

Mormon Helping Hands Completes First Decade of Service

Service rendered by members of the Church around the world comes in many forms, but over the past 10 years that service has usually come in one color: yellow.

Whether rendering emergency aid after a natural disaster or cleaning up the local park, the Mormon Helping Hands program, with its bright yellow vests or T-shirts, has become a welcome sign of hope for those in need during the past decade.

Mormon Helping Hands is a priesthood-directed Church program that, teamed up with the welfare program of the Church, contributes to relief efforts and facilitates other service projects around the world.

In the Beginning

Officially established in 1998, the Mormon Helping Hands program was created as a way for Church members in South America to reach out and serve their communities. Starting in Argentina, Paraguay, Uruguay, and Chile, Church leaders designated an annual day of service for members to give of their time and efforts in a prepared service project.

During this first official organized effort, tens of thousands of Church members of all ages in South America collaborated to participate in a multinational service project. In an effort to strengthen and beautify their



Young women in Hong Kong assemble hygiene kits for those in need.

PHOTOGRAPH BY CRAIG DIMOND

communities, members spent time repairing and painting schools and hospitals and cleaning parks, streets, and other public spaces.

Not long after the first service day, the idea spread to Brazil, where service continued and the program began to grow. By 2002 the organization had been named one of the most important volunteer organizations in Brazil because of the good it brought to the people.

Today, millions of hours of service have been donated by hundreds of thousands of volunteers in all areas of the world. What began as a multinational service project in a few countries of South America turned into a worldwide relief effort for people in need. The program currently operates in Africa, Asia, Europe, Latin America,

North America, and the Pacific.

Providing Relief

After Hurricane Ike stormed through the southern United States in 2008, work crews were organized to help with cleanup. Members in southeast Texas joined together to clean up debris left in yards and to distribute hygiene kits, cleaning kits, and food boxes in areas devastated by the storm. Local bishops' storehouses stocked with food, water, tools, and other necessary supplies provided resources for those in need.

When flooding killed some 20 people in the midwestern United States and left thousands homeless in 2008, Church members and missionaries donned yellow Mormon Helping Hands

T-shirts and helped with sandbagging and other relief efforts. The Cedar Rapids Iowa Stake set up a relief warehouse filled with the wheelbarrows, shovels, and work clothes the Church sent. As part of the area most heavily affected by the flooding, the stake also received funds to purchase power washers and generators. The community accepted the relief efforts with gratitude.

Improving Communities

While disasters provide opportunities to serve, no disaster is necessary to involve members in reaching out to their communities. Working to improve communities gives Church members the opportunity to give their time and talents to bless others in need and to show that their community is important to them.

In November 2007 more than 100,000 members in Africa participated in a continent-wide service project cleaning up communities. Their efforts included cleaning and landscaping the Red Cross War Memorial Children's Hospital in Cape Town, South Africa; planting more than 50 trees in Olivenhoutbosch, South Africa; filling potholes and clearing glass and rubble along roads in Kitale, Kenya; and repairing playground equipment.

At the conclusion of the project, Nikki Bishop, CEO of the Red Cross War Memorial Children's Hospital, commented that "the difference this is going to make to the children, parents, staff, and visitors will be enormous. We

are deeply grateful. The project has gone tremendously well, transforming the hospital. I am delighted and thrilled.”

Strengthening Members

One of the important principles taught by Jesus Christ and lived by His followers is that of service: “And behold, I tell you these things that ye may learn wisdom, that ye may learn that when ye are in the service of your fellow beings ye are only in the service of your God” (Mosiah 2:17).

Not only do Mormon Helping Hands projects accomplish much good for those in need by making use of the time and talents of members, but they also bless those rendering the service. They help members become more sensitive to the challenges others face. As members follow the example of the Savior, their testimonies are strengthened, and by serving together, members become more united.

“First of all, it helps us internally,” said Mike Martin, then president of the Pretoria South Africa Stake, after the 2007 All-Africa Helping Hands Day. “We are better able to bond with each other, and it develops unity; but really it is great just to be out there in the community, see some of the issues that people face, and try in a small way to make a little bit of a difference.”

