tion, the present physical body is of little or no consequence.

3. In LDS theology, mortality is a time to be tested and proved "to see if [people] will do all things whatsoever the Lord their God shall command them" (Abr. 3:25). In reincarnation, there are many future lives, so there is no urgent need to repent now. Reincarnation contradicts Amulek's admonition that "this life is the time for men to prepare to meet God" (Alma 34:32). The Prophet Joseph Smith said that transmigration of souls (spirits) was not a correct principle (TPJS, pp. 104–105).

4. In LDS theology, there is one single, unique historical act of redemption made by Jesus Christ. Through it, Christ becomes the only name under heaven "whereby man can be saved" (D&C 18:23). Reincarnation denies the absolute centrality of Christ's atonement by affirming the theoretical existence of an abundance of equally miraculous deities, who appear in a variety of forms, born again and again.

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RELIEF SOCIETY
The Relief Society is the official adult women's organization of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints and is an essential part of the structure of the Church at general, stake, and ward levels. The organization provides opportunities for association, leadership, compassionate service, and education. Through the Relief Society, "women of the Church are given some measure of divine authority particularly in the direction of government and instruction in behalf of the women of the church" (J. F. Smith, p. 5).

The motto "Charity Never Faileth" expresses the commitment of Relief Society members to love and nurture one another and to minister graciously to the needs of Church members and others. The binding sense of sisterhood that characterizes the Relief Society is founded upon the women's common faith and enhanced by the lessons, activities, and interpersonal involvements that constitute the Relief Society program. Current lesson materials for a weekly Sunday class focus twice a month on spiritual themes; the other two weeks have lessons on compassionate service and on home and family education. Lessons on cultural refinement and varied interests provide an optional midweek activity for interested sisters. Once a month, a midweek homemaking meeting features instructions for visiting teachers, a short home management lesson, and miniclasses emphasizing homemaking arts, welfare services projects, and individual and family development. Members especially appointed as "visiting teachers" are expected to make regular contacts with each woman once a month in her home, or more often if needed.

When the Prophet Joseph Smith organized the Female Relief Society of Nauvoo in 1842, he stated that the restored Church of Jesus Christ

Joseph and Emma Smith, by Florence Hansen (1978, cast bronze), Nauvoo Monument to Women, LDS Church Visitors Center, Nauvoo, Illinois. Joseph Smith is shown giving a five-dollar gold piece to Emma Smith, his wife and the first general president of the Relief Society. When he organized the society, he stated: "All I have to give to the poor I shall give to this society" (Minutes, Mar. 17, 1842, p. 13).
could not be perfect or complete without it. Elder Joseph Fielding Smith later confirmed that "the Relief Society was revealed to the Prophet Joseph Smith as a fundamental part of the gospel" (J. F. Smith, p. 4). As an integral part of the Church organization, the Relief Society functions in close connection with, rather than independent of, the ecclesiastical priesthood structure. Ward Relief Society presidents work with bishops, stake Relief Society presidents, with stake presidents, and the general Relief Society presidency, with designated general authorities in what has been described as "a companionship relationship—not inferior or subordinate, but companion, side-by-side" (B. B. Smith, p. 11). Final decision-making responsibility rests with priesthood leaders.

Origins 1842–1844. In 1842 a small group of women met at the home of Sarah M. Kimball in Nauvoo to organize a sewing society to aid Nauvoo Temple workmen. When they sought the Prophet's endorsement for their proposed constitution, he praised their efforts but proffered an alternative: he would "organize the sisters under the priesthood after a pattern of the priesthood" ("Story of the Organization of the Relief Society," p. 129). Meeting with twenty women on March 17, 1842, he organized the Female Relief Society of Nauvoo. The women elected Emma Smith president, and like presidents of priesthood quorums, she selected two counselors. The three presiding officers were set apart for their callings by the laying on of hands by priesthood leaders. Joseph Smith explained that the decisions of this presidency, together with minutes of society proceedings, would serve as the group's constitution. A secretary and treasurer were appointed, and the presidency could appoint other officers as necessary. New members were admitted individually when standing members voted to give them full fellowship. By 1844, there were 1,341 members.

