operations, including its finances. Day-to-day business matters are handled by a farm manager, who is usually a full-time employee. Where feasible, donated farm labor from Church members is utilized, which is counted as a contribution to the stake’s welfare program. Local ward units organize crews of volunteers who work different shifts at the farms. As modern agricultural work becomes more sophisticated, the welfare farms are relying increasingly on hired farm labor.

Currently, Church farm properties fall into three categories. First, there are about 160 Church welfare farms, which are operated by a farm committee as described above, transferring their products to Church canneries and bishop’s storehouses. Second, the Church owns about 250 reserve farms, which are held by the Church primarily for possible future welfare needs. These properties are assigned to the Church-owned Farm Management Corporation. They have been acquired over the years for a variety of reasons and are not always the best-quality agricultural lands. They tend to be concentrated in areas where Church populations are located. Their products are sold on the open market. Third, the Church owns other properties for various purposes, such as investment diversification (see FINANCES OF THE CHURCH). These farms are leased to private individuals or companies which operate them as private enterprises.

Church farms are tax-exempt only to the extent that they fill Church welfare needs. Above their welfare function, these farms pay taxes as regular businesses. In 1983 the Church sold more than 200 farms that exceeded its welfare needs.

Farms projects vary according to locale, need, climate, and soil conditions. Welfare farms produce grain, fruit, and vegetables. There are also beef, pork, and poultry projects, as well as such specialized projects as honey production. The first priority of all farm production is to supply the needs of welfare canneries and bishop’s storehouses, and to use as much donated labor as possible, giving opportunities for charitable service.

Farms may vary in size from just a few acres to several thousand. Most are located in the United States, primarily in Utah, Arizona, California, and Idaho. The largest reserve farm is in California. A notable investment farm is a 300,000-acre ranch in Florida that raises livestock and citrus fruit and is used as a hunting and forestry reserve.

WELFARE SERVICES

The basic philosophy underlying the welfare services system of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints was succinctly stated by the Church’s sixth President, Joseph F. SMITH: “It has always been a cardinal teaching with the Latter-day Saints, that a religion which has not the power to save the people temporally and make them prosperous and happy here cannot be depended upon to save them spiritually, and exalt them in the life to come” (quoted in L. Arrington, Great Basin Kingdom, 1958, p. 425, n. 16).

This Christlike objective of caring for the physical well-being of humans has been pursued throughout the history of the Church, involving a wide variety of activities undertaken in radically different circumstances, but all based on the same set of principles drawn from ancient and modern scripture:

- Self-sufficiency and family support are seen as a spiritual as well as a temporal obligation (1 Tim. 5:8; D&C 42:42). The Church is responsible for teaching principles and providing necessary assistance to enhance self-reliance.
- Those who are economically deprived for reasons either within or beyond their control (Mark 14:7) are to be provided with short-term emergency help, then assisted to a state of self-reliance, if possible, and provided with support if not.
- Assistance provided should exalt, rather than demean, the poor (D&C 104:16).
- The salvation of a person who is not poor depends to a substantial degree upon the care that person gives to the poor (Mosiah 4:16–22; D&C 56:16; 104:18).
- The salvation of the poor depends in part on the spirit in which they receive assistance (Mosiah 4:24–25; D&C 56:17–18).

HISTORY OF WELFARE SERVICES. During its first century, the modern Church applied these principles primarily by assisting Church members to gather at central locations—Kirtland, Ohio; western Missouri; Nauvoo, Illinois; the Great Basin—and to obtain land on which they could become self-sufficient. But all were not able to support themselves as farmers or in other pursuits, so other employment opportunities were created for the poor. They helped to build temples and other Church buildings and assisted in public
works projects, receiving pay out of contributions given by those who had regular incomes. As early as 1896, forty years before the inauguration of a public employment service in America, the Church had an employment bureau, gathering and publishing information on employment opportunities as well as compiling data about those needing employment.

