

# I Pray He'll Use Us

By Sharon Eubank

*First Counselor in the Relief Society General Presidency*

Small efforts collectively make a big impact, magnifying the many individual things we do as disciples of Jesus Christ.

This cookie made of phyllo dough and pistachio nuts is a thank-you. It was made by the Kadado family who, for decades, owned three bakeries in Damascus, Syria. When war came, a blockade stopped food and supplies from reaching their part of the city. The Kadados began to starve. At the height of this desperate situation, Latter-day Saint Charities and some very courageous staff at Rahma Worldwide began serving a daily hot meal, along with milk for the little children. After a difficult time, the family began their life—as well as their bakery—once again in a new country.

Recently, a box of cookies arrived at the Church offices with the following message: “For more than two months, we managed to get food from the Rahma–Latter-day Saint [Charities] kitchen. Without it we would [have] starve[d] to death. Please accept this ... sample from my shop as a small token of thanks. I ask God the Almighty to bless you ... in everything you do.”<sup>1</sup>

A cookie of gratitude and remembrance. It is meant for you. To all who prayed after watching a story on the news, to all who volunteered when it was not convenient or who kindly donated money to the humanitarian fund trusting it would do some good, thank you.

## Divine Responsibility to Care for the Poor

The Church of Jesus Christ is under divine mandate to care for the poor.<sup>2</sup> It is one of the pillars of the work of salvation and exaltation.<sup>3</sup> What was true during the days of Alma is certainly true for us: “And thus, in their prosperous circumstances, they did not send away any who were naked, or that were hungry, or that were athirst, or that were sick, or that had not been nourished; and they did not set their

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- fasting and the use of fast offerings;
- welfare farms and canneries;
- welcome centers for immigrants;
- outreach for those in prison;
- Church humanitarian efforts;
- and the JustServe app, where it's available, that matches volunteers with service opportunities.

These are all ways, organized through the priesthood, where small efforts collectively make a big impact, magnifying the many individual things we do as disciples of Jesus Christ.

## Prophets Have Stewardship for the Whole Earth

Prophets have charge for the whole earth, not just for members of the Church. I can report from my own experience how personally and devotedly the First Presidency takes that charge. As needs grow, the First Presidency has charged us to increase our humanitarian outreach in a significant way. They are interested in the largest trends and the smallest details.

Recently, we brought to them one of the protective medical gowns that Beehive Clothing sewed for hospitals to use during the pandemic. As a medical doctor, President Russell M. Nelson was highly interested. He didn't want to just see it. He wanted to try it on—check the cuffs and the length and the way it tied in the back. He told us later, with emotion in his voice, “When you meet with people on your assignments, thank them for their fasting, their offerings, and their ministering in the name of the Lord.”

## Humanitarian Report

At President Nelson's direction, I am reporting back to you about how The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints is responding to hurricanes, earthquakes, refugee displacement—and even a pandemic—thanks to the kindness of the Latter-day Saints and many friends. While the more than 1,500 COVID-19 projects were certainly the largest focus of the Church's relief over the last 18 months, the Church also responded to 933 natural disasters and refugee crises in 108 countries.

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daunting for her to find enough food, but COVID supply shortages and quarantines made it almost impossible. They were often hungry, scraping by only with the generosity of neighbors.

On a sunny day in August 2020, Dieke was surprised by a knock at her door. She opened it to find two strangers—one a Church representative from the area office in Johannesburg and the other an official from South Africa's Department of Social Development.

The two organizations had teamed up to bring food to at-risk households. Relief washed over Dieke as she glimpsed the pile of cornmeal and other food staples, purchased with Church humanitarian funds. These would help her to sustain her family for several weeks until a government aid package could begin to take effect for her.

Dieke's story is one of thousands of such experiences taking place across the world during the COVID pandemic thanks to your consecrated contributions.

### **Afghan Relief at Ramstein**

We have all seen recent images in the news: thousands of evacuees being flown from Afghanistan. Many arrived at air bases or other temporary locations in Qatar, the United States, Germany, and Spain before continuing to their final destinations. Their needs were immediate, and the Church responded with supplies and volunteers. At Ramstein Air Base in Germany, the Church provided large donations of diapers, baby formula, food, and shoes.

