

## Orlando, FL

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*Previous GTCA City 2018 & 2019*



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### **The church in Orlando**

The church in Orlando began in 1987 with about 25 saints. Presently, about 100 saints are active in the church life (there are over 150 saints on the church phone list). Roughly 80% of the increase over the years has come from saints moving to Orlando because of jobs or other personal considerations. The remaining 20% of the growth has come from the Orlando community, both from gaining unbelievers through preaching the gospel and from gaining believers who are drawn by the truth and the practice of the church life.

The weekly meetings of the church include the Lord's table, prophesying meetings, prayer meetings, small group meetings, ministry meetings, and college meetings. The saints currently meet in the following four areas:

- 1) Apopka, a small community northwest of Orlando, where the church-owned meeting hall is located
- 2) Kissimmee, a community south of Orlando where a large number of Spanish-speaking saints are meeting as a district
- 3) Oviedo/East Orlando, the area near the campus of the University of Central Florida (UCF)
- 4) Longwood/Maitland

There are prayer meetings, small group meetings, and ministry meetings in these four areas. The college meeting rotates between Longwood and the UCF area. Since Orlando is one of the top tourist destinations in the country, there are visiting saints in the Lord's Day meetings nearly every week.

The Orlando meeting hall is in the suburb of Apopka. It was acquired in 1991 and has a seating capacity of about 100. It is approximately 45 minutes away from the UCF campus. The brothers in Orlando are actively looking for a meeting place in the UCF area.

The Kissimmee area has around 50 saints. There are many home meetings, and once a month the saints in Kissimmee meet together with all the saints in Orlando. We have seen a large increase of Spanish-speaking saints, including some who moved from Puerto Rico after hurricane Maria. The current makeup of the church in Orlando is 40% English-speaking, 40% bilingual Spanish/English, and 20% Asian.

## Location, Climate, and Health

Orlando is located in the center of Florida, the third most populous state in the country. The state of Florida, the most southeastern of all the states, is home to about 22 million people. Almost 2.6 million people—over 10% of all Floridians—live in the Orlando metropolitan area. There are presently 11 churches in Florida. From Orlando, driving times to the other localities in the state are: Tampa—1:30; Gainesville—2:00; Clearwater/St. Petersburg—2:00; Jacksonville—2:30; Sebring—3:00; Tallahassee—4:00; Ft. Myers—4:00; and Boca Raton, Fort Lauderdale, and Miami—4:00.

Orlando has consistently warm, sunny weather. The summer months are hot and humid. Fall, winter, and spring are very pleasant with average highs in the 70s and 80s and average lows in the 50s and 60s. Average yearly rainfall is over 50 inches, and there are about 80 days per year with some rainfall.

The Orlando area healthcare system is robust, easily accessible, and well-regarded. Three Orlando hospitals were included in Leapfrog's 2019 list of the top hospitals in the US (2 general hospitals and one pediatric hospital).

## Demographics

Orlando has a city population of 285,000, while the Orlando metropolitan area has a population of roughly 2.6 million. It is one of the most visited cities in the US, receiving 75 million visitors last year. An estimated 6 million of those visitors were from other countries.

Demographics for the Orlando metropolitan area are: 42% White; 29% Hispanic; 16% Black; 4% Asian; and 9% mixed or other.

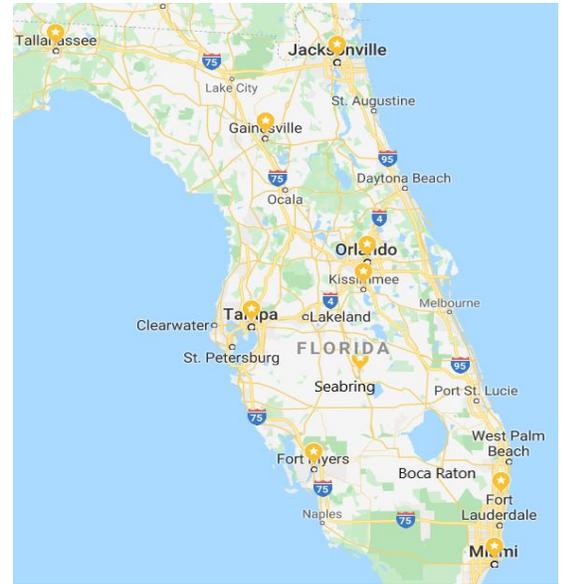
The number of Orlandoans of Puerto Rican descent is now over 330,000. Orlando has the largest and fastest-growing Puerto Rican population in Florida, with a cultural impact similar to that of Cuban-Americans in South Florida.