Building Bridges

In partnership with government leaders, education



PHOTOGRAPH BY CRAIG DIMOND

Mormon Helping Hands volunteers in Louisiana, USA, help clear debris following Hurricane Katrina in 2005.

officials, and private businesses, some 50,000 Church members and friends worked together in April 2005 to improve the conditions of 200 schools in São Paulo, Brazil. Painting doors, cleaning classrooms, and repairing desks were some of the ways volunteers served in the schools.

Such service events bring many different groups of people together; these people improve the areas and form friendships. Relationships developed while giving service can build bridges of understanding and strengthen relationships with officials and the community.

Mormon Helping Hands projects are not meant to be proselytizing activities. Rather they are meant to be opportunities to promote Christian service that might not otherwise occur.

In September 2006 members in the Bristol England Stake worked within their community to improve a struggling community farm. In one day members were able to work on a wheelchair access path; paint; dig; clean; and build educational toys, bird boxes, and feeders for the farm. More than 2,500 hours of service were given, and the improvement was noticeable. The local mayor visited the farm, expressed his gratitude, and said how impressed he was with what had been accomplished.

Through the Mormon Helping Hands organization, Church members worldwide have rendered service, improved communities, and formed friendships. The service projects have not only touched lives but also have deepened the faith of those involved and built

bridges in communities and organizations. ■

Web Extends Distribution Services' Reach

For many members of the Church who need Church materials and supplies, such as pictures, temple clothing, scriptures, or other distribution items, getting to a distribution center can be costly and time consuming, even with many such centers around the world.

“We still have many, many members of the Church who are hours away [from a center] who can have products right at their fingertips—shipped directly to their door

so they don't have to travel to a distribution center," said Jim Christensen, manager of product development for Church Distribution Services.

LDSCatalog.com

Distribution Services uses the Internet to expand the shopping options available to members of the Church. Country Web sites have been created to serve specific areas throughout the world.

Included in those areas is a site based in Argentina, a site based in Australia, and a site for members in the United States and Canada. A Web site based in Germany

and designed to serve most of Europe is currently being developed.

Members can access all of the sites by going to LDSCatalog.com and clicking on **Country Sites** at the top of the page.

The materials offered online are available for the same price as at distribution centers, and items ordered in the U.S. and Canada are sent without shipping fees.

The site often gives purchasers more options than a distribution center. "There is a greater selection," said Steve Argyle, presentations

coordinator for Distribution Services. "At local distribution centers there are often space restrictions. Online you can get everything that we offer."

From Clothing to Curriculum

The Web site allows buyers to purchase items or leads them to where they can find more information on what they are looking for.

The Web site has a section entitled "New Items," which identifies products recently made available, such as pictures of newly dedicated temples, current issues of the Church

magazines, and other new products.

Curriculum items are currently available through the Web site in English, Spanish, and French. Gospel study materials, manuals, catalogs, and other resources are available to benefit homes, wards, and branches. Church units can order curriculum material for all auxiliaries for the year from the site, along with specific materials catering to the needs of members with limited sight and hearing and other disabilities.

Information regarding family history work, including supplies for family history centers, census information, hints on how to begin, and other useful resources, are available to help those who would like to get started in family history work. Software downloads are also available through Distribution Services.

For artwork prints seen in the Church Materials Catalog, visitors to the Web site can search for artwork by title or by artist, making prints more readily available to members around the world.

Finding the Right Way

Brother Argyle said that Distribution Services makes materials available to members in a variety of ways, including telephone, FAX, and mail orders. The Web sites are one more way to achieve that goal.

"The Web site is just one part of a plan that makes Church materials available to all Church members," said Brother Argyle. ■



LDSCatalog.com makes Church materials available to many members worldwide.

