

(see Matthew 14). We are counseled to give service in a wise and orderly way and not to “run faster than [we have] strength” (Mosiah 4:27). But sometimes our greatest opportunities to serve and bless come when it is least convenient. In the Savior’s parable, the good Samaritan interrupted his journey, then and there, to minister to the stricken man’s needs (see Luke 10:30–37).

No one was beneath the Savior’s notice or too low for Him to reach out to (see Matthew 9:9–13). As the Savior did, so can we love and lift others, teaching them a better way and inviting them to join us in the abundant life the Savior offers.

Heavenly Father knows our unique abilities, circumstances, and desires, and He knows how we can use them to bless others. As we draw closer to Him and seek His direction, He will help us know whom, where, and how to serve.

Visit the Service section of **LDS.org** for ideas about serving in the Church, in your community, in missionary capacities, and in humanitarian service.

NOTE

1. Thomas S. Monson, “What Have I Done for Someone Today?” *Liahona* and *Ensign*, Nov. 2009, 85.

“Pure religion and undefiled before God and the Father is this, To visit the fatherless and widows in their affliction, and to keep himself unspotted from the world” (James 1:27).



Far left: Brother Chiroque, a Young Men president in Chulucanas, Peru, works with Alex, a member of the teachers quorum, to build crutches for an injured man in their branch.

Fast offerings, like those being collected by these deacons, are vital to helping the needy.

The Strength of Many

The Law of the Fast

The Lord established the law of the fast to bless His people and provide a way to care for those in need. He instructed the Saints “to impart of your substance unto the poor, . . . and [it] shall be laid before the bishop . . . to administer to the poor and needy” (D&C 42:31, 34). Fast offerings are a primary resource for the Lord’s storehouse. Church members are encouraged to give an offering at least equal to the value of the two meals not eaten while fasting. President Spencer W. Kimball (1895–1985) asked members to give “much, much more—ten times more where we are in a position to do it.”¹

When we understand and live the law of the fast, our love and compassion for the less fortunate increase. Fasting, accompanied by prayer, is a form of true worship. When we obey the law of the fast,

2009

- June: A new adoption website is launched, ItsAboutLove.org.³



2010

- April: A new employment website is launched, LDSjobs.org, currently available in English, Spanish, and Portuguese.
- Food production is added to humanitarian initiatives.

NOTES

1. See “Humanitarian Activities Worldwide,” providentliving.org/content/display/0,11666,4600-1-2323-1,00.html.
2. See C. Ross Clement, “LDS Family Services” (unpublished history prepared for LDS Family Services, May 10, 2000).
3. See Kimberly Bowen, “LDS Family Services Launches New Web Site,” *Ensign*, Sept. 2009, 78.



Symbolic of the added power that comes when we unite to serve others, priesthood brethren in Louisiana, USA, help remove a fallen tree after Hurricane Katrina struck in 2005.



Projects like peach production provide a variety of nutritious foods that both sustain and brighten the lives of those who would otherwise suffer hunger.

we gain spiritual strength, temporal blessings, and a greater desire to serve others.

President Thomas S. Monson taught: “The concept of fast offerings appears as early as the time of Isaiah when, speaking of the true fast, he encouraged people to fast and ‘to deal thy bread to the hungry, and . . . bring the poor that are cast out to thy house’ [Isaiah 58:7]. The Prophet Joseph instituted the practice of collecting fast offerings for the poor in Kirtland, Ohio; and later at Nauvoo, Illinois, the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles sent a general letter to the Church defining ‘the principle of fasts,’ stating: ‘Let this be an ensample to all saints, and there will never be any lack for bread: When the poor are starving, let those who have, fast one day and give what they otherwise would have eaten to the bishops

“If every member of this church observed the fast and contributed generously, the poor and the needy—not only of the Church, but many others as well—would be blessed and provided for.”

President Gordon B. Hinckley (1910–2008), “Rise to a Larger Vision of the Work,” *Ensign*, May 1990, 97.

for the poor, and every one will abound for a long time. . . . And so long as the saints will all live to this principle with glad hearts and cheerful countenances they will always have an abundance.”²

Food Production

The production and processing of food to feed the hungry has been a cornerstone of the welfare plan since it was first introduced. What began as scattered gardens and work projects located throughout Utah became a vast network of over 1,000 farms and food-production projects run by the stakes and wards of the Church. Welfare farms operated in North America, Europe, Australia, and Polynesia. By the 1980s these farms and production facilities were consolidated, enlarged, and improved. Some smaller projects were sold.

As in the past, these farms and facilities are supported by members of the Church who provide most of the labor—all volunteer. Members contribute hundreds of thousands of days each year to produce, process, and distribute food that will be used to support the needy. Over 100 million pounds (45 million kg) of grain, beans, meat, fruit, vegetables, and other commodities are produced annually, ensuring that bishops have food available to support those in need.



As part of the ongoing effort to meet people's most basic needs, young women in Hong Kong assemble soap and other hygiene items for victims of disaster.



Projects to serve others strengthen the bonds between us and help us develop Christlike attributes. Here, young Latter-day Saints in Mexico, involved in neighborhood improvement, wash a home.

In areas of the Church where storehouses are not available or readily accessible, bishops and branch presidents use fast offerings to provide the needed commodities and services.

The Lord's Storehouse

Since the welfare program was introduced in 1936, members of the Church have labored together to relieve the suffering of those who stand in need. Economic downturns, natural disasters, unemployment, sickness and disability, or times of loss have all required that the Saints work together under the direction of the priesthood to ensure that needs are met and that individuals and families are blessed. Over the years millions of members have willingly given of their time and talents to bless others and replace, as President Monson says, "the weakness of one person standing alone [with] the strength of many serving together."³

When President Heber J. Grant spoke of the welfare system in 1936, he envisioned that "no new Church machinery" would be required but that "stake and ward organizations, the priesthood quorums, the Relief Society, and the various auxiliary organizations [would] render the maximum service [they]

could furnish in the interest of the general welfare of the Church."⁴ The Lord had already established the organization needed to bless the poor and needy—priesthood quorums were in place, Relief Societies were organized, and the priesthood of God was on the earth.

The members of the Church, with their consecrated labor, their talents and abilities, become an integral part of the Lord's storehouse. In addition to the fast offerings that are paid to the fast-offering fund of the Church, priesthood leaders can draw on the time, talents, abilities, and energies of all the members in blessing those who stand in need.

By accepting the opportunity to assist others in their hour of need, we demonstrate our love for God and His children. This is welfare in its purest light, and its faithful practice will exalt both the giver and the receiver, as envisioned by prophets in our day.

NOTES

1. Spencer W. Kimball, in Conference Report, Apr. 1974, 184.
2. Thomas S. Monson, "Be Thou an Example," *Ensign*, Nov. 1996, 44.
3. Thomas S. Monson, in "Messages of Inspiration from President Monson," *Church News*, Feb. 6, 2010, 2.
4. Heber J. Grant, in James R. Clark, comp., *Messages of the First Presidency of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints*, 6 vols. (1965–75), 6:19; capitalization standardized.