

THE CHURCH OF  
**JESUS CHRIST**  
OF LATTER-DAY SAINTS

**CONFIDENTIAL**

**WORLDWIDE GOVERNMENT RELATIONS PRIORITY COUNTRIES**

(The countries listed below are the current Church priority countries, for purposes of government relations activities ONLY.)

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**"Immediate" Priority Countries:**\* These are countries where there are substantial, urgent problems affecting the viability or principal functions of the Church, for which immediate government relations activities are necessary. Currently, those countries are:

- |              |                     |
|--------------|---------------------|
| 1) Russia    | 6) Vietnam          |
| 2) Ukraine   | 7) Samoa            |
| 3) India     | 8) Papua New Guinea |
| 4) Argentina | 9) Venezuela        |
| 5) Botswana  | 10) Turkey          |

**"Longer-term" Priority Countries:** These are countries in which, taking all relevant factors into account (Church presence, growth potential, worldwide or regional stature, government relations issues and opportunities), it is expected that long-term investment of worldwide, coordinated government relations resources will have the greatest benefit for the Church. They are:

- |              |  |
|--------------|--|
| 1) Malaysia  | 6) Mexico  |
| 2) Mongolia  | 7) <u><a href="#">Cuba</a></u>   |
| 3) Nigeria   | 8) <u><a href="#">Brazil</a></u>   |
| 4) DR Congo  | 9) <u><a href="#">Philippines</a></u>  |
| 5) Indonesia | 10) <u><a href="#">United Kingdom</a></u>  |
|              | 10) <u><a href="#">Switzerland</a></u> <u><a href="#">[A new program is under way in Switzerland that likely will alleviate many of the Church's visa difficulties.]</a></u> |

\* China [is an](#) important country [y](#) but [is](#) being handled directly by the Area Presidency [y](#).

## WORLDWIDE GOVERNMENT RELATIONS PRIORITY COUNTRIES

### COUNTRY BACKGROUND SUMMARIES

#### IMMEDIATE PRIORITY COUNTRIES

##### Russia

Russia is an immediate priority country for three reasons: its continued strong political and cultural influence throughout former Soviet and Eastern Bloc countries; its growing assertiveness on the world stage as a counter-weight against Western dominance through means that contravene generally understood international norms; and a general hardening of official government and social attitudes towards things Western in general, including “foreign” religions in particular. Russia’s recent actions against Ukraine threaten to destabilize increasingly tense East-West relations reminiscent of the Cold War era. Recent government actions that have affected the Church include surprise politically motivated audits, investigation of the Book of Mormon as “extremist” material, and the denial of previously agreed-to 3-year multiple-entry visas for missionaries called from the United States. Newly enacted and proposed legislation will likely restrict even further the ability of the Church’s various legal entities to continue to operate as heretofore.

##### Ukraine

Ukraine, which recently lost Crimea through unilateral annexation by Russia deemed illegal under international law, is now fighting an insurgency by pro-Russian separatists in the eastern one-third of the country that could grow quickly into a much larger international conflict. The recent overthrow of the previous pro-Russian government by western “pro-Ukrainian” forces and a clear official shift toward the European Union threaten to fracture further an already deeply divided population. Political and economic instability, exacerbated by an over-reliance on Russia for domestic energy needs and endemic corruption, will likely plague Ukraine well into the future. At the same time, with a Church membership base in the Europe East Area second only to Russia, Ukraine, with its temple and relatively mature priesthood base, provides important stability to the Church and its operations in Eastern Europe. The current crises could have an immediate and long-term negative effect on Church operations. Government relations during this critical period for Ukraine need to be closely monitored and strengthened where feasible during what will likely be an extended period of political uncertainty and social upheaval.

##### India

With nearly 1.2 billion people, including 25 million Christians, India presents obvious opportunities for the Church. Currently, the Church has approximately 10,000 members in 36 units in India. In 2012, the first stake was created, and additional stakes are expected to be created in 2014. Nonetheless, Church progress is hindered because of “starts and stops” in the issuance of

visas for young missionaries. Visas are issued only at the discretion of the India Ambassador to the United States. There is a great need to put in place a long term strategy to regularize the process for obtaining missionary visas process and to expand the countries from which missionaries may be called. Other significant issues exist. Currently, Indian tax authorities have challenged the tax-exempt treatment of monies brought into India for operational funding. This challenge, which would involve substantial sums, reverses some 20 years favorable treatment of these fund flows. In addition, anti-conversion laws, a history of persecution of minority religions, and, in recent years, arrests of some missionaries all present additional government relations concerns.

