

# News of the Church

## The Church's Humanitarian Efforts: Discipleship in Action

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The Gospels are filled with accounts of the Savior healing the sick, the blind, and the lame. Also abundant in the scriptures is the Lord's invitation to follow Him, to do His works, and to become as He is. Doing so requires that we too have compassion—that we seek to bless and to heal, to lift burdens, and to ease pain and suffering.

This seeking is the driving principle behind the Church's humanitarian efforts around the world—efforts that are funded largely by the freewill offerings of Church members with the same desire.

In recent years millions of people in more than 100 countries have been blessed by Church humanitarian initiatives that bring clean water to remote villages, provide mobility to those who cannot walk, help prevent or treat blindness, save the lives of

*The Church's efforts to follow the Savior include humanitarian aid meant to be both far-reaching and long-lasting.*

struggling newborns, immunize against disease, and help improve crop yields and nutrition.

### Clean Water

Water for drinking, cooking, hygiene, and irrigation is scarce in many parts of the world. Often it is gathered a few gallons at a time from rivers, ponds, or shallow wells contaminated with parasites and disease. Time spent obtaining water keeps many adults from more productive activities that could help feed a family.

Those involved in the Church's clean water projects not only provide safe water systems but also construct sanitation facilities and teach basic hygiene practices. Depending on local conditions, the clean water may come from a new borehole well sunk into an aquifer, from a hand-dug well that is lined and covered, or from springwater that is captured and piped to a community.

Local contractors complete the projects using labor donated by those who will receive the water. Local water committees manage the systems, which are designed to be sustainable for generations. Matt Heaps, manager of the clean water initiative, said, "In reality, our projects are more about people than water systems. Everything is done with an eye to helping individuals and communities become self-sustaining."

Since 2002, 235 projects in 54 countries have brought clean water to more than five million people.

### The Gift of Mobility

For those unable to move about freely on their own, receiving a wheelchair, a walker,



or a prosthetic limb is like being given wings. Education, work, church attendance, socializing, and serving others all suddenly become possible.

Unfortunately, in many parts of the world, even the most basic mobility devices are unavailable or unaffordable. By providing such equipment, Latter-day Saint Charities removes a physical barrier that keeps many people from reaching their potential. By partnering with local organizations and buying from regional manufacturers where possible, the wheelchair initiative ensures that recipients have the equipment that best meets their needs. It also helps to ensure that those who get a wheelchair can get follow-up therapy and that parts and knowledgeable people are available for equipment maintenance. In the past nine years, more than 300,000 people have gained greater mobility through this program.

### Vision Treatment

Some of the blindness in the world today can be treated, corrected, or halted with medical procedures. The Church's vision treatment initiative works to improve vision care and prevent eye problems by providing equipment and training through short-term specialists. These specialists give local medical professionals the equipment, supplies, and training they need to care for their patients long after the specialists have left the country. In Mongolia, for example, local medical personnel who were trained through the vision treatment initiative are now performing free diabetic retinopathy screenings.

### Neonatal Resuscitation

A baby's first cry is music to the mother. But too often, in too many places, instead of a cry and the glad voice of a nurse or midwife, there is only silence due to a blocked airway. It's tragic, because using an inexpensive bulb syringe and proven rescue breathing techniques, doctors, nurses, and midwives can often save struggling newborns who would otherwise die.

The Church's neonatal resuscitation training (NRT) initiative uses short-term specialists to train local doctors, nurses, and midwives in NRT techniques. The program requires each person who participates to provide the training to other birth attendants in their area.

This train-the-trainer method allows lifesaving knowledge and supplies to quickly cross boundaries of language and culture. Medical communities are improved, birth attendants no longer watch helplessly when a newborn struggles to draw breath, and families are blessed. Liz Howell, an international health coordinator with LDS Charities, said, "It truly is a life-changing and a lifesaving program."

### Health and Strength

Diseases that no longer threaten children in developed nations still rage in many countries. Measles is one of the leading causes of death of young children, according to the World Health Organization.<sup>1</sup>

Hunger and malnutrition are also prevalent,

#### THE RESULTS OF REACHING OUT

Initiative	Projects	Countries	Beneficiaries
Clean Water (since 2002)	235	54	5,271,607
Wheelchairs (since 2001)	626	106	302,236
Vision Care (since 2003)	72	41	214,545 (trained or treated)
Neonatal Resuscitation Training (since 2003)	145	70	112,999 (trained or treated)
Food (since 2007)	20	11	343,668

stunting the physical and mental development of children and greatly increasing their susceptibility to diseases such as measles. According to the United Nations Food and Agriculture Organization, “undernourishment and deficiencies in essential vitamins and minerals cost more than five million children their lives every year.”<sup>2</sup>

In 2003 the Church joined the international Measles Initiative and Partnership. In addition to financial contributions, the Church has played a significant role in organizing, promoting, and conducting local vaccination campaigns using Church volunteers. Since 2003, approximately 56,000 Church members have provided more than 600,000 hours of service in 32 nations. Since 2001, the Measles Initiative and Partnership has vaccinated 600 million children and youth. Measles deaths worldwide have decreased from 750,000 in 2000 to 197,000 in 2007.<sup>3</sup>

The Church’s humanitarian efforts have always included helping to feed the hungry. But now chronic hunger and malnutrition are also being addressed by a food initiative that teaches communities in both rural and urban areas how to grow vegetables and to raise small animals for protein. Many of the techniques being taught are based on years of research by the Benson Institute, which became part of Latter-day Saint Charities in 2007.

Initiative manager Wade Sperry said that when people’s physical health improves, their emotional and spiritual health improves as well.

### Following Jesus Christ

When they see suffering and need in the world, followers of Christ instinctively desire to help. These humanitarian initiatives

provide an organized and effective way for Church members to act on their desire to follow the Savior’s admonition: “Verily, verily, I say unto you, this is my gospel; and ye know the things that ye must do in my church; for the works which ye have seen me do that shall ye also do; for that which ye have seen me do even that shall ye do” (3 Nephi 27:21).

#### NOTES

1. See World Health Organization, Fact Sheet no. 286, <http://www.who.int/mediacentre/factsheets/fs286/en/>.
2. Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations, “Undernourishment around the World 2004,” [http://www.fao.org/docrep/007/y5650e/y5650e03.htm#P26\\_3460](http://www.fao.org/docrep/007/y5650e/y5650e03.htm#P26_3460).
3. See “Members Assist with Measles Initiative,” *Liahona*, Feb. 2010, 76; *Ensign*, Jan. 2010, 77.

## Tabernacle Choir Marks Anniversary of First Recordings

By Richard E. Turley Jr.

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A century ago this month, the Mormon Tabernacle Choir and organ were first recorded in the Tabernacle on Temple Square. To mark the anniversary, the choir has released a three-disc set, *100: Celebrating a Century of Recording Excellence*, including selections from its 100-year history of recorded music.

Today, many would agree with famed director Eugene Ormandy, who said, “The Mormon

Tabernacle Choir is the greatest choir in the world.”<sup>1</sup> But in the first few decades after it was formed in the mid-19th century, the Tabernacle Choir remained largely unknown because few people around the world had heard it perform. Then in 1909—32 years after the invention of the phonograph—the Columbia Phonograph Company agreed to