The Female Relief Society of Nauvoo brought women into the formal structure of the Church and gave them significant responsibility and authority. They contributed to the Nauvoo Temple, supported moral reform, and petitioned the governor.

Relief Society general board in 1916. President Emmeline B. Wells (center, seated), with counselors Clarissa S. Williams (left) and Julina L. Smith (mother of Joseph Fielding Smith, right). Courtesy Utah State Historical Society.
of Illinois on behalf of Joseph Smith. Primarily occupied with “looking to the wants of the poor,” society members donated cash, commodities, housing, and labor. In July 1843 a visiting committee of four was appointed in each ward to assess needs, solicit contributions from Church members, and distribute necessities. Visiting teachers have remained part of the Relief Society’s basic organizational structure ever since (see Visiting Teaching).

Joseph Smith further charged members with the responsibility to “save souls.” He personally instructed them in the same gospel principles he taught the men, with particular emphasis on humility, charity, and unity. He also introduced them to sacred doctrines related to Temple Worship. This instruction set the precedent for meetings in which women could discuss religious principles and testify of their faith in the restored gospel, a continuing aspect of the Relief Society.

1844–1866. The Nauvoo society held its last recorded meeting on March 16, 1844, apparently unable to maintain unity of purpose during the factional events preceding the June 1844 martyrdom of Joseph Smith. Brigham Young, the next President of the Church, did not initially encourage women to resume formal meetings, nor did the organization function during the Saints’ westward trek and early settlement of Utah, though women continued their charitable works and gathered as friends to support and minister to one another through prayer, testimony, and the exercise of the gifts of the spirit. The Female Council of Health, organized in Salt Lake City in 1851 for midwives and others interested in healing by faith and herbs, preceded the 1854–1857 renewal of collective effort.

In early February 1854, sixteen women in Salt Lake City responded to President Young’s exhortation to befriend and aid the Indians by organizing “a society of females for the purpose of making clothing for Indian women and children.” This charitable Indian Relief Society elected its own officers and met weekly until June 1854, when President Young explicitly encouraged women to “form themselves into societies” and meet “in their own wards” to make clothing for the Lamanites (the Indians). Members of the initial group later disbanded to join their respective ward organizations. During 1854, some twenty-two Indian Relief Societies were organized in Salt Lake City and outlying LDS settlements, and their members contributed enough bedding and clothing to meet the demand for such goods. Many of these societies remained organized for the long-range goal of assisting the poor within their wards, as well as for short-range projects such as meetinghouse carpets and clothing and bedding for destitute Handcart Companies.

The 1857 Utah Expedition resulted in a widespread disorganization of wards that greatly diminished Relief Society operations for several years. There had been strong local leadership in a number of the wards, but the guiding central organization that would become a permanent and stabilizing feature of Relief Society was lacking.

1866–1887. In 1866 President Young initiated Churchwide reorganization of the Relief Society, appointing Eliza R. Snow to assist bishops in establishing the organization in each ward. The minutes that she had recorded in Nauvoo became the common “constitution” for all local units, providing continuity of name, purpose, and organizational pattern. Though not formally called and set apart as general president until 1880, Eliza R. Snow directed Relief Society work from 1867 until her death in 1887. She was aided by her counselors Zina D. H. Young and Elizabeth Ann Whitney and by the Retrenchment Society, which served informally as a central board.

By 1880, the Relief Society had 300 local units, and each one cared for the suffering and needy within its ward boundaries, using an expanded corps of visiting teachers to collect and distribute donations. Ward Relief Societies managed their own financial resources, and many of them built their own meeting halls.