## Argentina

Argentina is an immediate priority country for three reasons. First, in the past 18 months the Church has experienced difficulty importing many distribution materials, especially garments and sacred temple clothing from Beehive Clothing facilities in Paraguay and the United States. These difficulties include slow processing of import documentation as well as possible requests for illicit payments. As of July 2014, it has been approximately 12 months since the last successful garment and sacred temple clothing importation. The government has been unresponsive to various requests through different means to request a meeting to amicably resolve the importation blockage. With the planned opening of the Cordoba temple which will not rent clothing, the need for reliable importation remains critical. Second, Argentina is currently considering revisions to the Civil Code and other legislation that likely will affect the treatment of religious liberties. Due to the contentious nature of the issue within the current administration and legislature, the negotiation and drafting of the legislation has occurred behind closed doors without substantive input from the religious community and other stakeholders. The Church and other non-Catholic religions continue to experience various forms of religious discrimination with respect to tax exempt status and imposition of mandatory labor union requirements. Third, even before the United States Supreme Court ruled against Argentina on June 16, 2014 (which barred Argentina from paying restructured debt over the objections of holders of defaulted bonds), Argentina has experienced near collapse of its currency, high unemployment, and hyperinflation resulting in hardship for families, increased crime, emigration, and economic uncertainty.

## Botswana

The Church established a mission in Botswana – the Botswana-Namibia Mission – in 2013. The Government recently instituted new requirements, which the government has used to prevent missionaries from obtaining visas. Essentially, the new rules require among other things, a college education with a degree in theology or the like. These requirements have been challenged by religious groups generally, and Church representatives have made extensive efforts to obtain a waiver of the work permit requirement for missionaries, to no avail. In addition the Church has been informed, through confidential sources, that the Directorate of Internal Security (DIS), an office of the President which investigates security matters, has found the Church a security risk. This finding is based on allegations made by a teenage member who said she was pregnant by rape and was sent to the US by a senior missionary couple to have her baby, so the couple's son could adopt her baby. The arrangement was in fact consensual. The baby was born in the US; adopted

by the couple's son; and the member returned to Botswana. Some months after the mother returned Botswana, the mother asked for money from the adopting couple. When the couple refused to pay, she reported the Church to the DIS with claims which the DIS has found as child trafficking. Each missionary visa has been denied on the basis of "not qualified" and "security risk."

The Church has not been able to secure work permits or renew existing visas for missionaries since February 2013. The number of missionaries will soon dwindle to zero. The membership is small and the country only produces 5 to 10 missionaries per year and so it cannot support missionary work from within. After great effort, President and Sister Wilson were granted long term visas which will expire in early 2015, months before their 3 year term is over. We need to develop the government relationships necessary to secure a reliable stream of missionary visas.

### **Vietnam**

The Church currently has three branches, one in Hanoi and two in Ho Chi Minh City, and the potential for growth among Vietnam's population of 87,000,000 is significant. The principal near-term objective is to register a nationwide religious organization, followed by its full recognition. In May 2014, the Vietnam government's Committee for Religious Affairs recognized an "Interim Representative Committee" to represent the Church's interests in Vietnam. The Committee consists of the district president and two branch presidents and operates pursuant to rules prepared by Church representatives and approved by the government. While short of full legal status, the recognition of the Committee is a significant step forward for the Church. This should increase the credibility and visibility of the Church in Vietnam. Full legal recognition would substantially broaden the Church's permitted activities, including making it easier for foreign missionaries to enter the country and engage in proselyting activities.

### **Samoa**

Samoa is proposed as a priority country because of the need to monitor and provide input in connection with the so-called "Fono Act" of 1990. This act recognized the authority of village councils to deal with village affairs, including religion, in accordance with "custom and usage". Unfortunately, the act led to a number of village chiefs continuing to favor certain religious groups in their villages while restricting and sometimes persecuting other religious groups, including the Church.