The present-day system for helping the poor had its roots in the Great Depression of the 1930s, which hit urban Church members hardest. Though often struggling in the 1930s, farm-owning Latter-day Saints usually were self-sufficient, while city-dwellers deprived of employment were in the most serious straits. Stake presidents in urban areas contacted nearby farmers who faced prices so low that it was not profitable to harvest their crops. Arrangements were made so that idle urban members could harvest the crops in return for a share thereof. The produce thus obtained was stored in Church-controlled warehouse facilities and distributed according to need. Drawing upon that experience, welfare farms were soon established under Church ownership in areas surrounding Mormon-populated cities. Other Church units undertook processing and manufacturing projects based on the rural produce. BISHOP’S STOREHOUSES were created for storage and distribution, and products were moved from location to location by a Church-sponsored transportation system. A sheltered workshop program, DESERET INDUSTRIES, was introduced in 1938 to create jobs for the unemployed and the handicapped, refurbishing used clothing, furniture, and household goods for retail sale at low cost.

With the return of prosperity in the United States following World War II, these facilities were expanded to offer short-term emergency work and commodities during recessions, strikes, and natural disasters, as well as employment assistance to the aged, the handicapped, and others with limited ability for self-support. As the complexities of urban life increased and other obstacles such as unemployment and the need for various types of counseling became more evident, a social services agency was added. When needs became apparent, other welfare service functions were also added, growing into the system that currently operates, primarily in the United States and Canada. Meanwhile, the rapid growth of the international membership of the Church, especially in less developed lands, poses new challenges, which the welfare services system is adapting to meet.

Church members wrapping cheese at the Church cheese factory in Logan, a dairy region of Utah (1987). Local areas produce different kinds of commodities depending on geographical abilities and contribute them to the centralized distribution network of the Church Welfare system. Courtesy Craig Law.

WELFARE PRINCIPLES AND PRACTICES. Emphasizing family self-reliance, the Church welfare obligation begins with the teaching of principles of provident living, encouraging the use of appropriate community services, and then filling in with Church assistance when other resources prove to be inadequate.

Individuals and families are expected to live prudently, providing for their own needs and when possible, producing a surplus to use in helping others. Organizations within the Church such as the RELIEF SOCIETY, PRIESTHOOD QUORUMS, the SUNDAY SCHOOL, and youth programs teach the appropriate principles, while the Relief Society and the priesthood, through VISITING TEACHING and HOME TEACHING, encourage self-reliance and identify individual and family needs. Areas of emphasis are literacy and education; career development and counseling; financial and resource management; home production and storage; physical health; and social, emotional, and spiritual support.

Latter-day Saints view education as a spiritual, as well as a temporal, obligation. All members are expected to take advantage of available educational opportunities. Church leaders counsel parents to read to their children, teach them, and encourage them to study the scriptures and other
good literature and to communicate well in writing and speaking. Church organizations reinforce these family efforts. Instruction in family relations strengthens the family's ability to meet its challenges. People are given counsel to help them select careers in which their talents and skills can be used in meaningful employment. Adults and youth are expected to become proficient through appropriate training. The Church accepts responsibility for arranging for career counseling, encouraging access to training, providing assistance as necessary, and motivating members to assist each other in finding employment.

Church directives teach members to establish financial goals, pay tithing and fast offerings, avoid excessive debt, pay their obligations, use their resources wisely, and pursue a regular savings program. Keeping property in good repair is also encouraged. LDS families are taught to grow and preserve fruits and vegetables, sew clothing, and make household items. Every family is urged to be prepared for emergencies and to maintain a year's supply of food, clothing, and, if possible, fuel. The word of wisdom obliges members to avoid tobacco, alcohol, tea, coffee, and harmful drugs. Church organizations teach principles and skills of nutrition, physical fitness, immunization, sanitation, health, accident prevention, medical care, and the maintenance of a healthy home environment. Members are also advised to carry adequate health and life insurance when feasible and to avoid questionable medical practices.