The Relief Society engaged in a number of bold and innovative economic activities spurred by the Church’s movement for economic self-sufficiency. Ward societies initiated cooperative enterprises for making and marketing homemade goods, raised silk (see Silk Culture), established a grain storage program with local granaries, and helped finance the medical training of midwives and female doctors. With the support of ward units, the central board established the Deseret Hospital (1882–1895). Assuming a new political role, the Relief Society sponsored a series of “indignation meetings” to voice women’s opposition to proposed antipolygamy legislation. After Utah women were enfranchised in 1870, the Relief Society encouraged women to vote. Then they actively cam-
Young (1888–1901). During the 1895 debate over the proposed constitution for the new state of Utah, Relief Society members successfully campaigned for a provision assuring women’s right to vote and hold public office. Committed to cooperating with non-Mormons for the advance of women and later for international peace, the Relief Society affiliated with the National Woman Suffrage Association and the International Council of Women (1888). It was a charter member of the National Council of Women (1891) and, as such, became incorporated in October 1892 as the National Woman’s Relief Society, establishing a twenty-three-member board of directors or general board composed of its general presidency and stake Relief Society presidents. Many ward units were also incorporated to facilitate management of property.

The Relief Society’s political and economic involvement in the western United States did not displace its primary concern of spiritually nurturing its members and caring for the poor. These purposes united women across cultures, as members attested at their 1892 Relief Society Jubilee celebration. “Whether the language spoken is the English, French, German, Hawaiian or whatever tongue . . . they are all partakers of the same Spirit” (“The Jubilee Celebration,” p. 133).

The increase in Relief Society membership and geographical spread that accompanied Church growth prompted greater centralization to assure continuity and unity. Annual dues for members, introduced in 1898, helped to defray the general board’s traveling and operating expenses. Under the direction of President Bathsheba W. Smith (1901–1910), the general presidency and board published its initial handbook (1902) and established its first official headquarters in the newly constructed Bishop’s Building in Salt Lake City (1909).

The physical housing of the Relief Society and Church auxiliaries with the Presiding Bishopric was one manifestation of emerging efforts to correlate a larger and more complex Church. The building of separate stake and ward Relief Society halls was likewise discouraged, though some local units maintained their own halls into the 1940s. Effective correlation required greater communication and interdependence between priesthood and Relief Society leaders, and they began meeting together more regularly to discuss common concerns such as charity and community work.
The nineteenth-century format for local Relief Society meetings—based on charity work, sewing, testimony bearing, and scripture study—made way in the twentieth century for a more varied and extensive educational program. As the society’s membership aged, leaders attempted to meet the needs of these older women as well as of the younger ones of a new generation. Mothers classes, introduced in 1902, featured a widely varied curriculum prepared by each stake. During the administration of President Emmeline B. Wells (1910–1921), the general board introduced new standardized lessons in the Relief Society Bulletin (1914) and the next year commenced publication of the Relief Society Magazine through which it regularly issued standardized monthly lesson plans on theological, cultural, and homemaking topics, designating a week each month for each topic, while still reserving time for “work” (charity projects) and testimonies. This monthly format of rotating topics has been maintained, though subject matter has varied with changing interests and needs.

The most long-lived of the society’s economic enterprises was the grain storage program directed initially by Sister Wells in 1876 and continued until the close of World War I (1918), when the Relief Society sold 205,518 bushels of their storage wheat to the U.S. government at its request. The sale capped the Relief Society’s intensive involvement in the war effort. A “Wheat Trust Fund” was then established that made possible the purchase and storage of more wheat in 1941. Responsibility for the wheat continued until 1978, when the Relief Society transferred 266,291 bushels of wheat and nearly 2 million dollars in assets to the First Presidency for use in the welfare program. In 1920 the general board terminated another longstanding enterprise, and closed its Nurse School as adequate professional schools were then in place.

1921–1945. Relief efforts and community involvement reached a high point during these years. Under the innovative and businesslike administration of President Clarissa S. Williams (1921–1928), the Relief Society enlarged the professional component of its traditional charity work and increased cooperation with public and private welfare agencies. The Relief Society Social Services Department, established in 1919 by general secretary-treasurer Amy Brown Lyman, served as the Church’s professional link with other welfare agencies and trained Relief Society workers in modern methods of family casework. Between 1920 and 1942, more than 4,000 women participated in its intensive two- and six-week “institutes,” returning to their wards and stakes to aid Relief Society and priesthood leaders in welfare work. The department also provided an employment bureau for women and girls and served as the Church’s licensed agency for child placement until 1963.