The Prime Minister and Cabinet are currently reviewing recommendations to modify the Fono Act, which, obviously, could impact the rights of Church members and those of other faiths in Samoa to worship as they please. The Attorney General has advised that if the Cabinet recommends changes to the Fono Act, the Church will be invited to make submissions regarding the form of the draft Bill. Although the Church has made gains recently, as the list of villages restricting religious liberty has reduced, there still remain a significant number of villages that refuse access to the Church.

## Papua New Guinea

The Pacific Area Presidency has designated Papua New Guinea as its number one focus for government relations. With seven million residents, Papua New Guinea has the second-largest population in the Pacific Area. There are currently 21,000 Latter-day Saints there, but the Area Presidency sees great potential for growth. Specifically, the Area Office wants to improve the Church's ability to respond to humanitarian needs, bring in missionaries with minimal bureaucratic encumbrance, and more easily buy and develop property. Good relationships are being established with [Prime Minister Peter O'Neill; Minister for Finance James Marape, Minister for Religion, Youth and Community Development Loujaya Kouza](#), and other [officials](#). These relationships need to be nurtured and expanded. Increasing Church resources and attention on Papua New Guinea would help with these efforts.

## Venezuela

Venezuela is an immediate priority country because of significant challenges presently faced by the Church and because of the political uncertainties resulting from the death [last year](#) of President Hugo Chavez. The Church is permitted to operate in Venezuela, but the attitude of the government toward the Church (and most other religious groups) has generally been antagonistic. Local governments have expropriated or occupied three meetinghouses owned by the Church. Two meetinghouses have been returned and legal action is underway to regain possession of the remaining meetinghouse. . Venezuela's president, Hugo Chavez, who ruled the country for 13 years, died on March 5, 2013. He was replaced by vice president Nicolas Maduro, a member of Chavez's inner circle. Venezuela's economy has been worsening since President Maduro came to power, and he has been taking increasingly radical measures that could have significant ramifications and should be closely monitored. [In February, 2014, many Venezuelans began to protest over conditions in Venezuela. The protests and the government's response to the protests have become increasingly violent. In March, 2014, all foreign \(non-Venezuelan\) missionaries were removed from Venezuela.](#) Government relations efforts may be key to protecting the Church's interests during this time of political uncertainty. The Church has over 150,000 members currently living in Venezuela.

## Turkey

Turkey is a government relations priority because of its significant influence regionally and culturally. Recent [societal shifts and changes the government's historically secularist policies](#) could threaten the fragile presence of the Church and other minority religious communities. Pending changes to the visa and temporary residence permit application processes scheduled to become effective in 2014 could adversely affect the small full-time missionary presence in Turkey. Litigation and other issues relating to LDS Charities have forced the temporary suspension of LDSC activities in the country.

## LONGER-TERM PRIORITY COUNTRIES

### Malaysia

Malaysia has nearly 26 million people and 7,300 Church members. For many years missionaries have entered the country on a tourist visa instead of [an](#) appropriate [visa, such as a](#) Professional Visit Pass (“PVP”). In addition, there is growing religious intolerance for non-Muslim religions. Despite considerable efforts, only a few missionaries have been able to obtain PVPs in recent years, and then only for part of the country and for a period up to one year. Recent [concentrated](#) government relations efforts resulted in a series of meetings with government officials, including high level immigration officials, who have expressed a willingness to assist the Church and offered various recommendations. Notwithstanding this, no resolution has yet been achieved. Discussions [and efforts to find a workable long-term visa solution](#) are ongoing.

