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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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 canny. 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 canny replaced the old one in 1963. The original Bishop’s Storehouse was replaced with a larger facility in 1976. In 1951 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.
Welfare Square became functionally and symbolically important to the Church in the 1930s and 1940s. It was the flagship of the Church welfare program initiated in the Pioneer Stake in Salt Lake City in 1932. Over the years, the pattern established at Welfare Square has been replicated in more than a hundred Bishop’s Storehouse facilities. Welfare Square continues to be the central supplier and coordinator for many of these other locations.

Welfare Square stands for all the principles of welfare advocated and practiced by the Church—industry, work, and caring for the poor and needy. A Visitors Center is located on Welfare Square to distribute information about the Church welfare program and to teach the principles of the gospel of Jesus Christ concerning social and religious obligations toward those in need.

[See also Poverty, Attitudes Toward.]

T. GLENN HAWS

WELLS, EMMELINE B.

Emmeline Blanche Woodward Wells (1828–1921) was a strong advocate for women’s rights and advancement as editor of the woman’s Exponent for nearly four decades, as general president of the Relief Society for over a decade, as a national suffrage leader, and as a Utah political activist.

Born to David and Deidama Hare Woodward on February 29, 1828, at Petersham, Massachusetts, Emmeline experienced early the extremes of private tragedy and public triumph that would recur throughout her life. The death of her father when she was four years old and the controversy in her community occasioned by her conversion to The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints ten years later were harrowing to the young girl. Yet Emmeline had opportunities for education not widely available to girls of her time. While still in her early teens she started teaching, but her teaching career was cut short by her marriage on July 29, 1843, at age fifteen, to James H. Harris, only two months her senior, and their subsequent move the following spring with his parents and other Latter-day Saints to Nauvoo, Illinois. However, within sixteen months of their marriage, James’s parents abandoned both the Church and Nauvoo after Joseph Smith’s assassination; the young couple’s son, Eugene Henri Harris, died shortly after birth; and James left Nauvoo to look for work, never to return. Many years later, Emmeline discovered he had died in a sailing accident in the Indian Ocean.

She found refuge by returning to teaching, and among her pupils were the children of Bishop Newel K. and Elizabeth Ann Whitney. In February 1845, Emmeline became a plural wife to Whitney, who was thirty-three years older than she. He died in 1850, two years after they had arrived in the Salt Lake valley, leaving her with two young daughters.

Emmeline’s third marriage in 1852 proved more enduring but not always satisfying. Seeking protection and stability, she petitioned Whitney’s friend and prominent Church leader Daniel H. Wells to marry her. He already had six other wives, and, because of numerous business and ecclesiastical obligations, he and Emmeline rarely saw each other. Although three daughters were born to the union (two of them died in young adulthood), only in the later years of their marriage did Emmeline find the love and companionship that she had so long desired, but had found so elusive.