

Called to Serve: **You**

By Heather Whittle Wrigley

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The First Presidency of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints has asked all Church units to commemorate the 75th anniversary of the Church welfare plan by organizing their own day of service during 2011.

“The service may be undertaken at any time during the remainder of this year, and its length may be flexible depending on the service rendered,” a letter from the First Presidency read.

The call to serve comes on the heels of President Henry B. Eyring’s conference talk during the Saturday morning session of April general conference.

“The feelings of unity will multiply the good effects of the service you give,” President Eyring, First Counselor in the First Presidency, said. “And those feelings of unity in families, in the Church, and in communities will grow and become a lasting legacy long after the project ends” (“Opportunities to Do Good,” *Liahona* and *Ensign*, May 2011, 25).

The First Presidency offered guidelines for members planning service projects, including inviting community members and full-time missionaries to become involved and designing projects so that families and individuals can participate. Publicizing the projects to raise awareness and interest was also encouraged.

Many wards, branches, districts, and stakes have already answered the call. Some service crews donned yellow Mormon Helping Hands shirts while others just rolled up their sleeves, but from donating blood to sprucing up community buildings, the response by members has been overwhelming.

Elder Walter F. González of the Presidency of the Seventy presides over Church affairs in the North America Southeast Area. He first challenged every congregation in his area to give a day of service in 2009.

Every year since then members in the southern United States have organized annual days of service. Elder

González said he is happy to see that congregations throughout the Church will have that opportunity this year.

“We serve because it’s a Christlike attribute, and it’s an opportunity to become a little like Him, to cultivate an *attitude* of service—a habit of serving by nature,” he said. “As we serve without consideration for religion or denomination or race, our helping hands will become linking hands, cultivating relationships with the community.”

In Jacksonville, Florida, USA, 11 congregations answered the call to serve by donating food and giving blood on April 16. Several LDS meetinghouses were used as drop-off locations for food donations, while others were staging places for blood donations.

Chainsaw-wielding members of the Jonesboro Ward in Georgia, USA, gathered at the Stately Oaks Plantation, legendary site where the movie *Gone with the Wind* was filmed, on May 14 to haul broken branches.

The last week of April, Saints in California and Hawaii, USA, joined with community volunteers for the annual Mormon Helping Hands Day.

In San Diego, California, USA, 150 volunteers helped clean 3,000 headstones at the Fort Rosecrans Memorial Park, a veterans’ cemetery.

Latter-day Saints in Palos Verdes, California, USA, partnered with a nonprofit organization called Clean San Pedro to sweep and clean the streets and sidewalks in the central area of San Pedro, collecting over one ton (900 kg) of refuse and litter.

The head of Clean San Pedro, Steve Kleinjan, said, “We love to work with this church. They always have such a good turnout of volunteers.”

Members of the Charlotte North Carolina (USA) South Stake answered the First Presidency’s call for a day of service during 2011 by partnering with a local charity to put on a welcome basket item drive.



Editor's note: The Church Welfare Department is gathering stories of members who are participating in a day of service during 2011 in response to the First Presidency's call. To share your experiences, go to providentliving.org, click on **75 Years of Self-Reliance and Service**, then on **Day of Service** in the left margin, then on the **share** button under "Share your Service Activity."



More than 2,000 paper bags with a list of much-needed items were placed throughout the community. A week later, nearly 130 volunteers spent 150 hours collecting the bags and donating the items to families transitioning from homelessness to new housing.

Primary children from the ward made "Welcome Home" signs for the families.

In Georgia, USA, the Griffin Ward came together on Saturday, May 21, to scour the inside and outside of a local homeless shelter, the House of Hope.

In Clinton, Missouri, USA, Latter-day Saints met to spruce up the Jackson Zoo, mulching flower beds, painting, and repairing equipment.

Elder González emphasized that members' service will bless both those within the Church and those who are not members.

"There are so many different ways to serve and create links with the community," he said. "And as we serve others, we will also see the hand of the Lord in the lives of our members." ■

Members in California, USA, clean up their city.