### Mongolia

Mongolia, with a population of 3 million, has been a place of remarkable and rapid success and now has nearly 10,000 members, and one stake. Mongolia has provided many native missionaries, but there is still a need for foreign missionaries. At one point in time, the authorities stopped issuing visas to young missionaries, claiming that the visas issued at the invitation of local NGOs for missionaries to teach English are inconsistent with the religious activities the missionaries pursue in their free time. That difficulty subsided, but the situation remains fragile. Informal discussions with Immigration officials (including attendees at the 2013 Law and Religion Symposium at BYU) [appeared to open](#) the possibility of securing religious worker visas in lieu of (or in addition to) the NGO-sponsored visas, [but, at present, even these are constrained by a quota. Missionaries are regarded as part of the Church’s workforce, and, currently, only 5% of the workforce may be non-Mongolian. We are considering options, including seeking an increase in the quota.](#)

### Nigeria

Nigeria has a population of over 170,000,000 and rapidly growing Church membership. We anticipate substantial growth in Church operations with significant real estate acquisition and construction activity with the attendant governmental licensing and permitting. Nigeria has a near even split between Christians and Muslims populations, which has generated sectarian conflicts and challenging security issues for religious groups. The Church may have the ability to serve, and become regarded as, a bridge for dialogue among adherents and leaders of these persuasions. Nigeria also has unique combinations of tribal, community, and governmental relationships that will require effective governmental relations work to assure an environment for future Church growth and stability.

## DR Congo

There is a special need for government relations work in the DR Congo because of the growth in Church membership, the announcement of the temple in Kinshasa; [anticipated ground breaking and construction](#); and the country's increasing importance in Church operations [in Central Africa](#). The uncertain political and security environment underscores the importance of careful governmental relations in the DR Congo.

## Indonesia

Indonesia has a population of 240,272,000 and 6600 members. [In 2013](#), reports from the Jakarta media indicated [that](#) the House of Representatives “re-endorsed” a law limiting the number of religions recognized by the state to six. While this “policy” has been in place since the 1950s, [the](#) action with respect to the 2004 Civil Administration Law takes place at a time when religious intolerance is on the rise. According to one human rights activist the fear is that minority religions may be treated as “deviants” and, therefore, more likely subject to [be subjected to action under](#) Indonesia's blasphemy laws. [No difficulties emerged for the Church in this regard, but the potential remains. The Church's](#) foreign missionaries enter [Indonesia](#) under a strict quota, [which has recently been increased](#). Government proselyting guidelines also impose [some](#) limitation on the ability of missionaries to conduct a full range of missionary activities.

## Mexico

There are over 1.3 million members of the Church in Mexico, which is likely the largest concentration of members outside the U.S. On December 1, 2012, and after a twelve year hiatus, the political party that ruled Mexico for more than 70 years returned to power. The new president is Enrique Peña Nieto of the Institutional Revolutionary Party (PRI). Barring any unforeseen circumstances, the PRI administration will govern Mexico through 2018 and will affect the Church's presence, membership and operations in that country. The new administration has replaced many key government officials with whom the Church has enjoyed an excellent relationship. For example, new appointees now head the National Institute of Immigration, the Direction of Religious Affairs and the Commission for the Regularization of Land Tenancy. Cooperation by the foregoing agencies, among others, will be necessary to insure the Church's operations continue to flow smoothly in country. Even though we do not anticipate significant challenges to religious autonomy and Church operations in Mexico as a result of the recent change in political power, it seems prudent for the Church to continue to focus significant government relations efforts to develop and maintain good working relationships with the new Mexican government. During 2013, relationships were established with several key government officials; however, there are many additional contacts that still need to be developed. Based on the foregoing, Mexico should be maintained as a “longer-term” priority country in 2014.

## Cuba

The Church is not officially recognized in Cuba and operates there as an unincorporated entity. Nonetheless, the Cuban Government has granted permission, informally, for Church members living in Cuba to hold Sunday meetings. The Church has [one](#) branch in Havana, consisting of approximately [40](#)

known members and [another branch in](#) Cotorro (approximately 25 members). Church members are not allowed to proselyte but are permitted to teach and baptize investigators who independently find their way to Church meetings. Virtually all other activities and programs “typically” associated with the Church are not permitted by the Cuban Government. Currently, the Caribbean Area Presidency supervises the branch and groups on this island nation. With respect to the immediate future, expansion of Church activities in Cuba is virtually impossible--not only due to the position of the Cuban Government, but also due to the strict, complex and comprehensive “embargo” imposed by the U.S. against Cuba. As for the long-term outlook, however, there is reason for optimism. Support within the U.S. for the continuance of the U.S. embargo against Cuba seems to be waning and, it would appear, Communist party views toward religion for the Cuban people seem to be softening somewhat. Finally, while short-term expansion of Church activities is problematic, continued attention to Cuba in a meaningful way is warranted. Based on the foregoing, we propose Cuba be considered for “long-term” priority country status in 2014.

