

# Relief Society's Role in Welfare Services

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My dear brothers and sisters, I appreciate the overview of the Welfare Services program that has been outlined in this excellent presentation by the Presiding Bishopric for the earthly family of the Lord. We see the importance of the basic unit of society, the family. Within the family stands the father, the priesthood bearer, who is the governing head of the family and its presiding officer. He outlines a blueprint for family action, a design jointly and cooperatively developed and planned to be a blessing for the entire family.

I am pleased to represent the feminine half of the Church family in this meeting to enthusiastically reaffirm the wisdom of the plan of the priesthood and to pledge the continued support and the effort of the women of the Church to facilitate and to help carry out the great Welfare Services program.

The Relief Society plays a very important role in Welfare Services. By mandate of the Lord through his prophets, the Relief Society has been given an assignment to assist in planning and implementing the Welfare Services program. To fulfill our welfare stewardship, the Relief Society works with the priesthood at every level in the Church. The general presidency of the Relief Society works with the Presiding Bishopric; a called stake Relief Society president works with the area and region priesthood Welfare Services leaders; the stake Relief Society presidency works with the stake presidency; and the ward Relief Society presidency works with the ward bishopric.

In a Relief Society conference held in 1946, Harold B. Lee, then of the Council of the Twelve, told of a survey conducted in the early days of the welfare plan among those needing welfare assistance. It was found in the families of those surveyed that most of the fathers were *not* highly skilled workmen and their wives *did not* possess many of the homemaking and home managerial proficiencies that could help them take care of the resources available to families. Few had learned the skills that would help them be independent. (See *Relief Society Magazine*, Dec. 1946, pp. 809–17.)

If we are to succeed in carrying out the Welfare Services program of family preparedness, it is necessary for women to develop the qualities of industry, thrift, independence, work, and prudence—qualities which, if applied, will help to fortify individuals and families with a secure feeling of self-reliance against the day of need.

In order to respond to the challenge for every family in the Church to be prepared, the Relief Society is increasing its efforts to help the sisters of the Church in the following ways:

Through its education program, continuing and new courses of study on welfare-related subjects will be taught in all classes. Among the lessons are those on money, home, and time-management and home nursing. By helping women to acquire knowledge and skills, many problems can be prevented or overcome.

A program of instruction for stake and ward Relief Society presidencies will be offered on how Relief Society officers may more effectively and efficiently carry out their assignments as outlined in the *Welfare Services Handbook*.

In-depth instruction will be given to visiting teachers so that they may become more sensitive to the needs of

those they visit and more alert to conditions that should be reported through the Relief Society president to the bishop for welfare action.

The Relief Society will give increased cooperation to the Deseret Industries homecraft program.

A portion of the Relief Society session in the regional meetings will be devoted to welfare services.

Relief Society members will be encouraged to participate in welfare projects and activities.

An incident reported to me recently illustrates the cooperative action of the Relief Society and the priesthood in laboring together in the Church family for the benefit of the sons and daughters of the Lord here upon the earth.

One cold January day, two visiting teachers called at the home of a family that had recently moved into the ward. There was no immediate response to their knock, but, feeling impressed to try again, the visiting teachers knocked a second time and a third.

The door finally opened a few inches, revealing a woman and a child bundled in coats and pajamas. The visiting teachers were reluctantly invited into the icy-cold house. In answer to their questions, framed with understanding and care, the woman tearfully revealed the family situation.

The student husband was desperately ill and in an intensive-care unit of the hospital. The doctor and hospital bills would take all the money the couple had saved for years to allow him to obtain additional schooling.

When their supply of fuel had been exhausted, the young wife and the child stayed in bed to keep warm, and the mother was trying to make one quart of milk and half a loaf of bread last for the remainder of the month.

When the visiting teachers offered help, the sister said, "My husband is proud. He wouldn't want us to accept charity."

The visiting teachers wisely explained that the Lord's program of welfare is not one that robs the receiver of his pride or independence, but rather contributes to it. By gentle, loving persuasion the young wife finally gave permission for a call to be made to the Relief Society president.

Within a short time both the Relief Society president and the bishop arrived at the home. Soon fuel was delivered, the furnace was started, warm food was provided, and a food list was prepared. Then the bishop visited the husband in the hospital where encouragement was given to the sick man that his family was well taken care of. An administration followed in which the young man was reassured concerning his own condition. From that point on, he began to improve. The Relief Society education counselor who was assigned to personal welfare gave the wife suggestions of ways she could better manage the family's limited resources and give service for commodities received.

As women in this Church family, we have been instructed to "stretch out our hands to the poor and the needy," to "look to the ways of our households"; for through such involvement, both the helped and the helper grow. The Relief Society as an organization can do much toward ward and family preparedness and awaits your invitation to work with you.

I testify to you that we will rejoice in the opportunity to serve in this great capacity with all of our hearts, minds, might, and strength. In the name of Jesus Christ. Amen.

