



THE CHURCH IN Brazil

THE FUTURE HAS
FINALLY ARRIVED

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In both physical size and population, Brazil is the fifth largest country in the world. But 100 years ago, its population was sparse, and few took advantage of its natural abundance: a tropical climate, rich land, and a wealth of minerals and water.

Max and Amalie Zapf were intrigued with Brazil and decided to make it their home. They had joined the Church in Germany in 1908 and immigrated to Brazil in March 1913. As the first known members of the Church to live in Brazil, they were excited to be in a country with so much promise. Yet the Church was not established in South America, and Max and Amalie soon realized how lonely they felt without the privilege of attending church and interacting with other members.¹

After 10 years in Brazil, Max and Amalie Zapf learned of another faithful Church member, Augusta Lippelt, who had emigrated in 1923 from Germany with her four children and nonmember husband to the Brazilian southern state of Santa Catarina. The Zapfs moved to Santa Catarina to be close to the Lippelts.

Two years later the South American Mission opened in Buenos Aires, Argentina. The second mission president, K. B. Reinhold Stoof, also from Germany, was inspired to establish the Church among the large German immigrant population in southern Brazil. In 1928 he assigned two missionaries, William Fred Heinz and Emil A. J. Schindler, to Joinville, a city with a large population of German immigrants. In 1930, President Stoof visited the Zapfs and Lippelts and established a branch, where both families could finally attend church together and partake of the sacrament.

What a difference 100 years has made. Before the Zapfs arrived in 1913, Brazil had no members, no missionaries, and no Church organization. Today more than



These missionaries served in Rio de Janeiro in the late 1930s, including Daniel Shupe, who helped translate the Book of Mormon into Portuguese.

mainly in the German language until 1940, when it changed to Portuguese, the country's official language. Missionaries were serving in numerous cities throughout the country until World War II required them to leave the country. Missionaries returned after the war, and the work began again.

In the city of Campinas, in the state of São Paulo, several young men and women joined and remained faithful. One of those early members was Antônio Carlos Camargo. He joined as a teenager in 1947, dated and married a member of the Church, and in 1954 attended Brigham Young University and later the University of Utah. He and his

TIME LINE

1928: First missionaries sent to Brazil among the German-speaking population in Joinville

1930: First branch organized, in Joinville

▼ 1931: First Church-owned meetinghouse in South America dedicated, in Joinville



► 1935: First mission created, headquartered in São Paulo



a million members live in Brazil, making it the country with the third-largest population of Church members (after the United States and Mexico). The Church now has congregations in all of Brazil's states and major cities. Max and Amalie's descendants enjoy the benefits of a strong and vibrant Church with a unique and fascinating history.

Growing Like an Oak

A prophecy given in Argentina in 1926 by Elder Melvin J. Ballard (1873–1939) of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles suggested that the region would initially have slow growth but that it would one day be mighty. He prophesied: "The work of the Lord will grow slowly for a time here just as an oak grows slowly from an acorn. It will not shoot up in a day as does the sunflower that grows quickly and then dies."²

Few joined the Church in the early years of the Brazil Mission, which opened in 1935. The Church operated

wife returned to Brazil in 1963 for his employment with a textile company and were surprised at the growth of the Church. When they left in 1954, there were only a few small branches, presided over by American missionaries. However, during their nine-year absence, almost 16,000 Brazilians had joined the Church, including many young families who had strong leadership abilities and a faithful commitment. Antônio stated, "They were great and noble spirits whom the Lord selected here in São Paulo."³

In 1966, 31 years after the Brazil Mission opened, the first stake in South America was organized in São Paulo. Elder Spencer W. Kimball (1895–1985), then a member of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles, organized the stake with Walter Spät as president and Antônio as his second counselor.

Only a few of the new leaders had ever seen a functioning stake. But the Lord had prepared Antônio, who had significant experience with the Church in the United

States and was able to assist the stake presidency. From the leadership in the wards and branches of that first stake came leaders for many additional stakes. Their influence was felt throughout the country as the organization of stakes began at an impressive pace.