Book of Mormon Reaches 140 Million Milestone

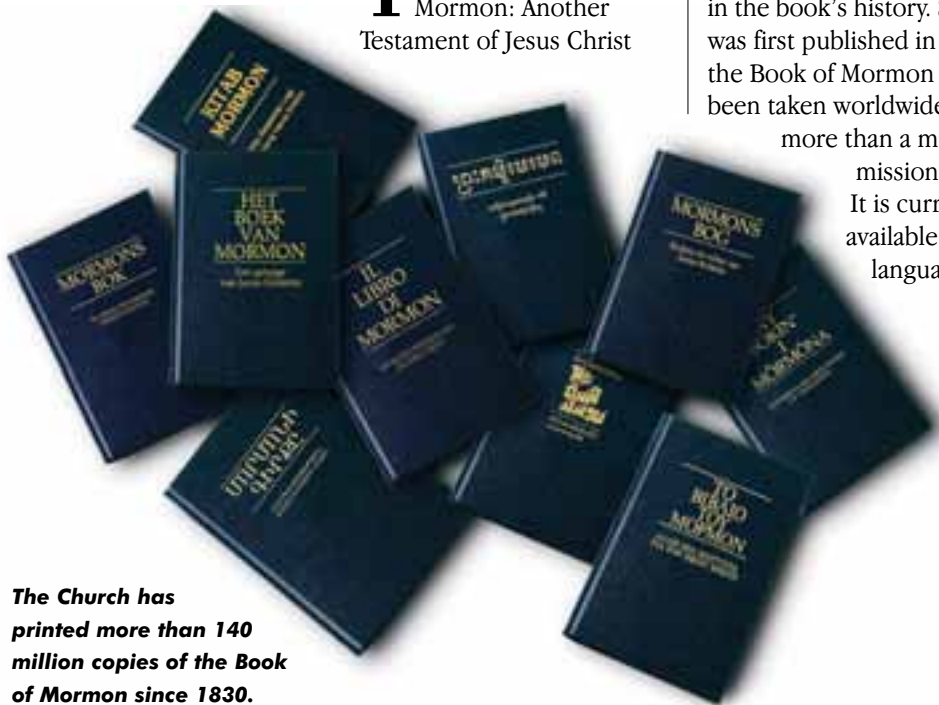
The 140 millionth copy of the Book of Mormon: Another Testament of Jesus Christ

was recently distributed, passing another milestone in the book's history. Since it was first published in 1830, the Book of Mormon has been taken worldwide by

more than a million

missionaries.

It is currently available in 107 languages.



The Church has printed more than 140 million copies of the Book of Mormon since 1830.

In 2003, *Book* magazine named the Book of Mormon one of the “20 Books That Changed America” (July/August issue, 59). In October 2007 President Gordon B. Hinckley (1910–2008) described its modern influence: “Through all of these years critics have tried to explain it. They have spoken against it. They have ridiculed it. But it has outlived them all, and its influence today is greater than at any time in its history” (“The Stone Cut Out of the Mountain,” *Ensign*, Nov. 2007, 83).

The Book of Mormon has been described as the “keystone” of the Church (see Introduction to the Book of Mormon) and is used side by side with the Bible in members’ teaching and personal study. ■

WORLD BRIEFS

Church Museum Gets Name Change

To align itself with other Church entities, including the new Church History Library now under construction, the Museum of Church History and Art in Salt Lake City is now the Church History Museum. The museum showcases the Mormon experience, with permanent galleries as well as temporary exhibits on specific themes. There are guided as well as self-guided tours. The museum is open Monday through Saturday. Admission is free.

Family History Consultants Supported Online

To help support family history consultants, the Family History Department is developing new online tools and services. These will include access to up-to-date training and new systems, services, and products. Information, updates, and helpful hints will be e-mailed periodically to registered participants. Consultants can register at <http://consultant.familysearch.org> with their unit number and Church membership number.

British Genealogist Lectures in Salt Lake City

Distinguished British genealogist Colin R. Chapman lectured at the Family History Library in Salt Lake City in October 2008 on the topics “Was Your Ancestor Really Married?” and “Genealogy in Early British Censuses, 1086 to 1841.” Mr. Chapman helped establish six British county genealogical societies and is the author of 14 books on family history. He was involved in developing the three-letter Chapman County Code, which has become the international standard in family history work.

Hawaiian Book of Mormon on Display

An original copy of the 1855 edition of *Ka Buke a Moramona*—the Hawaiian translation of the Book of Mormon—went on display at the Laie Hawaii Temple Visitors’ Center in November 2008. Only 3,000 copies of the 1855 edition were printed, and only some 200 of them were bound. Due to a fire a few years after printing, only 15 to 30 copies of the rare edition are believed to exist today. ■

Water Project Provides More than Just Water

As water sprayed from a new well drilled into the Kenyan countryside, villagers from the Makueni region shouted for joy. Some danced. Some cried. It meant no more 30-kilometer walks to fetch water in lieu of drinking from contaminated rivers.

