandinavian countries except Finland. In 1876, Carl August and John E. Sundström of the Stockholm Conference were called to Finland. They organized a small branch in Larsmo, under difficult conditions because of the lack of religious freedom. After having been ruled by Sweden for 600 years, Finland was a Russian Grand Duchy from 1809 until 1917, and the authorities confiscated LDS books and tracts. Post offices in Finland opened packages containing Nordstjärnan, the LDS Swedish publication, and sent the empty wrappers to subscribers with the explanation that no Mormon literature would be allowed into the country. In 1903 Elder Francis M. Lyman, an apostle, dedicated Finland for the preaching of the gospel, but it was not until after World War II that missionary work showed any significant success. C. Fritz Johansson and Karl Lagerberg were sent to Finland in May 1946, and Elder Ezra Taft Benson, an apostle, rededicated the country on July 16, 1946, at Larsmo, where the small branch had been established earlier. Henry A. Matis became the first Mission President of the Finnish Mission in August 1947. At the end of 1990 Finland had two stakes and one mission of the Church.

Emigration. Since 1852, many Scandinavian members have emigrated to the United States. Particularly in the nineteenth century, poverty, starvation, persecution, and hopelessness motivated people to seek a better life and, for Latter-day Saints, the spirit of gathering to the “promised land” in Utah was strong. There they could enjoy religious freedom and practice their religion without ridicule or harassment.

The Church in Western America has been significantly augmented by these immigrants. From 1850 to 1950, 27,000 members of record emigrated from Scandinavia. If unbaptized children under eight years of age were counted, the total would be much higher. A little more than half of these emigrants were Danish, a third Swedish, and the balance Norwegians. Emigrating Icelanders amounted to less than one percent. A 1950 survey concluded that about 45 percent of the Church membership was at least partly of Scandinavian descent.

Clash of Cultures. To understand the environment in which early missionaries to Scandinavia found themselves, it is necessary to know that a strong liberal movement prevailed there in the mid-1800s. On June 5, 1849, only months before the first LDS missionaries came to Denmark, King Frederik VII signed the new Danish Constitution, which guaranteed the people freedom of speech, press, and religion. In Norway a Dissenter Law guaranteeing religious freedom to all Christian denominations was passed as early as 1845. As soon as Mormon missionaries began to proselytize in Norway, some of the clergy and public officials questioned whether Latter-day Saints could be considered Christians. On November 4, 1853, the Supreme Court of Norway ruled that Mormons could not enjoy protection under the Dissenter Law, and missionaries were arrested and fined for preaching, baptizing, or administering the sacrament. Unable to pay, they had to go to jail, where they studied the scriptures, sang hymns, and taught the gospel to the jailers, who often were sympathetic and provided them with the best cells. In Sweden limited religious freedom was granted by law in 1858, but it was not until 1952
that the Church was given full legal religious freedom. For Scandinavians, PLURAL MARRIAGE was a real problem. It took a long time after the 1890 Manifesto (see Official Declaration—1) to convince the public that Mormons who lived their religion were law-abiding and hard-working citizens with strict moral principles. The right to exercise full religious freedom has come slowly to the Latter-day Saints in Scandinavia. But the resentment long prevalent among Scandinavian public officials and clergy has gradually turned into respect and, in some instances, into admiration for the Church, which can now legally pursue full worship and perform all its ORDINANCES in all the Scandinavian countries.

LANDMARK TRANSLATIONS. Using the standard translations of the Bible, the missionaries in Copenhagen realized the pressing need to have the Book of Mormon translated into Danish. Peter Olsen Hansen and Elder Snow’s translation was printed by F. E. Bordings Bogtrykkeri in May 1851. This was the first foreign language edition of the Book of Mormon.

Because the Norwegians could read the Danish translation, the Book of Mormon was not translated into Norwegian until 1950. The first Swedish translation was published in 1878, the Finnish in 1954. Selected passages were published in Iceland in 1981. The Doctrine and Covenants and the Pearl of Great Price have also been printed in all Scandinavian languages.

LOCAL PUBLICATIONS. Peter Olsen Hansen also wrote the first Mormon tract published in Scandinavia, En Advaresel til Folket (A Warning to the People). When Elder Snow arrived in June 1850, he wrote A Voice of Truth, which Hansen translated as En Sandheds Røst, which has seen many reprints. Skandinaviens Stjernes (The Scandinavian Star), published in 1851, was the first official periodical of the Church in Scandinavia. It later became Danske Stjernes (The Danish Star), presently Stjernen. Comparable Norwegian and Finnish magazines, Lys Over Norge (Light over Norway) and Valkeus, were published monthly in 1900. The Swedish journal is called Nordstjärnans (The North Star). March 1851 saw publication of the first Danish LDS book of HYMNS.