It is assumed that, barring the unforeseen, most members and their extended families will be self-sufficient and able to give, rather than need to receive, assistance. Nevertheless, the Church stands ready to assist whatever needs exist. The Welfare Services Handbook states:

No true Latter-day Saint, while physically or emotionally able, will voluntarily shift the burden of his own or his family's well-being to someone else. So long as he can, under the inspiration of the Lord and with his own labors, he will work to the extent of his ability to supply himself and his family with the spiritual and temporal necessities of life. As guided by the Spirit of the Lord and through applying these principles, each member of the Church should make his own decisions as to what assistance he accepts, be it from governmental or other sources. In this way, independence, self-respect, dignity and self-reliance will be fostered, and free agency maintained (1980, p. 5).

Latter-day Saints are encouraged to avoid "unearned" public assistance programs insofar as possible. They are also encouraged to take full advantage of all available education and training programs and, as appropriate, to draw upon public insurance programs established for the benefit of employees, such as unemployment insurance and social security pensions.

ADMINISTRATION. While all members of the Church have the duty to "sucor those that stand in need" (Mosiah 4:16) and to "bear one another's burdens" (Mosiah 18:8), the institutional responsibility for the welfare of others in the wards belongs to bishops, Relief Society presidencies, priesthood quorum leaders, and home and visiting teachers. These Church leaders are admonished to be alert to the condition of each family and to offer assistance when needs exceed family resources and extended families are unable or unwilling to assist. Assignments are made to "sucor the weak, lift up the hands which hang down, and strengthen the feeble knees" (D&C 81:5; Heb. 12:12).

Marshaling the resources of the Church on behalf of needy families is then the primary responsibility of the bishop. For this purpose, he can use cash from fast offering funds and direct the personal help of members (see Volunteerism) or can refer members to community resources or give temporary assistance from the storehouse resource system.

Members receiving Church assistance are expected to work to the extent of their ability to compensate for the help received. The local ward leadership has responsibility to provide work opportunities, which may be on a Church welfare project, in Church building maintenance, or in behalf of another needy member. Following short-term emergency assistance, a rehabilitation program is developed to bring the member back to self-sufficiency.

Faithful members of the Church are deemed to have a right to assistance, and the bishop can aid inactive members and nonmembers at his discretion. Help is to be extended graciously without embarrassment to the recipient and with complete confidentiality.
Within a year of the organization of the Church in 1830, Latter-day Saints in Ohio and Missouri were instructed through revelation to consecrate their surplus properties to the Church for the care of the poor. The bishop allocated properties to the members as stewardships, through which the people were to become self-supporting. Properties and commodities over and above immediate needs were “kept in [the Lord’s] storehouse, to administer to the poor and the needy” (D&C 42:34); such accumulated assets were called “storehouse resources.” Today these resources include fast offerings, production projects and commodities, the Church employment system, Deseret Industries, and LDS Social Services.

Production. The Church welfare production system, as of 1985, consisted of 199 agricultural production projects, 51 canneries, and 27 large and 36 small grain-storage facilities feeding into 12 central, 69 regional, and 32 branch storehouses. These storehouses are essentially a combination of warehouses and outlet stores. The commodities in them are distributed after Relief Society leaders meet with families to determine their needs and bishops sign written orders for the needed commodities, which the family can pick up or have picked up for them at the storehouses or at Deseret Industries outlet stores. Also available in the storehouses are the products of a meat-packing plant, a milk-processing facility, a bakery, a soap factory, a pasta factory, and a number of Relief Society sewing projects. Items not produced in the Church system can be purchased at the bishop’s discretion from outside sources. The bulk of the production occurs in the western United States, with a fleet of trucks moving commodities to the storehouses scattered around the country for distribution. As of the late 1980s, commodities conservatively valued at $30 million were dispersed in response to approximately 350,000 bishops’ orders a year. The production system provides service opportunities as well: 872,000 hours of volunteer labor were donated in 1987. Recipients are encouraged to provide as much of this labor as possible, but about half of the volunteer hours are donated by nonrecipients. Longer-term recipients are also given meaningful training through production projects.

