social work training for volunteers from local Relief Societies. It also provided adoptive placements and family services, including foster care and counseling for unwed mothers. During the Great Depression of the early 1930s, this department expanded its cooperation with Salt Lake County, providing commodity relief to the poor.

In the 1930s many federally funded public assistance and Social Security programs were established in the United States. Consequently, the Relief Society Social Service Department, like many other private agencies, changed its focus from providing financial relief to offering direct services, or counseling, mostly on child welfare matters.

During the next three decades (1937–1969), the department began hiring trained professionals, mostly social workers. Adoptive placements increased and services to unwed mothers expanded. More children were placed and supervised in foster care. An extensive youth guidance program was developed. The Indian Student Placement Services, a special foster care program for Native Americans, officially began in 1954. It provided Native American children with educational, religious, and cultural experiences in LDS homes. Belle S. Spafford, General Relief Society President, provided direction during those years. In 1962, geographical expansion began, and, by 1969, Social Service agencies had been established in Arizona, Nevada, Idaho, and California.

In October 1969, Church leaders consolidated the Relief Society adoption services, the Indian Student Placement Services, and the Youth Guidance Program under a single department known as Unified Social Services. The change was part of the correlation of all Church programs. Counseling and adoption services continued to increase. Professional employees were encouraged to obtain at least a master’s degree in the behavioral sciences, preferably in social work. They began responding to requests from local Church leaders for assistance in counseling members with a variety of social-emotional needs and problems.

In September 1973, Unified Social Services became a separate corporation, renamed LDS Social Services. The new corporation began charging moderate fees for clinical, adoption, and foster care services. Services were expanded with Church growth and with the demand for licensed and clinical services. Agencies were established in the United States, Canada, Australia, New Zealand, and Great Britain. In 1974, there were 16 agencies and 9 suboffices; in 1979, 35 agencies and 13 suboffices; in 1991, 41 agencies with 24 suboffices. Staff size increased to a peak of 280 in 1980, then began decreasing slightly due to reductions in the Indian Student Placement Services and a trend toward emphasizing referral services for personal and family problems.

Shortly before 1990, LDS Social Services began placing greater emphasis on services for adoptive and unwed parents. Outreach efforts were intensified to assist greater numbers of unwed parents. The First Presidency issued letters to local leaders encouraging unwed parents to ensure their children are raised in stable homes with two parents, placing them for adoption through LDS Social Services when marriage is not feasible. At the same time, LDS Social Services changed the focus of its foster care program with a greater emphasis on placing troubled children in the homes of relatives, and on working closer with community agencies to provide services.

Currently, LDS Social Services continues to respond to the requests of Church members for adoption services, counseling for unwed parents, foster care, and referral or therapy for personal or family problems.

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SOCIETIES AND ORGANIZATIONS
The vitality and relevance of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints have spawned the formation of a wide assortment of unofficial organizations serving various Church-related interests and needs. Because the Church encompasses a comprehensive belief system about deity and the purpose of life, some members feel an intense need for outlets that allow them to share their personal insights, question ideas, and apply religious beliefs to daily living.
Unofficial organizations have existed since the early years of the Church (for a discussion of many nineteenth-century organizations, see Heinerman; Jenson). Some eventually became official Church programs, such as the Deseret Sunday School Union in 1849, the Mutual Improvement Association in 1875, and the Primary organization in 1878. Publications by these organizations similarly evolved from unofficial to official Church publications: Juvenile Instructor (Sunday School), The Contributor and later the Improvement Era (Mutual Improvement Association), and Children’s Friend (Primary).

In recent years, hundreds of unofficial societies and organizations have been created primarily to provide four kinds of activities: They (1) hold regular study groups, usually monthly; (2) meet as professional associations; (3) publish journals and newsletters; or (4) hold annual symposiums or conferences.

The least formal organizations are study groups of neighbors or friends sharing common interests who meet periodically to discuss preselected topics. Although most of these groups have a temporary and unstable life, some have met regularly for many years and have invited scholars or Church leaders to address them. Several professional associations have been formed by members who originally met as special interest groups at professional conferences.

The Society for Early Historic Archaeology (SEHA) was originally chartered with the state of Utah in 1949 as the University Archaeological Society, a nonprofit organization for the purposes of collecting and disseminating information about archaeological research on the scriptures. SEHA distributes a quarterly newsletter, plus papers presented at its annual symposium.