GENERAL AUTHORITIES BORN IN SCANDINAVIA. Three native-born Scandinavians have become GENERAL AUTHORITIES of the Church. Anthon H. Lund, born in Ålborg, Denmark, became an apostle (1889) and counselor in the first presidency (1903–1921). John A. Widtsoe, born at Daløe, Island of Frøya, Norway, was an apostle (1921–1952). And Christian D. Fjeldsted from Sundbyvester, Copenhagen, Denmark, was a member of the seventy (1884–1905).

ORGANIZATION OF MISSIONS AND STAKES. Copenhagen became the center for the Church in Scandinavia as communication from Salt Lake City went through the Scandinavian Mission office located there. As membership increased, branches were organized into conferences. In 1900 the Scandinavian Mission consisted of sixty organized branches in nine conferences: three in Denmark (Copenhagen, Århus, and Ålborg), three in Sweden (Stockholm, Göteborg, and Skåne), and three in Norway (Christiania, Bergen, and Trondheim). Even after thousands of Saints had emigrated, Church membership in Scandinavia totaled 4,535, with 165 American missionaries. The Swedish Mission was divided from the original Scandinavian Mission on July 1, 1905, and the Norwegian Mission was organized on April 1, 1920.

In the fall of 1939, the American missionaries were withdrawn from Europe, and local leaders were made acting presidents over the missions: Orson B. West in Denmark, Olaf Sønstebø in Norway, and C. Fritz Johansson in Sweden. Even though Denmark and Norway were occupied by Germany from 1940 until 1945, the local members were able to continue Church activity. When the new American mission presidents arrived in 1945–1946, they found the missions to be in good condition in spite of the ravages of war.

On February 15, 1946, Elder Ezra Taft Benson began administering a relief program of food and clothing to Latter-day Saints in Scandinavia. Many members emigrated to the United States after World War II, and most were educated people who left good jobs to go to Zion. Yet, recent growth of the Church in all of the Scandinavian countries has led to organized stakes. The first stakes organized in each country are: the Copenhagen Denmark Stake on June 16, 1974; the Stockholm Sweden Stake on April 20, 1975; the Oslo Norway Stake on May 22, 1977; and the Helsinki Finland Stake on October 16, 1977.

THE STOCKHOLM SWEDEN TEMPLE. In 1985, the Church dedicated a temple in Västerhaninge, Sweden, eighteen miles south of Stockholm, with John
and Edna Fluge Langeland, Norwegian-Americans, as TEMPLE PRESIDENT AND MATRON. Scandinavian members who have TEMPLE RECOMMENDS perform sacred TEMPLE ORDINANCES in their own languages there. It was the first place in Europe where Latter-day Saints could receive TEMPLE SEALINGS for time and eternity without first being married by civil authority. With stakes and wards in their countries and the temple in Västerhaninge, Scandinavian Latter-day Saints can enjoy the full program of the Church.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

JOHN LANGELAND

SCHISMATIC GROUPS

Like any large religious body, The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints has had a number of variously disaffected members break away. Some have taken a group of members with them and started rival organizations, based on their interpretations of the teachings of Joseph SMITH. There have been about 130 such groups; only a few have existed for more than ten years.

The first was known as the Pure Church of Christ, founded in 1831 by Wycam Clark, Northrop Sweet, and others. Asserting that Joseph Smith was a false prophet, Clark claimed that he was the true leader of the Church. The group held only two or three meetings and died out.

The most prominent schismatic group organized during Joseph Smith’s lifetime was the Church of Christ, established by Warren Parrish in Kirtland, Ohio, in 1837. A few months earlier Parrish was accused of embezzling funds from the Church’s bank, the Kirtland Safety Society, and was excommunicated. Alleging that Joseph had fallen from his divine calling as leader of the Church, Parrish claimed the authority to lead it.

He gained the support of three members of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles, some of the presidents of the Seventies, and several other influential leaders who had become alienated from Smith during the 1837–1838 economic crisis in Kirtland. That group broke up in less than a year (CHC 1:403–407).

The death of Joseph Smith in 1844 produced another flurry of new groups seeking to take advantage of the loss of the Church’s leader. There were people in these organizations who agreed that Joseph Smith had been a true prophet, although many of them rejected or ignored some of the doctrines or practices he had established; the question in their minds was who was to take his place.

Joseph’s counselor in the First Presidency, Sidney RIGDON, was one of the first to press his claim, telling the Saints that there could be no successor to Joseph Smith and that he should be named guardian of the Church, to watch over it in Joseph’s name and build it up to the memory of the slain prophet. His claim was rejected by most members, who sustained Brigham YOUNG and the