Some of the Relief Society sisters noticed that many Afghan women were using their husbands' shirts to cover their heads because their traditional head coverings had been ripped off in the frenzy at the Kabul airport. In an act of friendship that crossed any religious or cultural boundaries, the sisters of the Ramstein First Ward gathered to sew traditional Muslim clothing for Afghan women. Sister Bethani Halls said, "We heard that women were in need of prayer garments, and we are sewing so that they can be [comfortable] for prayer."<sup>5</sup>

### **Haitian Earthquake Relief**

This next example shows you do not have to be wealthy or old to be an instrument for good. Eighteen-year-old Marie "Djadjou" Jacques is from the Cavaillon Branch in Haiti. When the devastating earthquake struck near her town in August, her family's house was one of tens of thousands of buildings that collapsed. It's almost impossible to imagine the despair of losing your home. But rather than giving in to that despair, Djadjou—incredibly—turned outward.

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## German Flood Relief

Only a few weeks before the earthquake, another group of young adults was giving similar service across the Atlantic. The floods that swept through western Europe in July were the most severe in decades.

When the waters finally receded, one shopkeeper in the riverside district of Ahrweiler, Germany, surveyed the damage and was utterly overwhelmed. This humble man, a devout Catholic, whispered a prayer that God might send someone to help him. The very next morning, President Dan Hammon of the Germany Frankfurt Mission arrived on the street with a small band of missionaries wearing yellow Helping Hands vests. The water had reached up to 10 feet (3 m) on the shopkeeper's walls, leaving behind a deep layer of mud. The volunteers shoveled out the mud, removed the carpet and drywall, and piled everything in the street for removal. The overjoyed shopkeeper worked alongside them for hours, amazed that the Lord had sent a group of His servants to answer his prayer—and within 24 hours!<sup>6</sup>

## “Well, I Pray That He'll Use Us”

Speaking of the Church's humanitarian efforts, Elder Jeffrey R. Holland once remarked: “Prayers are answered ... most of the time ... by God using other people. Well, I pray that He'll use us. I pray that we'll be the answer to people's prayers.”<sup>7</sup>

Brothers and sisters, through your ministry, donations, time, and love, you have been the answer to so many prayers. And yet there is so much more to do. As baptized members of the Church, we are under covenant to care for those in need. Our individual efforts don't necessarily require money or faraway locations;<sup>8</sup> they do require the guidance of the Holy Spirit and a willing heart to say to the Lord, “Here am I; send me.”<sup>9</sup>

## The Acceptable Year of the Lord

Luke 4 records that Jesus came to Nazareth, where He had been brought up, and stood up in the synagogue to read. This was near the beginning of His mortal ministry, and He quoted a passage from the book of Isaiah:

“The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because he hath anointed me to preach the gospel to the poor; he hath sent me to heal the brokenhearted, to preach deliverance to the captives, and recovering of sight to the blind, to set at liberty them that are bruised

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blind. His Church is to preach deliverance to the captive, and His disciples across the world are striving to set at liberty them that are bruised.

Let me conclude by repeating the question Jesus asked His Apostle Simon Peter: “Do you love me?”<sup>11</sup> The essence of the gospel is contained in how we answer that question for ourselves and “feed [His] sheep.”<sup>12</sup> With great reverence and love for Jesus Christ, our Master, I invite each of us to be a part of His magnificent ministry, and I pray He’ll use us. In the sacred name of Jesus Christ, amen.

#### Notes

1. 1. Abdul Razaq, personal correspondence, May 2021.
2. 2. See Doctrine and Covenants 104:11–18.
3. 3. See *General Handbook: Serving in The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints*, 1.2.2, ChurchofJesusChrist.org.
4. 4. Alma 1:30.
5. 5. Bethani Halls, quoted in “Aiding Afghan Evacuees,” Europe Area Welfare and Self-Reliance Newsletter, Aug. 2021.
6. 6. From Dan Hammon (Germany Frankfurt Mission president), email to Ty Johnson, 2021.
7. 7. Jeffrey R. Holland, “Neonatal Resuscitation with Elder Holland” (video), The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, Nov. 10, 2011, youtube.com.
8. 8. See Sharon Eubank, “16 Things You Can Do to Be a Humanitarian,” Oct. 3, 2021, ChurchofJesusChrist.org.
9. 9. Isaiah 6:8; see also Abraham 3:27.
10. 10. Luke 4:18–19, 21.
11. 11. See John 21:15–17.
12. 12. John 21:15–17.

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