The Mormon History Association was formed in 1965 by both Mormon and non-Mormon historians who wanted an opportunity to share ideas in an atmosphere of openness. The Mormon History Association publishes the MHA Newsletter (quarterly) and the Journal of Mormon History (annually). The journal contains scholarly articles related to Mormon history that have passed an editorial review board. The association holds a three-day conference annually, usually in historically significant locations, such as Nauvoo, Kirtland, Lamoni, Palmyra, Omaha, England, and Salt Lake City. An annual awards banquet honors distinguished scholars who have written about LDS history from the perspective of their discipline. These conferences have attracted many who are not professional historians plus many non-Mormons. The Mormon History Association has facilitated extensive contacts between Latter-day Saint and Reorganized Latter Day Saint scholars that have contributed to the exchange of historically significant original documents.

Among the organizations that restrict their activities to publishing, one of the best known is Dialogue: A Journal of Mormon Thought. The title page of this journal states that it is “an independent national quarterly established to express Mormon culture and examine the relevance of religion to secular life.” Started in 1966, it is edited by Latter-day Saints whose intent is to bring their faith into dialogue with human experience as a whole and to foster artistic and scholarly achievement based on their cultural heritage.

Exponent II is a quarterly newspaper founded in 1974 to discuss Mormonism and feminism to help LDS women develop their talents.

The Sunstone Foundation was started in 1975 by a group of graduate students at Berkeley, California, who initially issued a quarterly magazine that was later published bimonthly. The purpose of the magazine is to provide a forum for young scholars to express themselves without being restricted by the professional, literary, and academic standards of established journals or Church publications. In 1979 the first annual Sunstone Symposium was held. Selected presentations from the annual symposium have been published in Sunstone and other journals. In addition to full-length articles, Sunstone features poetry, fiction, interviews, opinion columns, book reviews, and discussions of contemporary issues, theology, history, art, and drama.

The Association of Mormon Counselors and Psychotherapists (AMCAP) was organized in 1975 to promote fellowship and to enhance personal and professional development of LDS counselors and psychotherapists. AMCAP meets twice annually and publishes a quarterly newsletter and a semianual journal containing articles on psychotherapy with an LDS emphasis.

The Association of Mormon Letters (AML) was organized in 1976 to promote the writing and study of LDS literature. AML gives awards for outstanding literature and publishes an annual volume of essays on Mormon literature plus a quarterly newsletter.
In 1977, a group of LDS media artists formed an association called ALMA (Associated Latter-day Media Artists), which publishes a bimonthly newsletter and meets monthly to "promote quality media." In 1978, the Society for the Sociological Study of Mormon Life was formed to encourage sociological research on Mormon life.

The Foundation for Ancient Research and Mormon Studies (F.A.R.M.S.), headquartered in Provo, Utah, was organized as a California nonprofit corporation in 1979 to promote, coordinate, finance, and popularly disseminate research on ancient scriptures, particularly the Book of Mormon. F.A.R.M.S. publishes books, an annual review of publications on the Book of Mormon, a bimonthly newsletter, reprints, research reports, tapes, videos, and the writings of Hugh W. Nibley and other Mormon and non-Mormon scholars.

The B. H. Roberts Society was established in 1980 as an association "dedicated to the study of timely issues in Mormonism" and sponsors quarterly meetings in Salt Lake City. Similar societies have been formed in Denver, Los Angeles, and San Francisco.

A group called Affirmation was founded in 1980 to provide a forum and newsletter for discussing homosexuality.

In 1982, a group of medical practitioners formed Collegium Aesculapium for physicians, medical students, and those in the paramedical professions. This professional association publishes the Journal of Collegium Aesculapium and holds a semiannual conference. The main purpose of the association is to promote service to society and help to the underprivileged.

The Mormon Women’s Forum was founded in 1985 to publish a newsletter and discuss women’s issues in monthly meetings in various cities.

Several organizations have been formed by people associated with programs and activities of Brigham Young University. For example, in 1975 the BYU Management Society was organized under the auspices of the School of Management, and in 1988 the J. Reuben Clark Law Society was formed at the Law School to enhance the professional careers of their members through educational and professional opportunities. An International Society was organized in 1989, coordinated by the David M. Kennedy Center for International Studies at BYU. Many other centers and organizations are funded and operated by the university itself.

