

# The Developing Welfare Services Department

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A recently organized department of Welfare Services, the Developing Welfare Services Department, has been charged to promote the mission of Welfare Services by—

1. assisting in the teaching and implementation of Welfare Services in the developing areas of the Church, thereby enabling members residing there to enjoy the blessings of family and ward preparedness; and
2. providing stake and mission presidents in developing areas with health, agriculture, and other Welfare Services missionaries.

This department provides a geographical emphasis for Welfare Services in world areas where, because of lack of opportunity and other unfavorable circumstances, people often are afflicted with temporal welfare problems, including poverty, poor housing, disease, malnutrition, unemployment, and a shortened life span.

In addition, priesthood leaders in these areas are frequently recent converts who request special training and help in implementing family preparedness to prevent and solve these problems.

The Presiding Bishopric has been charged to extend welfare services to “the ends of the earth.” President Harold B. Lee, in setting apart Bishop Victor L. Brown and his counselors on April 9, 1972, challenged:

“It is your responsibility to see that the processes of Welfare organization are extended. ... One of your great challenges will be to see how the Welfare program can be moved into the new stakes to the ends of the earth in order that the full processes of the Lord’s plan can be fully realized.”

We have accepted this challenge. We are redoubling our efforts to provide priesthood leaders and members in developing areas of the Church with needed training and examples so that they can, as rapidly as possible and in an orderly fashion, implement family and ward preparedness. We recognize that priesthood leaders living in the developing areas of the world in the 1970s will need the same careful, in-depth training that was provided during the 1930s and 1940s to stake presidents and bishops in the United States and Canada by President Lee and President Romney.

Careful training of devoted priesthood leaders will enable the Church to implement the Welfare Services programs in developing areas in accordance with revealed principles. Local leaders are learning how to avoid the evils of the dole, avoid the abuse of the use of fast offering funds, and avoid temporal inducement to baptism.

To date, priesthood leaders in developing areas of the Church are provided with many needed Welfare Services resources:

The *Welfare Services Handbook* has been or is being translated and distributed in sixteen languages.

Bishopric training materials on Welfare Services are prepared, translated, and distributed.

General Authorities and Welfare Services staff members assist in teaching Welfare Services principles during their visits to different areas.

Welfare Services principles are taught in the Relief Society and other Church curriculum materials.

Health and agriculture missionaries in increasing numbers are sent around the globe. In 1971 only two health missionaries were serving. Today, 272 health and agricultural missionaries serve in thirty-four missions.

In giving of themselves these missionaries experience great spiritual growth, as exemplified by the testimony of Dr. Blair Bybee, one of the first health missionaries. He stated as he was released from the Samoa Apia Mission:

“God helped me more, blessed me more, answered more questions, gave me more important challenges, and at the end gave me more of a feeling of having accomplished something good than at any other time in my life. If I never were to practice medicine again, all my years at the university, in medical school, and in my internship would have been well spent just preparing me for my health mission. Intellectually, spiritually, and emotionally, it is the same. I will never cease to marvel and be amazed that God gave me the opportunity to go, nor will I ever cease to give him thanks.”

Dr. Bybee’s testimony exemplifies the intense feelings and spirituality of those serving as Welfare Services Missionaries.

Let me tell you what is happening in developing areas of the Church as the principles of family and ward preparedness are taught and applied.

After her baptism, a mother living in the Philippines expressed sorrow at having lost her firstborn baby from malnutrition and improper care. With her conversion, there came a great motivation to learn how to properly care for her family. She asked, as she expected another baby, “What do I need to do to have a ‘healthy Mormon baby?’” She took a special course provided by the Relief Society on child care. She was enthusiastic about the lessons and did her best to apply the principles she learned. The second baby was born strong and vigorous and continues to be healthy. The health missionary who helped those teaching the Relief Society course is a local sister called on a full-time health mission. She has since been released from her mission but is still serving her people as a health resource person through the branch Welfare Services Committee.

A letter from health missionaries serving in Latin America reads, “We watched a three-month-old baby who was near death with diarrhea develop into a laughing, chubby, happy baby because the family learned the importance of better nutrition and how to boil water and properly clean utensils and bottles.

“There have been family projects guided by the father, including digging a well, draining a swampy area, planting a vegetable garden, and repairing the home, which have made the living environment more healthful.”

One proud father helped provide a safe and sanitary way for his family to dispose of their wastes. The facility was built as part of a priesthood welfare services project. Until it was completed, nearly all of the Latter-day Saint families in the branch had no sanitary facilities.

Members are encouraged by the priesthood to utilize appropriate local health resources such as clinics. Health missionaries assist the priesthood and Relief Society in helping members understand how to utilize these resources. Instead of seeing a doctor only when severe illness occurs, members are striving to prevent disease

and keep their children healthy and strong.

One branch agricultural project has put a parcel of Church property adjacent to a chapel under cultivation to provide fresh produce. The lot had been filled with weeds until the local priesthood leaders, using agriculture missionaries as resources, initiated this project to assist branch members with severe nutritional problems.

Even the children participated and learned as the ground was prepared for planting. The members learned and practiced sound agricultural techniques relating to moisture and nutrient requirements of the soil and now have a corn yield many times greater than they had previously obtained in their own farms and gardens.

A protein deficiency, which had resulted in mental and physical retardation and death of children, was combated as the Saints in Guatemala learned how to raise soybeans, swine, poultry, rabbits, and other protein-rich products. This project has continued long after the agricultural missionary and his wife were released to return home.

These are just a few of many illustrations of Welfare Services principles at work in developing areas of the Church.

The Church has now had considerable experience in health missionary work. More is done every day to promote sound agricultural practices. Our work in career development and economic improvement is getting off to a good start. Hours of Church service time are donated, not only by the Welfare Services missionaries, but also by local companions and resource people who serve their own people through callings extended by mission presidents and other local priesthood leaders.

The Welfare Services missionaries continue to complement proselyting by referring doctors, nurses, nutritionists, businessmen, agricultural specialists, and others to the proselyting missionaries for the missionary discussions.

A good start has been made; yet much remains to be done in alleviating sorrow and suffering and in making the Saints self-sustaining and able to share with others, preparatory to living the full law of consecration.

Your help is needed, my brothers and sisters. There is a pressing need for couples who have experience and teachable skills in agriculture, career development, financial management, health, and related vocations. Priesthood leaders, are there couples in your stakes and wards who, now that their children are grown, are in a position to serve as health or agriculture missionaries in other parts of the world? We need those with good health, vigor, and enthusiasm who can help the Church lengthen its stride throughout the world.

Our hearts reach out and we feel sincere compassion for the hundreds of millions of our Heavenly Father's children who do not have all of the necessities of life. To bring those who belong to the Church as rapidly as possible to where they can enjoy the blessings of family and ward preparedness is our desire and goal.

In closing I would like to read a quote from President Marion G. Romney. This is a statement he made in a similar Welfare Services meeting on April 7, 1973.

“The First Presidency has designated Presiding Bishop Victor L. Brown as chairman of the new general committee directing Welfare Services. This brings into correlation the welfare services of the Church, a tremendous responsibility, an unlimited field for services. When we make all of these work, brothers and sisters,

as they should to the blessing of those who give and the glorification of those who receive, we will be ready for the coming of the Savior.” May we so prepare, I pray in the name of Jesus Christ. Amen.

\* (*excerpts only*)

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