

A Brief History of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints in Ontario



Missionaries in the Canada Toronto Mission, 1976

EARLY CHURCH HISTORY

The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints was founded by Joseph Smith in New York state in the United States in 1830. From its beginning, missionaries came to Ontario to spread the restored gospel of Jesus Christ. The word spread quickly, and new members flocked to join the Church. Between the 1830s and 1840s, over 2,000 members joined the Church in Ontario and moved to Church headquarters in the United States.

Joseph Smith visited members in Ontario in 1833 and 1837. Likewise, Brigham Young, the second President of the Church, taught in the Kingston area, and John Taylor, the third President, joined the Church in Toronto.

In the early days of the Church, about half of the village of Churchville, Ontario (now a historic district in Brampton), left to gather with the Saints in the Midwest of the United States. A commemorative marker of Joseph Smith's visit to this area has been placed in the Churchville Cemetery.

CHURCH GROWTH

After the early exodus of members to the United States, missionaries returned to Ontario in the early 1900s. Branches were formed in cities throughout

the province, with the first chapel in Toronto being dedicated in 1939. In 1960 a group of Church units joined to form the first stake (similar to a diocese) of the Church in Ontario.

In 1990 the first temple in Eastern Canada was built in Brampton, and members came to worship from Ontario, Quebec and the Maritime Provinces, along with several states along the U.S. border.

Today there are eight stakes and one district in this part of Ontario. Immigrants from other countries have joined, and there are Church units where services are held in Spanish, Portuguese, Chinese and Tagalog as well as English. The province of Ontario is currently home to approximately 55,000 members of the Church. Many of its newest members are recent immigrants from Ghana, Nigeria and Central and South America.

COMMUNITY SERVICE

Members are taught that “when ye are in the service of your fellow beings ye are only in the service of your God” (Mosiah 2:17, Book of Mormon), and they serve their communities in countless ways. FamilySearch centres and the FamilySearch.org website offer free help to all those searching for their ancestors. Missionaries reach out wherever they are serving. Church members of all ages give humanitarian service. For example, Latter-day Saints have volunteered at the Brampton's Charity Community Garden since its inception. They have also provided hundreds of backpacks filled with basic necessities for women leaving custody at the local provincial jail.

The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints is a major humanitarian donor to many local registered charities. In 2024 the Church donated more than \$2 million in humanitarian support to several prominent food banks in the Greater Toronto Area. Additionally, the Church actively engages with interfaith groups in communities where it has congregations.