Unofficial organizations and their publications may serve at least six important functions for Church members and/or the Church.

First, a few serve ecumenical functions, bringing people of different faiths together in an exchange of ideas and understanding. Increased understanding has reduced ignorance, hostility, and intolerance and has led to greater sharing of ideas, historical documents, and research, especially in relationships fostered by the Mormon History Association.

Second, some unofficial organizations provide increased affiliation and social support for members by allowing them to associate with others whose religious beliefs provide a feeling of kinship. Having a common religious heritage provides a social bond that facilitates friendship and the formation of a social support system. Many monthly study groups are attended primarily for the purpose of association.

Third, unofficial publications provide an opportunity to learn and distribute new insights regarding theology, the scriptures, ancient cultures, historical events, and current practices. Dedicated members wanting to combine their religious beliefs with their professional training have made significant scholarly contributions, and unofficial journals provide outlets for publishing them.

Fourth, the creative efforts of those who contribute to these publications add to the collection of Mormon literature by allowing members to write about life and events from a unique LDS perspective. Some literary articles represent personal expressions of faith and testimony in artistic or scholarly ways that most authors would not choose to use in a monthly testimony meeting.

Fifth, certain publications serve as an outlet where individuals with unorthodox beliefs can share their questions, concerns, and doubts in an open forum where they feel adequate acceptance.

And sixth, for members who feel a need to promote change, publications of such organizations provide a forum where they can take an advocacy position. The targets of change have included the elimination of racism and sexism, the acceptance of altered social practices (such as birth control, dress, and grooming standards), and interpretation of the scriptures or historical events.

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SOCIETY

[Mormon life is inseparably involved with people. See, in general, Children; Community; Family; Lifestyle; Marriage; Men, Roles of; Social and Cultural History; Social Characteristics; Socialization; Values, Transmission of; Vital Statistics: Women, Roles of; and Youth.

Belonging to the Church is the basis of many aspects of Latter-day Saint societal values and concepts. See Activity in the Church; Brotherhood; The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints; Lay Participation and Leadership; Membership; Orthodoxy, Heterodoxy, and Heresy; Senior Citizens; Sisterhood; Volunteerism; and Ward.

On the single individual in LDS society, see Dating and Courtship; Divorce; Individuality; and Single Adults.

For discussions of specific social topics, see various entries under Business; City Planning; Education; Family; Fine Arts; Folk Art; Folklore; Holidays; Humor; Language and Culture; Literature; Material Culture; Mental Health; Minorities; Music; Politics; Science; Societies and Organizations; Sports; Symbolism; and Welfare.

Social relations with members of other religious groups are treated under Interfaith Relationships; Non-Mormons, Social Relations with; and Tolerance.]

SOLEMN ASSEMBLIES

In the Old Testament, Israel met in solemn assembly on the seventh day of the Feast of the Passover (Ex. 23:14–17; Deut. 16:8, 16) and the eighth day of the Feast of Tabernacles (Lev. 23:33–36; Neh. 8:18). The dedication of Solomon’s Temple occurred during the latter feast (2 Chr. 5:2–3; 7:9–11).

By commandment, the Prophet Joseph Smith convened a solemn assembly on March 27, 1836, in the KIRTLAND TEMPLE and in a nearby schoolhouse. During the meeting, the saints sustained Joseph and other Church leaders in their callings. Joseph offered the dedicatory prayer for the new temple, and Church leaders instructed each other and bore testimony, which led to a rich outpouring of the Spirit of God (D&C 88:70; 105:4; HC 2:410–28).

Church leaders have called solemn assemblies for many purposes since then. The foremost is to sustain general Church leaders. Following the death of a president of the Church, the Church holds a solemn assembly in the Salt Lake TABERNACLE to approve and sustain its new first presidency. Church members participate at the Tabernacle and in other places where the proceedings are broadcast (see, e.g., CR [Apr. 1986]:93–95).

A second purpose is to dedicate new or refurbished temples. Worthy Church members attend dedicatory services, which are held in the temples themselves and in other nearby facilities (see dedications).

A third purpose is to instruct and encourage Church members in their responsibilities. Such solemn assemblies generally take place in temples or stake centers. Church members invited to