

History of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints in the Democratic Republic of the Congo



Congolese members started to write to Church headquarters requesting missionaries as early as the 1960s and 1970s.

Reverend M'Baki Dingana was one of these early Congolese who wrote to Church leaders. American and European members living in the country were the first to establish early branches of the Church. In the late 1970s, Spencer W. Kimball, President of the Church at that time, authorized Martin E. Christensen of the Switzerland Mission to put "these Congo Saints [members] under the jurisdiction of his mission."

Mbuyi Nkitabungi was an early Congolese convert to the Church. He was baptized on July 19, 1980, while studying in Brussels, Belgium. Following his baptism, he began correspondence with the Church, hoping to establish the Church in his home country. Nkitabungi later received a mission call to Birmingham, England. While this was going on, Oscar McConkie, a legal representative for the Church, visited Zaire in 1982. He discovered a few groups who had registered under the name of the Church. In September 1985, the first Zaire congregation met in Limete, with 205 people in attendance. This started a process that resulted in the arrival of Ralph Bay and Jean Hutchings as the first missionaries to Zaire in February 1986. The first district of the Church in Zaire was organized on June 12, 1986, with Robert L. Backman as acting district leader. In June 1987, Elder Hutchings was called as

the first mission president in Zaire. In September the sons of Banza Muchioko, who joined the Church in Switzerland, were baptized, becoming the first people baptized into the Church on Zaire soil.

On August 30, 1987, Elder Marvin J. Ashton of the Twelve, assisted by Elder Alexander B. Morrison of the Seventy, dedicated the country for the preaching of the gospel. In the same year, the work spread to cities such as Lubumbashi, Likasi, and Kolwezi. As the 1980s came to an end, Church membership had reached 1,400.

The 1990s began with the calling of the first members from Zaire to serve as missionaries in the Zaire Kinshasa Mission. In 1992, the mission president, Homer LeBaron, met with Etienne Tshisekedi, the then minister of culture and arts in Zaire, and presented him with a triple-combination scripture set, which contains part of the holy scriptures of the Church. At the end of 1995, Church membership had reached 5,300. On November 10, 1996, the first stake in Kinshasa, Zaire, was created. Wa Mushihi Jacques Muliele was called as president.

In 1997 the name of the country changed from Zaire to Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC), and in the same year, on September 7, 1997, the Lubumbashi Stake was organized, with Nzembelenge Kefa Milambo as president.

In 2005, the Church launched several efforts to help members and the community become self-reliant. Some of the programs included those designed to help fund education, provide career training, and host career improvement meetings. In 2012, the Church began the first phase of the Kinshasa water project, projected to help 500,000 upon completion.

On June 30, 2010, the Democratic Republic of the Congo Lubumbashi Mission was established, the second in the DRC. By the year 2012, the 10th Kinshasa Democratic Republic of the Congo Binza Stake was established. In 2016, the Democratic Republic of the Congo Mbuji-Mayi Mission was created, with the first mission president being Alfred Kyungu, a native Congolese.

The Kinshasa Democratic Republic of the Congo Temple was announced in October of 2011 by Thomas S. Monson, President of the Church at that time. In February 2016, the

Church broke ground to begin construction. About 800 people were present at that groundbreaking, including key community leaders and Church members. The temple will be dedicated and become operational from April 2019 and

will serve seven countries in the surrounding area, including Rwanda, Burundi, Cameroon, Republic of the Congo, Central African Republic, Gabon, and the DRC.

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