The Church's clean water initiative is providing remote communities like Makueni with hand-pump wells to reduce water-borne diseases. But by

allowing villagers to spend less time fetching water, the wells also enable families to spend more time together and children to attend school more frequently.

In July 2008 in the neighboring district of Mwingi, the Church, with help from the local residents, built 30 wells that serve 56,000 people. Around the same time, 20 wells in Masinga, Kenya, were also completed, serving 32,000 people. Seven other projects in the country are in process.

As with other major humanitarian initiatives, the clean water projects incorporate principles of self-reliance and sustainability. A community water committee becomes responsible for maintaining the system. The Church supplies the committee with the necessary tools and trains them on hygiene so they can use the water safely and properly.

While local contractors take care of major construction elements like drilling, community members are expected to help, digging trenches, moving pipe, and mixing cement, among other things.

In the Democratic Republic of Congo, more than 400 people are digging a 30-kilometer trench and laying pipe to create a gravity-fed water system. The four-year project will benefit an estimated 160,000 people, making it the largest clean water project the Church has funded.

With an estimated 23 projects in progress for 2008, the clean water initiative continues to touch hundreds of thousands of lives. Since 2002 the projects have provided more than four million people in 50 countries with access to clean water. ■



Kenyans in the Makueni region celebrate as water sprays from a new borehole.

Church Sends Atmit to Ethiopia

The Church sent more than 1.4 million pounds (635 tonnes) of Atmit—special food for the severely malnourished—to drought-stricken Ethiopia in late 2008.

At least 14 million Ethiopians were in need of assistance. While the crisis stemmed from a drought that destroyed the entire spring crop in some places,

the country has also dealt with high food prices, a number of disasters, and a rebellion in the Somali region that disrupted food delivery.

Remembering the aid the Church provided during the 2003 famine, government officials in Ethiopia requested help. The Church sent more than 30 containers of Atmit, beginning in late August and

ending in October.

As in 2003, the Church worked closely with Project Mercy, a nongovernmental relief agency with experience in Ethiopia. In close coordination with the Ethiopian government, Project Mercy oversaw the distribution of the Atmit.

Atmit is a mixture of oat flour, powdered milk, sugar, salt, vitamins, and minerals that is mixed with water and cooking oil and has proven to be a successful resource for feeding the severely malnourished. ■

leading into the isolated village and restrictions placed on missionary travel, baptism remained something the nonmembers only read and dreamed about.

Realizing the people's sincere desire, Brother Souza traveled six hours to Iquitos, the capital city in the region, and spoke to the stake president of the area about the situation. The stake president, along with the nearest missionaries, planned a way to provide the loyal followers from San Regis the opportunity to be baptized.

Nauta, a town situated on the edge of the Amazon and 58 miles (93 km) from Iquitos, served as the meeting point since it was the closest the missionaries could get to San Regis. This meant a perilous boat ride through dense jungle and predator-infested waters for the San Regis believers. However, upon hearing the news of the missionary meeting, many in San Regis desired to make the trip despite the danger. With room in the boat for only 15, Brother Souza and his son went with 13 selected

Aid Brings Hope to City in Iraq

After a hot Iraqi summer filled with drought, dust storms, and devastating suicide bombings in Tal Afar, Iraq, a timely donation to local elementary schools gave students new school supplies

and hope for the future.

The effort was the result of a large donation by the Church. More than 3,000 boxes of school supplies, baby clothes, hygiene kits, and toys were donated, helping the

local children prepare for the new school year and aiding many of their families as well. The school supplies included notebooks, pencils, scissors, and a bag for the children's schoolbooks. ■

Young Adults Travel the Amazon for the Gospel

Wading in a murky river, home to piranhas and anacondas, 15 travelers acted quickly to remove the water from their sinking handcrafted wooden boat. When it was empty, they reboarded and continued to navigate on faith and hope through the rough Amazon River waters.