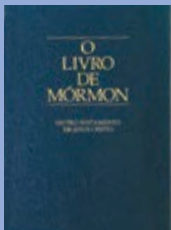
An Era of Growth

One unexpected announcement prompted greater growth of the Church in Brazil: the building of a temple. The members knew the importance of temples, but most had seen them only in photographs. The closest temples were in the United States, thousands of miles away.

that facilitated growth. Many Brazilians were moving to urban areas and becoming more open to new religions. At the same time, President Kimball asked Brazilian stake presidents to set goals to increase the number of Brazilian youth called to serve missions. Soon more than half the missionaries serving in Brazil were native Brazilians. These returned missionaries later became local leaders in the Church.

But Church growth highlighted a challenge: a lack of experience by the members. This challenge, however, had a positive outcome: it required increased faith and spiritual guidance among the members. For instance, in November

► 1939: *Book of Mormon published in Portuguese*



1954: *First time a Church President, David O. McKay, visits the country*

1959: *A second mission organized*

1966: *First stake created in South America, the São Paulo Brazil Stake*

► 1978: *First temple dedicated in South America, in São Paulo*



President Kimball visited Brazil in March 1975 and in a regional conference announced the construction of a temple in São Paulo. Great anticipation and financial sacrifice led to its completion in 1978. Members helped pay for the cost of building the temple through donations. Many of them sold their cars, jewelry, and land to obtain funds for their donations.

The temple's dedication in October and November 1978 was preceded in June by the revelation on the priesthood (see Official Declaration 2). This revelation meant that all worthy members in Brazil could participate in the dedication and the blessings of the temple.

The priesthood revelation and temple dedication were the catalysts for one of the greatest missionary successes ever seen in the Church: more than 700,000 Brazilians joined the Church in the next two decades.

Additional events encouraged this growth. The country was going through important political and social changes

1992 a stake was organized in Uruguaiana, on the western side of Brazil, far from established stakes of the Church. When a faithful and longtime member of the Church, José Candido Ferreira dos Santos, was called as the patriarch of the newly created stake, he was concerned. He explained to the General Authority: "I can't be a patriarch. I have no idea what one is. I don't recall ever meeting a patriarch and do not have my patriarchal blessing." The General Authority suggested a solution. In the neighboring city of Alegrete, a new patriarch, Rui Antônio Dávila, had also recently been called and was in a similar situation. The two patriarchs needed to give each other patriarchal blessings.

As Brother Santos was receiving his blessing from Brother Dávila, he was surprised as he heard blessings pronounced relating to his past and his personal desires that the patriarch had no way of knowing. When Brother Santos in turn pronounced a blessing on the head of Brother Dávila, again tears flowed as the same experience occurred. The two men



embraced afterwards with a deep understanding of what had just happened.⁴ Just as the Spirit inspired them to give their first patriarchal blessings, the Spirit inspired them as they gave hundreds more. The Lord provided many such spiritual blessings in a country where Church experience was limited.

Perpetual Education Fund

A lack of education among members was another challenge. Often, when missionaries returned home, they were spiritually

in Brazil, stated, “It is a blessing to see the young members finish their education and get good jobs, but the real success of the program is to see the level of confidence in them increase. They have greater hope.”⁵

Dedicated Members

The strength of the Church in Brazil is not just the number of members but also their dedication to the gospel. For example, Gelson Pizzirani, a retired airline administrator, was offered a challenging and lucrative



◀ 1985: Elder Helio R. Camargo is called as a General Authority, the first from Brazil

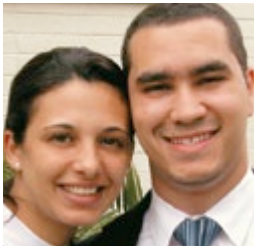
1986: Brazil becomes the fourth country to have more than 50 stakes

1987: The Brazil Area is created

1993: Brazil becomes the third country to have 100 stakes



◀ 1997: The Church's second-largest missionary training center is built in São Paulo



prepared but lacked the education to obtain adequate employment. Reinaldo Barreto, a stake president in São Paulo, explained, “It was a significant challenge to find work. Many missionaries lost hope of progressing, even losing the spiritual strength they had on their missions.” Education was often key to overcoming this challenge.