Beginning in 1921, at a time of national concern over high rates of maternal and infant mortality, stake and ward societies used interest from the Wheat Trust Fund to sponsor hundreds of health clinics for expectant mothers, babies, and preschool children. Two stake Relief Societies established and operated maternity hospitals, the Cottonwood (Utah) Maternity Hospital (1924–1951) and the Snowflake (Arizona) Maternity Hospital (1939–1960). Branches attached to the European missions prepared “maternity chests” for needy mothers and home deliveries.

The worldwide depression of the 1930s at first intensified the direct-aid efforts of Relief Society officers, particularly in the United States, where they cooperated with county and later with federal agencies in dispensing temporary relief to the unemployed and needy. As a new system of permanent federal aid was established, Church leaders developed their own comprehensive Church Welfare Plan (1936), in which the Relief Society had a supportive role. Priesthood leaders directed the new program, but the society was represented on the governing committees and took the main re-
sponsibility for preserving food, providing clothing and bedding, and teaching welfare principles to the sisters.

The Relief Society's own traditional relief efforts through the visiting teachers gradually phased out and finally terminated in 1944 when visiting teachers stopped collecting charity funds. Since 1921, ward presidents rather than visiting teachers have been assessing family needs and distributing relief to the needy, under the direction of their respective bishops. Underscoring the high degree of interdependence of the Relief Society president's and the ward bishop's two offices, Elder Harold B. Lee said in 1939, "The bishop is the father of his ward; the Relief Society is the mother" (p. 526). Ward Relief Society presidents also supervise other charitable work, such as caring for the sick, termed "compassionate service" to distinguish it from "welfare service."

President Louise Y. Robison (1928–1939), who led the Relief Society through these institutional changes, made other innovations. She started Mormon Handicraft (1938) in Salt Lake City to help women at home earn money by selling their handiwork on consignment. She also encouraged the formation of stake and ward Relief Society choruses known as Singing Mothers.

During World War II, President Amy Brown Lyman (1940–1945) guided the Relief Society's efforts to limit meetings, simplify activities, and strengthen homes fragmented by the demands of war. In the United States, Canada, Hawaii, New Zealand, and Australia, members sewed projects on workday for the Red Cross as well as for welfare assignments. They gave blood, saved animal fats, refurbished clothing, kept lists of registered nurses, and took nursing and first aid courses. As in World War I, some local ward Relief Societies became Red Cross units. In war-torn Europe, members shared their meager supplies, struggled to do their visiting teaching with makeshift transportation, and comforted each other. Recognizing that some of its curriculum was not relevant outside the United States, the general board began providing alternative lesson materials for the units in other countries.

The Relief Society played an important part in the Church's postwar emergency aid to the Saints in Europe, sending through the Church welfare program clothing, food, and thousands of quilts that had been made and stored by sisters in the United States and Canada. Sisters in Hawaii sent similar help to Japan.

1945–1974. By the end of 1945, Relief Society membership had reached 102,000. In the years that followed, its membership has kept pace with the accelerating worldwide growth of the Church. The first Relief Societies in Japan were organized in 1949; membership in the Far East increased from 439 in 1950 to 7,400 in 1969. Rapid growth in Mexico and South America led to the printing of the Relief Society Magazine in Spanish (1966). By the 1970s, most members were using the same lesson materials and learning to appreciate each other's cultures through monthly cultural refinement lessons.
President Belle S. Spafford traveled widely, both as general president of the Relief Society (1945–1974) and as a two-year president of the U.S. Council of Women (1968–1970). She further professionalized the Relief Society Services Department and directed expansion of its services to include programs for Indian Student Placement Services and youth guidance. The department was housed in Salt Lake City in the Relief Society Building, which had been built in 1956 from contributions from LDS women and matching funds from the Church.

