

Progression

INTO RELIEF SOCIETY



Last year Sister Bonnie L. Oscarson, Young Women general president, and Sister Linda K. Burton, Relief Society general president, posted requests on their Church Facebook pages. They asked young women and Relief Society sisters, as well as parents, leaders, and teachers involved with helping young women, to share their experiences about progressing from Young Women into Relief Society. The two presidents received comments from around the world.

Many young women expressed excitement about being surrounded by strong women, while others held back.

Following are some of the comments about making the progression from Young Women into Relief Society easier. They are arranged into two groups: (1) What can we do in Young Women? and (2) what can we do in Relief Society?



In Young Women:

1. ATTEND RELIEF SOCIETY OPENING EXERCISES.

Many Relief Society leaders invited the young women to opening exercises once a month and the Laurels to a lesson occasionally.

Jill, a Relief Society leader, shared what her ward does. She wrote: “We challenge young women to sit next to a Relief Society sister before the meeting and ask her about her life. It helps young women see that Relief Society sisters aren’t that different from them.”

2. GET TO KNOW EACH OTHER IN SOCIAL SETTINGS.

“I distinctly remember helping do the dishes at a funeral luncheon,” wrote Rachel, a young woman. “I got to talk and laugh with the other sisters who were in the kitchen, and I felt like part of the group. They expressed their confidence in me. That was a huge moment for me.”

Bekah, a Relief Society sister, took the initiative to get to know the young women. She wrote: “I use social media to befriend the youth and get to know

the things they love. As a result, we became friends.”

3. LEARN FROM WOMEN WHO LOVE RELIEF SOCIETY.

“I grew up in a town outside Stockholm, Sweden. My mother was single,” wrote Britt-Marie. “I was almost 13 the year my mother and I were baptized. When Mom attended Relief Society night meetings, she brought me along so I wouldn’t be at home alone. When I finally turned 18, I knew and loved every sister.”

Paula wrote, “As a convert at 14, I made an effort to serve the widows, single mothers, and less-active sisters. Soon they were inviting me into their homes for family activities. As a result, on my first Sunday in Relief Society, I felt I had a roomful of mothers.”

“My mother, grandmother, and aunts shared their testimonies through their examples,” wrote Lindsey. “They included me in service projects. I couldn’t wait to officially join Relief Society. The transition wasn’t abrupt. Relief Society is where I felt I was always going.”

4. SET THE EXAMPLE.

“I was super excited to go to Relief Society,” said Emily. “I think it was in part due to the fact that I always felt close to my Young Women leaders. They treated me with a lot of respect. I didn’t have any hesitations joining the Relief Society sisters because I assumed it would be the same way with them, and it was.”

“I wish my Young Women leaders had talked to me more about Relief Society and the love and sisterhood found there,” wrote Marisa.

“The leaders have a big impact on the way young women see Relief Society as a whole,” wrote Tessa. “I think it is important for Young Women leaders to encourage young women toward Relief Society and for Relief Society sisters to be welcoming.”

“I wish my Young Women leaders hadn’t made Relief Society sound like a boring place,” wrote Amanda. “As a result, that is how I felt going into it.”

In Relief Society:

5. MAKE THE TRANSITION MORE THAN A ONE-TIME EVENT.

While many Relief Society presidents do something special to acknowledge a young woman on her first day in Relief Society, comments showed that leaders also realized that the progression into Relief Society is ongoing.

Raquel, a Relief Society leader in Brazil, shared what her presidency did: “(1) We gave each young woman a welcome kit on her first Sunday. This was always a happy moment. (2) As a presidency we did some training with them so they knew they could come to us. (3) We suggested that young women not be

called to Primary or Young Women immediately.”

6. MAKE LESSONS APPLICABLE TO ALL SISTERS.

“I had grown up engaging in deep gospel conversations with my mother,” wrote Christy, “and I found that Relief Society was often closer to those kinds of conversations.”

Jillian wrote: “I had yearned for spiritual insight and appreciated getting it.”

“I struggled to relate to the lessons and with sisters who seemed so much older than me,” wrote Marisa.

“I was excited to hear perspectives of women who could share with me a vision of our mortal purpose that I hadn’t seen yet,” wrote Emily.

7. SIT BY A FRIEND ON SUNDAY.

“I didn’t have a family member to sit with,” wrote Lacey, a young woman. “Having sisters just say ‘Hi’ to me or sit with me made a huge difference.”

Kelly, a Relief Society sister, stated it simply. She wrote: “If someone doesn’t feel welcome, it’s hard to continue attending.”



Sadly, Nikki was one sister who felt uncomfortable. What she wrote reminds us that there is always more we can do. “In situations like mine, some are lost to inactivity. Relief Society needs to be a place where we can embrace sisters of all ages, regardless of who they are or what they’ve done.”

Crystal cried on her first day. She wrote: “My former Young Women leader put her arm around me and invited me to sit with her. I was with wives, mothers, and grandmothers. I shared my feelings, and they listened. For the first time I felt the strength of being part of a group of women striving to be more like Christ. I felt so blessed to be a part of this worldwide organization.”

8. GIVE YOUNG WOMEN OPPORTUNITIES TO SERVE.

“I was asked to play the piano for our Sunday meetings,” wrote Amy. “Knowing I was needed helped me develop a bond with the sisters. It’s like what President Gordon B. Hinckley (1910–2008) said about new members in the Church needing a friend, an assignment, and nourishment by the good word of God [see ‘Find the Lambs, Feed the Sheep,’ *Ensign*, May 1999, 108]. I needed the same things.”

A new Relief Society sister, Cate, wrote: “I came to learn that I had an important role in Relief Society after I was called as an instructor. I have learned a lot. I am not married yet, but I feel I am ready for marriage and motherhood thanks to Relief Society.”

Charlotte, a young woman, took the initiative. She wrote: “I have looked for service opportunities because I rarely have the opportunity to attend Sunday Relief Society meetings. However, service opportunities have been abundant and taught me the meaning of Relief Society.”

9. KNOW THAT YOU ARE WELCOME AND WANTED.

Brooke wrote, “The simple desire of the women in my ward to ask us questions about what was important to us was huge. I realized that although these women had different life experiences than I did, we still had the same basic hopes, dreams, and fears.”

Robyn, however, had a difficult time. “I was new and the only one my age that was in Relief Society,” she wrote. “At first I felt I didn’t belong.” But Robyn kept going with her mom. “Slowly I got to know the women and grew to love Relief Society and visiting teaching.”



Deborah wrote:

“I knew I was a Relief Society sister when Bonnie, my Relief Society president, asked me to assist her in cleaning a sister’s apartment. The sister had lived in poverty and then died unexpectedly. As we gently sifted through what had been a difficult end to her life, we came across the sister’s bridal portrait. There, smiling up at us, was a stunning, bright-eyed brunette in her white satin bridal gown. Quietly Bonnie said, ‘This is how we’ll remember her.’ I felt a love for a sister that I had not met in mortality. We were Relief Society sisters. Bonnie and I finished the day with tears and a hug.”

Let us truly become a “circle of sisters,” as President Boyd K. Packer (1924–2015), President of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles, tenderly referred to us as sisters in Relief Society. Let us build on what we have in common. Our progression from Young Women to Relief Society is God’s path for us as His daughters to grow and develop. Truly, as the Relief Society motto says: “Charity Never Faileth” (see 1 Corinthians 13:8). ■