Employment Services. The most visible components of the Church employment system are the thirty-six employment centers staffed with full-time professionals and the fifty-one centers operated by Church service volunteers. These are located in the United States in areas of membership concentration, with a few abroad. The volunteer-run centers function as satellites under the direction of the professional centers. However, the bulk of the employment activity occurs at the ward and stake levels. Each ward and stake has an employment specialist who contacts ward officers to identify any employment needs and job openings of which they are aware. Possible matches are made, and unfilled job openings are reported to the stake specialist, who disseminates the information to other wards and to the employment centers. Employment specialists are expected to be familiar with the workings of local labor markets and to counsel jobseekers on improving their job search skills and their employability. Professionals from the employment centers hold periodic seminars to train the stake and ward specialists and provide them on an ongoing basis with lists of current job openings. The specialists are encouraged to refer needy people to an employment center for career counseling, training in job search skills, information on the local and national labor markets, and referral to community job agencies.

Deseret Industries. In the western United States there are twenty-one parent and twenty-seven branch Deseret Industries installations. Through periodic donation drives in the wards and stakes, clothing, furniture, appliances, toys, and other items are collected to be refurbished and sold by Deseret Industries’ employees in sheltered workshops and stores. In addition, new products are manufactured in a mattress and furniture factory. A homecraft program offers productive opportunities for the homebound. Deseret Industries provides kits, patterns, materials, and supplies for items, which are then manufactured at home and picked up for sale through Deseret Industries retail stores.

Welfare Services Missions. A welfare services missionary program responds to requests from Church units around the world with special needs that exceed local resources. Primarily young women and older persons with special skills are called to go, at their own expense, to these areas to train people in basic child development, family relations, nutrition, sanitation, health care, social work, counseling, and agriculture or vocational
Ezra Taft Benson and his wife, Flora (on the left), and many members of the Church give volunteer services at LDS canneries and welfare projects. The food raised and preserved is distributed to the needy through the Bishop’s Storehouses and Church welfare services. In recent times, these projects have been increasingly automated and professionally staffed.

Training. In 1990 there were about 280 welfare services missionaries.

Few social phenomena are more challenging to cope with than widespread poverty. Nevertheless, in all geographical areas where the Church program is established, members have some Church resources to assist them. Church welfare projects supply commodities to prevent serious deprivation. Since teaching self-sufficiency and counseling are unending one-on-one tasks, the fellowship of the Church provides a personal and reassuring support system to help members confront the problems of poverty.

The Church now faces the challenge of establishing its program in developing nations. Not since its early years has the Church struggled with situations in which a majority of members in some areas are plagued with poverty in conditions that arise from severe economic and social circumstances. To meet these challenges, programs are beginning, first with the teaching of self-reliance principles and the wise use of fast offerings, then with projects in conjunction with experienced Third World economic development agencies and with the establishment of Church employment centers. What will happen and what patterns or institutions will emerge cannot be foreseen; but that the effort will be made to establish the welfare system of Zion in all parts of the world is inherent in LDS doctrine.

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GARTH L. MANGUM

WELFARE SQUARE

Welfare Square in Salt Lake City is the largest and most complete facility in the Church welfare system. It produces and delivers food and clothing and provides other services to needy people in the Salt Lake area. It also supplies and coordinates welfare efforts of the Church in other areas.

The first structures built on Welfare Square, in 1938, were a bishop’s storehouse, a root cellar (now used as a storage building), and a cannery. A milk-processing plant and a 300,000-bushel grain elevator were built in 1941. A new milk-processing plant replaced the old one in 1960, and a new cannery replaced the old one in 1963. The original Bishop’s Storehouse was replaced with a larger facility in 1976. In 1981 a DESERT INDUSTRIES plant and its affiliated store were built on Welfare Square, and an office building to house the Social Services Department and employment services was added in 1983. A bakery was added in 1986.

Welfare Square provides regular employment for about fifty people, and volunteer assistance to run its operations and services is provided on a regular basis by about 200 people from fifty surrounding stakes. Financial support for Welfare Square comes largely from the Fast Offerings of local members.

Most of the recipients of food and services at Welfare Square are members of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, but there is also a transient service center associated with the Bishop’s Storehouse that gives temporary assistance to the homeless of all faiths.