The dangerous boat ride from San Regis, a village tucked in the densely packed Amazon rainforest of northeastern Peru, to the closest city missionaries could reach was a four-hour voyage toward salvation—

the travelers had come to hear the gospel of Jesus Christ and be baptized.

Reaching their destination wet, but hungry to hear about the restored gospel of Jesus Christ from the full-time missionaries, seven youth and young adults received the saving ordinances for which they had waited for years.

Each week for the previous three years, 30 people attended the Church meetings held at Miguel Souza's house in San Regis. Other than Brother Souza and his son, David, none of the

villagers at the Sunday services were baptized members of the Church. With no roads



Thirteen investigators traveled four hours by boat on the Amazon River in Peru to hear the missionaries. Seven were baptized; the others returned home with the goal to continue preparing.

PHOTOGRAPH BY JAKE BRANDENBURG

youth and young adults to Nauta.

Obstacles immediately sprang up for those making the journey. People of other faiths in the village tried to persuade them to give up their dreams, telling them they were being duped and that they were already baptized and did not need baptism again.

Undaunted, they made the voyage, surviving the Amazon and a nearly capsized boat.

After learning from the missionaries over two days, the group went to a remote lagoon in the Peruvian jungle, where the seven who were ready received the ordinances of baptism and confirmation.

A day later the travelers made the long journey back to their remote village, where others would prepare for a future opportunity to make the same voyage toward salvation. ■

Mexico City Temple Rededicated

President Thomas S. Monson formally rededicated the Mexico City Mexico Temple on November 16, 2008, after 19 months of renovation. President Henry B. Eyring, First Counselor in the First Presidency, also attended the rededication.

After functioning without interruption for 25 years, the

temple closed its doors on March 31, 2007, for remodeling. In October the temple opened for a public open house. Guided tours were offered from October 20 through November 8, 2008, excluding Sundays. Latter-day Saints from the region then attended two dedicatory sessions.



Mexico City Mexico Temple.

The temple serves approximately 264,000 members of the Church who live in Mexico City and the states of Mexico, Guerrero, Guanajuato, Morelos, Baja California Sur, Michoacán, Hidalgo, Puebla, Querétaro, and San Luis Potosí.

The Mexico City Temple was the first of 12 temples constructed in Mexico and was originally dedicated on December 2, 1983.

The history of the Church in Mexico City traces back to 1875, when President Brigham Young sent Daniel

Jones along with a small group of missionaries to Mexico City, where they distributed brochures to several Mexican leaders. One of these brochures fell into the hands of Plotino Rhodacanaty, who later became the first member of the Church in Mexico. In November 1879 the Church's first branch in Mexico City was organized with Brother Rhodacanaty as branch president.

Currently, the Church has 212 stakes and approximately 1,120,000 members throughout the country. ■

Comment

Hopeful Help

Even though I am not single, I enjoyed reading the article "Single and Steadfast: Lessons in Hope" in the August 2008 *Ensign* (p. 20). Not only did the principles taught there help me in my own life, but they helped me better understand what my 16-year-old daughter was going through. As she had not been asked out to an upcoming dance, I was able to help her maintain a more positive outlook about herself and the situation. We discussed that even though she wasn't going to the dance, she was still a righteous, lovable person and the opportunity may present itself in the future. I am thankful the article was published at just the right time to help me better counsel my daughter. I am sure it will be beneficial in the years to come as my other children grow up and experience similar issues. Thank you.

Dana Randall
Utah, USA

Something for Everyone

I'm a little behind on my reading (just finished the July 2008 issue). I found the article "Making Church Magazines" (p. 64) very informative. I would like you to know that I read every issue of the *Ensign* from cover to cover—even the articles that do not fit me personally—or so I thought. I have found something of value that I can use in my life in every article—even if at first glance the article did not seem intended for me. So don't worry about hitting everyone and all interests. You do that very well.

Also, the article by Elder M. Russell Ballard, "Sharing the Gospel Using the Internet" (p. 58), was very helpful. What a wonderful way to share the gospel for those who are shy and fear face-to-face discussions. I feel enlightened! ■

Lynda Sessions
Oregon, USA