During President Spafford’s long administration, the Relief Society moved toward fuller correlation within the larger Church structure. Under the comprehensive Church correlation program, the reporting and financing systems, magazine and lesson materials, and social services once managed by the Relief Society became the responsibility of priesthood leaders and professional departments, such as the new LDS Social Services Department. After September 1971, Relief Society membership automatically included all LDS women and soon exceeded a million.

1974–1990. As the movement for women’s liberation called into question women’s traditional work as homemakers and volunteers, the Relief Society increased its support for the vital roles of women in their home and Church responsibilities. The Relief Society Building became a resource center for stake and ward officers, offering ideas, materials, and training for their Relief Society work. President Barbara B. Smith (1974–1984) joined Church officials in opposing passage of the proposed Equal Rights Amendment to the U.S. Constitution, which they were convinced would not help women. The Relief Society promoted scholarly study of women’s concerns by helping to establish the Women’s Research Center at Brigham Young University (1978) and rallied its members worldwide to contribute to a visible symbol of honor for women, the Monument to Women at Nauvoo, a garden park with thirteen bronze statues portraying the many-faceted contributions of women (1978).

The rapid worldwide growth of Relief Society membership encouraged accommodation for diversity. Stake boards expanded to meet a variety of options for young, single, and working women. The Church’s college sorority, Lambda Delta Sigma, was incorporated into the Relief Society structure. In 1978, under the direction of President Spencer W. Kimball, the first general women’s fireside was held. This has become an annual event called the General Women’s Meeting and is broadcast worldwide; it has also become a model for women’s conferences subsequently held by stake Relief Societies.

Current Administration. Increased simplification and correlation with priesthood leaders characterized the administration of President Barbara W. Winder (1984–1990). Her first general board had seventeen fewer members than the preceding board. And stake Relief Society boards were released. Ward Relief Society presidencies attended the quarterly (instead of monthly) stake leadership training meetings and carried the training to their own ward boards. The general board maintained contact with stake officers, while members of the general presidency visited stakes on speaking assignments; however, the focal point of Relief Society action subtly shifted to the local

Elaine L. Jack, born in Cardston, Canada, became general president of the Relief Society in March 1990, after serving on the general boards of the Relief Society and Young Women and as a counselor in the general presidency of the Young Women.
level. In the wards and branches, members continued to find the opportunities for service, learning, sisterhood, and spiritual growth.

As President Elaine L. Jack (1990–) moved Relief Society toward a sesquicentennial consideration of its Nauvoo legacy, membership reached 2,784,000. Though the Relief Society’s programs have changed substantially over its 150-year history in an effort to meet the changing needs of women and the Church, its basic organizational structure and essential mission have not varied significantly. Emphasis on simplification, diversity, and worldwide sisterhood in the 1970s and 1980s resulted in a basic standard format for Relief Society that affirms common goals and programs for women around the world. Through its changes and growth, Relief Society has exemplified its motto. Sister Jack stated, “It is no minor thing that the motto of the Relief Society is ‘Charity Never Faileth’” (p. 74), for “charity is the pure love of Christ, which endureth forever” (Moro. 7:47).

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JANATH RUSSELL CANNON
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RELIEF SOCIETY MAGAZINE
The Relief Society Magazine was the official monthly publication of the women’s Relief Society of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints from 1915 to 1970. It preserves the history of the Relief Society for those years, with reports of each annual general Relief Society conference held in the Salt Lake Tabernacle, and with the talks of General Authorities and the Relief Society presidencies given at those conferences. It also contains articles of particular interest to the women of the Church, such as gospel topics, prose and poetry, housekeeping aids, recipes, pictures, and descriptions of Relief Society activities from near and far. Some space each month was devoted to the progress of women worldwide. It also published the Relief Society lessons, which were written by authorities in various fields such as the scriptures, art, architecture, social sciences, economics, the Constitution of the United States, world governments, and literature.

In its first issue, President Joseph F. Smith expressed his hope that the magazine would be “entrenched about by the bulwarks of worthy and