

## COMPASSIONATE SERVICE

The term “compassionate service” is used in the Church to refer to love-inspired assistance willingly given to meet physical, spiritual, and emotional needs. It requires a sensitivity that perceives human distress beyond spoken words (Luke 10:30–37; cf. 8:43–48), an eye that recognizes the good in people (Mosiah 4:16–18), and an understanding heart attuned to the HOLY SPIRIT to discern what is appropriate to say and do (3 Ne. 17:5–8; John 19:25–27). A call to Christlike service undergirded the Prophet Joseph SMITH’s formal charge to the Female RELIEF SOCIETY organized in 1842. Aware of the dire needs of the Saints, he said that “the object of the society [is to search] after objects of charity and [administer] to their wants” (Minutes of the Female Relief Society of Nauvoo, p. 7). A Necessity Committee of sixteen sisters was appointed “to search out the poor and suffering, to call upon the rich for aid, and thus, as far as possible, relieve the wants of all” (*History of Relief Society*, p. 68). Since that time, not only Relief Society members but also other Church members have been involved in formal and informal acts of compassionate service.

Present-day Relief Society visiting teachers continue to carry out Joseph Smith’s commission



Relief Society sisters and their families provide compassionate watchcare for each other, make themselves aware of one another’s needs, and give loving service to individuals and families (c. 1985).

with regular visits to each LDS family, discerning needs and providing caring support. Ezra Taft BENSON stated, “We urge you, particularly priesthood brethren and Relief Society sisters, to be sensitive to the needs of the poor, the sick, and the needy . . . [and] see that the widows and fatherless are assisted” (p. 7). Through appropriate channels of the PRIESTHOOD and Relief Society, assistance is to be given to the poor, sick, bereaved, homeless, and members with special personal problems and burdens (Mosiah 18:8–9; D&C 52:40).

When compassionate service is clothed in the true spirit of charity—which the Book of Mormon defines as the pure love of Christ—it becomes an all-encompassing and rewarding experience for the giver as well as the receiver (1 Cor. 13:4–8; Moro. 7:6–8, 45–47).

[See also Visiting Teaching.]

### BIBLIOGRAPHY

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- Benson, Ezra Taft. “Council to the Saints.” *Ensign* 14 (May 1984):6–8.
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- Minutes of the Female Relief Society of Nauvoo, March 17, 1842, p. 7.

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## COMPREHENSIVE HISTORY OF THE CHURCH

Intended as a centennial history of the LDS Church (1830–1930), Elder B. H. Roberts’s six-volume *Comprehensive History of the Church* stands as a high point in the publication of Church history to that time. Most earlier works were either attacks upon or defenses of the Church. Although Roberts’s study was a kind of defense, he set a more even tone, a degree of uncommon objectivity.

Like several historians preceding him (Bancroft, Whitney, Tullidge), Roberts set out to produce a multivolume work. Originally a periodical series prepared for the *Americana* magazine, Roberts’s articles appeared in forty-two-page installments between July 1909 and July 1915 (*CHC* 1:v–vi). As the centennial year of 1930 approached, Elder George Albert Smith suggested