## **Brazil**

Brazil is a longer-term priority country for a number of reasons, including: the size of Church membership and investment in the country, Brazil’s emergence as a world political and economic power, the complexity of its governmental structure, and the difficulty the Church has experienced in recent years in obtaining visas for missionaries, mission presidents and others. The Church has roughly 1.2 million members in Brazil, 34 missions, and six operating Temples. Brazil is the world’s fifth largest country, both by geographical area and by population with almost 200 million people. It currently has the world’s seventh largest economy. It is the largest country in South America and in the Latin America region. The Church presently enjoys good relationships with the government. Those relationships, however, require intensive effort to maintain and grow, primarily because of the nuances inherent in Brazil’s governmental structure. Fifteen political parties are represented in Congress; four of those parties are currently regarded as dominant players. It is common for politicians to switch parties, or to move back and forth between roles in the state, municipal or the federal government. The practical reality in Brazil is that strong personal and institutional relationships at all levels of government, and the influence that can be generated from those relationships, matter a great deal to the continued growth and establishment of the Church.

Finally, notwithstanding the continuing efforts of the Brazil Area Presidency and the Visa Committee at Church Headquarters, there is and has for many months been a backlog of hundreds of American missionaries who are experiencing significant delays in being issued Brazilian religious or volunteer visas. This has resulted in temporary reassignments of missionaries to other missions as “visa waiters,” followed in many cases by permanent reassignments. It has also created a good deal of uncertainty in the Brazilian missions and in the Church departments in Brazil that rely on the services of senior missionaries as to how many of the American missionaries who have been called to serve will in fact arrive and when they will arrive. Resolution of this problem will require the active involvement of the Brazilian federal government

## Philippines

The Church is experiencing significant, consistent growth in the Philippines. Next to Mexico and Brazil, the Philippines has the largest Church membership outside North America, with [the total membership of 698,883 as of 25 June 2014](#). Of the country's approximately 100 million population, 93% are Christian. It is the 12th largest country in the world by total population and the 5<sup>th</sup> largest in the number of Christians. It is the only nation in Asia that is predominantly Christian. The Philippines is a significant base for Church missionary work in Asia. The Manila Missionary Training Center now receives missionaries from over 32 countries, mostly in Asia and the Pacific Rim. Many of these new missionaries are accompanied to the MTC with their own teachers (recently returned missionaries) and are taught in their own language. In 2013, some 2,300 missionaries were trained in the Manila MTC. Currently 4,482 missionaries are serving in 21 missions in the Philippines, 2,128 of which are foreigners who require missionary visas. We have also recently experienced additional challenges with the issuance of Exit Clearances for missionaries who have completed their missions and are returning home. It is imperative that the Church maintain a good working relationship with the Philippine government, particularly the Bureau of Immigration, which issues missionary visas, Exit Clearances, [extension of stay and Special Work Permits](#) for MTC [Language Interpreters](#).

## United Kingdom

The UK potentially exerts outsized influence on issues of importance to the Church, including religious freedom, traditional family values, and social/cultural norms. The value of religion generally and religious worship is in steep decline in the UK and is under political attack. Implementation of the Marriage (Same Sex Couples) Act 2013 also presents possible challenges to Church operations. The country's "bellwether" status within Europe and across the world and its historical and current importance to the Church, in terms of Church membership and operations, make the UK a government relations priority.

## **PRIORITY COUNTRY ADMINISTERED BY AREA OFFICES**

### **China**

China is the world's most populous nation, with 1.3 billion residents. There are only five recognized religions in China, which are subject to substantial government oversight and control. As a non-recognized religion, the Church has been permitted to operate because of relations with the State Committee for Religious Affairs ("SARA"). Future growth of the Church, and indeed the opportunity for the Church to continue to exist at all in China, depends upon consistent, long-term government relations efforts