Consequently, the establishment of the Perpetual Education Fund by President Gordon B. Hinckley (1910–2008) in 2001 has blessed thousands of Brazilian returned missionaries. It provides them with training opportunities, which have resulted in better employment. Members are better able to support a family and extend their educations even further. President Barreto, who became the administrator of the PEF program

Since 1999, thousands of Brazilian members have served in their communities as part of the Mormon Helping Hands effort.



job: help build a new airline in Brazil. At the same time, he and his wife, Míriam, were called to preside over the Brazil Brasília Mission. There was no question what to do. Since their baptisms as teenagers, they have dedicated their lives to the Church. Prior to their marriage, Brother Pizzirani was called to serve as a branch president. He was called to be a stake president at age 25 and accepted numerous other callings, including Area Seventy. Sister Pizzirani has served in stake and ward Relief Society, Young Women, and Primary callings. She expressed her feelings concerning the blessings of the gospel: “My life has been profoundly blessed because I have tried to keep the commandments.



▲ 2000: Recife and Porto Alegre Brazil Temples dedicated

2002: Campinas Temple dedicated

2002: Mormon Helping Hands receives national recognition as one of Brazil's most important volunteer organizations



◀ 2008: Curitiba Temple dedicated



▲ 2012: Manaus Temple dedicated

For every commandment I keep, I receive a blessing.”⁶

After finishing their mission in Brasília, their plan to settle down at home was interrupted by a short-term call to serve as president of the Brazil Campinas Mission. After a few months rest, they accepted a call in 2013 to be president and matron of the Recife Brazil Temple. One of the missionaries who baptized Brother Pizzirani was recently called with his wife to serve in the Recife Temple, where missionary and convert will serve together.

The example of the Pizziranis giving up career opportunities to serve the Lord is impressive but not unusual among the faithful members in Brazil.

The 100 years since the Zapf family arrived in Brazil have seen numerous positive changes but also occasional setbacks. Prophets who have visited, however, have never hesitated to express faith in the future of the country. Those prophecies are coming to fruition as Brazil takes its place in the world as a leader in economic growth and



development. The descendants of the Zapfs—both their literal descendants and those who followed their footsteps in the gospel—are reaping the benefits of the hard work and patience of those early efforts to plant the gospel seeds. The second part of Elder Melvin J. Ballard’s prophecy given in 1926 has come to pass: “Thousands will join the Church here. It will be divided into more than one mission and will be one of the strongest in the Church.” ■

NOTES

1. Sibila Hack Nunes (granddaughter of Max and Amalie Zapf), interview by Michael Landon, Curitiba, Brazil, July 30, 2004, Church History Library.
2. Melvin J. Ballard, in Bryant S. Hinckley, *Sermons and Missionary Services of Melvin Joseph Ballard* (1949), 100.
3. Antônio Carlos Camargo, interview by Mark L. Grover, São Paulo, Brazil, June 27, 2006, Harold B. Lee Library, p. 22.
4. Jose Candido Ferreira dos Santos, interview by Mark L. Grover, Rio Grande do Sul, Brazil, May 4, 2010, Harold B. Lee Library; Rui Antonio Dávila, interview by Mark L. Grover, Rio Grande do Sul, Brazil, May 5, 2010, Harold B. Lee Library.
5. Reinaldo de Souza Barreto, interview by Mark L. Grover, São Paulo, Brazil, June 16, 2006, Harold B. Lee Library, p. 14.
6. Míriam da Silva Sulé Pizzirani, interview by Mark L. Grover, São Paulo, Brazil, March 21, 1982, Harold B. Lee Library, p. 7.