## Economy/Employment

Although Orlando is one of the top tourist destinations in the country, its economy has diversified greatly from the tourism and hospitality industry. Other industries in Orlando include: military; defense; aerospace; the modeling, simulation and training industry; and biotech and life sciences. Major employers in the area include:

- Walt Disney World
- UCF and Valencia State College
- Orange County Public Schools
- Various health care systems and the Lake Nona Medical City
- Oracle and Electronic Arts

Kennedy Space Center, while not in Orlando, employs many Orlando residents. The Central Florida Research Park, adjacent to UCF, is a business campus where a variety of companies can rent space and form research



relationships with UCF. It is the seventh-largest research park in the United States by number of employees, and companies such as Lockheed Martin, Northrup Grumman, Raytheon, and Siemens have offices there.

Florida has no state income tax on wages earned in the state. The property tax on real estate is typically around 1.2%. Florida's cost of living is slightly below the national average.

### **Transportation**

Orlando has two international airports. Orlando International Airport (MCO) handled nearly 48 million passengers in 2018, making it the busiest airport in the state of Florida and the tenth-busiest airport in the United States. It is modern and well-equipped for both domestic and international flights. Orlando Sanford International Airport is located in the suburb of Sanford, and is the hub for Allegiant Air.

There is a light rail system that is being expanded in the area. The bus system currently has 88 routes. Nevertheless, the main mode of transportation in and around Orlando is car. The street and highway system is extensive and is regularly being improved. Although traffic can be heavy at times, local Orlandoans are adept at navigating traffic flows. A beltway around the city is nearing completion. Interstate 4 runs through Orlando and connects I-95 and I-75.

### **Interests**

Orlando is a culturally diverse and rich city, with attractions and venues for all kinds of interests. Among other things, the city offers the Orlando Museum of Art, the Orlando Science Center, a performing arts center, the Kennedy Space Center, several professional sports teams, and of course, the numerous world-renowned amusement parks and resorts. In addition, there is an abundance of trails for walking, jogging, and bicycling. There are bodies of water for canoeing, kayaking, and boating. There are state parks within an easy drive that accommodate daytime activities as well as overnight camping.

### **Campuses**

University of Central Florida (UCF): Orlando is home to UCF, the largest university in the United States, with an enrollment of 68,571 students. UCF is attended primarily by typical young Floridians; in-state students representing 91% of the enrollment. The UCF medical school's new campus is situated in the vicinity of Lake Nona Medical City. UCF is unlike most schools of its size in that it is surrounded by housing communities that are family-oriented. This makes finding a home near the campus rather easy. The students' response to Bible distributions at UCF has at times been overwhelming. In light of this situation at UCF, we are strongly burdened for the Lord to raise up a campus team.

Valencia College: 47,841 students are enrolled at this 4-year state college.

Seminole State College: 4-year college; 29,879 student enrollment

Full Sail University: private 4-year university; 18,605 student enrollment

Rollins College: private liberal arts college; 3,278 enrollment

### **Schools**

Public schools: Since there is no mandatory bussing in the area, the schools generally reflect the areas they are in. The schools are well-regarded in the areas that saints would be encouraged to look for housing. There are also a number of magnet schools in the Orlando area that rank well in the state of Florida.

- Seminole County ranked 4th in Florida, and has 10 magnet programs
- Orange County ranked 23rd in Florida, and has eight magnet programs
- Both counties have dual enrollment programs for high school juniors and seniors. Florida offers the Florida Bright Futures Scholarships to students graduating from high school with a 3.5 GPA or better.

Private schools: There are several private schools in Orlando, many of which are college preparatory schools. At present, none of the saints have children in private schools in Orlando.

Homeschooling: Florida has a fully accredited homeschool program. There are a few families in the church in Orlando that are homeschooling their children.

**Housing**

Surrounding UCF there are several excellent neighborhoods with very low crime rates and excellent schools, including Winter Springs, Waterford Lakes, and Oviedo. Oviedo is listed in the top places for families to live in the US. As the attached map indicates, there are several clusters of saints in the Orlando area. Saints moving to Orlando would be encouraged to look in one of these neighborhoods, particularly those near UCF. As in everything in the church life, fellowship is essential. Typical of most larger US cities, there are certain areas in Orlando which have high crime rates and should be avoided. The median home prices surrounding UCF range from \$230,000 just north of the campus to \$320,000 on the southern side.

Neighborhood/Zip Code	Median home price/apt rent	Families nearby	Min. to Mtg Hall	Min to UCF	Public Schools	Family Friendly
Oviedo/32765	320,700/1,788	8	45	5	A+	A
Maitland/32751	304,700/1,504	1	15	20	B+	A-
Winter Park/32789,92	346,750/1,305	3	30	30	A	B+
Winter Springs/32708	280,900/1,351	2	30	30	B	B
Longwood/32750	255,600/1,441	5	20	30	B	B
Lake Mary/32746	310,200/1,454	1	20	40	B	B