

In modern time as in antiquity, a solemn responsibility envelops both the messengers and those to whom the message is delivered. The Lord informed Ezekiel, “I have made thee a watchman unto the house of Israel: therefore hear the word at my mouth and give them warning from me” (Ezek. 3:17). Only those who hearken to the warning are spared the punishments and receive the blessings. The messengers who deliver the message also save their own souls; if they fail to deliver the message they acquire responsibility for those whom they failed to warn—“[their] blood will I require at thine hand” (Ezek. 3:18–21).

It is a covenant obligation of all who are baptized into the Church of Jesus Christ to “stand as witnesses of God at all times, and in all things, and in all places” (Mosiah 18:9). Once warned, “it becometh every man . . . to warn his neighbor” (D&C 88:81). The messengers who deliver the warning will be present at the day of JUDGMENT as witnesses (D&C 75:21; 2 Ne. 33:11; Moro. 10:34). The essence of missionary work is for each member of the Church to become a voice of warning to those who have not been warned (see *DS* 1: 307–311).

NEIL J. FLINDERS

VOLUNTEERISM

Latter-day Saint doctrine teaches that basic tenets of a Christ-centered life are CHARITY, LOVE, and JOY through service. Volunteerism in the Mormon COMMUNITY strives to implement the principles of service and concern for one’s neighbor as taught in the GOSPEL OF JESUS CHRIST. The volunteering of time, energy, talents, and other resources for the betterment of the community and individual lives is a daily occurrence, primarily inside but also often outside a formal ecclesiastical setting. Church members are taught that cultivating the attribute of service is a spiritual obligation. This responsibility is reflected in the motto of the women’s RELIEF SOCIETY organization, “Charity Never Faileth,” from 1 Corinthians 13:8.

WARD and STAKE organizations are staffed by members with CALLINGS to serve in various capacities in carrying out the programs of the Church (see LAY PARTICIPATION AND LEADERSHIP). In this manner MISSIONARIES, TEACHERS, leaders, and many others voluntarily donate their time and tal-

ents. A balance exists in Mormon volunteerism between the spontaneous actions of members and organized Church initiatives. Some Church programs have begun at the grass-roots level through volunteer-member initiative; however, most Church operations are centrally approved and implemented under the guidance of the GENERAL AUTHORITIES. Members strive to govern themselves and voluntarily find ways to serve within the principles, objectives, and guidelines taught by the Church. While all members are commanded to be “anxiously engaged in a good cause, and do many things of their own free will” (D&C 58:27), it is not customary for members to offer unsolicited advice, to intervene in the responsibilities of others, or to suggest themselves for specific Church callings. Most members accept whatever callings are extended to them, and few request to be released except under difficult circumstances.

In areas with concentrated Latter-day Saint populations, Mormons traditionally organize themselves to help members and, where possible, all others in the community in times of need. Local Church leaders often use PRIESTHOOD QUORUMS, the Relief Society, and Church YOUTH groups as vehicles for volunteer efforts. Latter-day Saints are also encouraged to volunteer their efforts in civic service. Examples of volunteer service extend to the national and international levels, as when members rally together to help in times of crisis. Latter-day Saints in many parts of the world have joined with others in the aftermath of natural disasters, famine, and war to donate and deliver goods and services, to perform clean up, and to rebuild communities.

Many types of volunteer service are seen in LDS congregations and communities. Typical activities include refurbishing homes of the elderly or the cleanup of public parks or buildings. Handicapped individuals are visited by members who assist them with their rehabilitation efforts. Visits to hospitals, nursing centers, or prisons with programs or projects for the patients or inmates are typical services. Groups of members frequently work together to raise money to help ease heavy medical bills for neighborhood families. Food and clothing are donated to charitable organizations, including the DESERET INDUSTRIES. A call for help in such diverse activities as harvesting crops or moving a family usually generates willing volunteers. Many members spend hours of volunteer service translating materials for the deaf and the

blind. Others work to preserve cultural or genealogical records. Returned missionaries offer their language skills when foreign visitors or immigrants are in the community. In addition, other professionally trained members teach the application of home nursing or agricultural technology in cross-cultural settings. Although not all members find themselves in circumstances permitting extensive service both inside and outside the Church, charitable service is highly admired and valued in the Mormon lifestyle.

Whether living in a community having few or many Latter-day Saints, Church members are taught and encouraged to render acts of kindness to their neighbors. Some charitable acts are done as a result of HOME TEACHING, VISITING TEACHING, or COMPASSIONATE SERVICE assignments. These Church callings bring to those who render unselfish service the joy of Christlike love for one's fellow beings. Many other deeds of service occur

as the result of a need seen by an individual who is willing to fulfill that need. Hot meals, shoveled winter sidewalks, visits to the sick, the lonely, or the elderly, child care in times of despair, tutoring, painting, yard work, housekeeping, the sharing of musical talents, the remaking of clothing or home furnishings, and donating food from family garden plots are all small acts of volunteer kindness given, sometimes anonymously, to those in need.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

Cuthbert, Derek A. "The Spirituality of Service." *Ensign* 20 (May 1990):12-13.

For numerous references concerning Church counsel on volunteerism and service, or specific stories of individual or group volunteer efforts, see *Index to the Periodicals of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints*, Salt Lake City, 1961-present. Key Words: Volunteers, Service, Compassionate Service, Community Service, and Service Projects.

MARIBETH CHRISTENSEN