

History of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints in Mexico

The history of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints in Mexico goes back to 1875, when Brigham Young, then prophet and leader of the Church, sent Daniel Jones to lead a small group of missionaries to Mexico City and distribute brochures to Mexican leaders. One of these brochures about the Book of Mormon fell into the hands of Plotino Rhodacanaty, who after reading it wrote to President John Taylor, Brigham Young's successor, to request more information about the Church.

During the October 1879 general conference, President Taylor called Moses Thatcher, then the newest member of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles (the second-highest governing body in the Church), to start the proselytizing work in Mexico City. Plotino Rhodacanaty was the first convert.

On November 13, 1879, Elder Thatcher and two missionaries organized the first branch (congregation) of the Church in Mexico City with Rhodacanaty as the branch president.

Beginning with a group of 12 members and three missionaries, the Church started to expand slowly among the Mexican people. In 1886 the Church published a Spanish edition of the Book of Mormon to further the work of the Church in Mexico. The Book of Mormon is a record of the inhabitants of ancient America and includes an account of Christ's visit to and dealings with them.

In the first days of the Church in Mexico, two faithful members, Rafael Monroy and Vicente Morales, became martyrs because of their beliefs. During the Mexican Revolution, Monroy was the president of the small congregation in San Marcos, Hidalgo, and Morales was his first counselor (assistant). On July 17, 1915, both were arrested by a group of revolutionaries and were told they would be released if they handed over their arms and renounced their strange religion. The two men declined the offer and were shot to death by the firing squad. They died in defense of their beliefs.

Throughout the years, the Church reached all parts of the country. The first stake (similar to a diocese) was organized in Colonia Juárez, Chihuahua, in 1895. Sixty-six years later, on December 3, 1961, the second stake was organized. Currently there are 1,120,000 members of the Church in Mexico in 212 stakes.

On April 3, 1976, under the direction of Church President Spencer W. Kimball, the construction of the Mexico City Temple was announced. Ground was broken by Elder Boyd K. Packer, a member of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles. The temple was open for public tours from September 8 to September 20, 1983, and was dedicated on December 2, 1983, by President Gordon B. Hinckley, who later became the leader of the Church in 1995.

During the April 1998 general conference, President Hinckley said: "I have been with many who have very little of this world's goods. But they have in their hearts a great burning faith concerning this latter-day work. They love the Church. They love the gospel. They love the Lord and want to do His will. They are paying their tithing, modest as it is. They make tremendous

sacrifices to visit the temples. They travel for days at a time in cheap buses and on old boats. They save their money and do without to make it all possible. They need nearby temples — small, beautiful, serviceable temples.” As a result of this vision, he announced the building of more temples, 11 of which were built in Mexico between the years 1998 and 2000.

After 25 years of uninterrupted service, the Mexico City Temple closed its doors on March 31, 2007, for remodeling. It opened for a public house October 20, 2008, and was rededicated November 16, 2008.

The temple closed again in January 2014 for a second remodel. A free open house for the public to tour the temple will start August 14, 2015, and go through September 5, 2015. The temple will be rededicated Sunday, September 13, 2015.

The Mexico City Temple is the 26th of 147 operating temples throughout the world. At the end of 2015, the Church will open the Tijuana Mexico Temple.