

## 6.

# Welfare Principles and Leadership

## 6.1

### Purposes of Church Welfare

The purposes of Church welfare are to help members become self-reliant, to care for the poor and needy, and to give service.

In 1936 the First Presidency outlined a welfare plan for the Church. They said: “Our primary purpose was to set up . . . a system under which the curse of idleness would be done away with, the evils of a dole abolished, and independence, industry, thrift and self respect be once more established amongst our people. The aim of the Church is to help the people to help themselves. Work is to be re-enthroned as the ruling principle of the lives of our Church membership” (in Conference Report, Oct. 1936, 3).

#### 6.1.1

##### Self-Reliance

Self-reliance is the ability, commitment, and effort to provide the spiritual and temporal necessities of life for self and family. As members become self-reliant, they are also better able to serve and care for others.

Church members are responsible for their own spiritual and temporal well-being. Blessed with the gift of agency, they have the privilege and duty to set their own course, solve their own problems, and strive to become self-reliant. Members do this under the inspiration of the Lord and with the labor of their own hands.

When Church members are doing all they can to provide for themselves but cannot meet their basic needs, generally they should first turn to their families for help. When this is not sufficient or feasible, the Church stands ready to help.

Some of the areas in which members should become self-reliant are outlined in the following paragraphs.

#### 6.1.1.1

##### Health

The Lord has commanded members to take care of their minds and bodies. They should obey the Word of Wisdom, eat nutritious food, exercise regularly, control their weight, and get adequate sleep. They should shun substances or practices that abuse their bodies or minds and that could lead to addiction. They should practice good sanitation and hygiene and obtain adequate medical and dental care. They should also strive to cultivate good relationships with family members and others.

#### 6.1.1.2

##### Education

Education provides understanding and skills that can help people develop self-reliance. Church members should study the scriptures and other good books. They should improve in their ability to read, write, and do basic mathematics. They should obtain as much education as they can, including formal or technical schooling where possible. This will help them develop their talents, find suitable employment, and make a valuable contribution to their families, the Church, and the community.

#### 6.1.1.3

##### Employment

Work is the foundation upon which self-reliance and temporal well-being rest. Members should prepare for and carefully select a suitable occupation or self-employment that will provide for their own and their families' needs. They should become skilled

at their work, be diligent and trustworthy, and give honest work for the pay and benefits they receive.

#### 6.1.1.4

##### **Home Storage**

To help care for themselves and their families, members should build a three-month supply of food that is part of their normal diet. Where local laws and circumstances permit, they should gradually build a longer-term supply of basic foods that will sustain life. They should also store drinking water in case the water supply becomes polluted or disrupted. (See *All Is Safely Gathered In: Family Home Storage*, 3.)

#### 6.1.1.5

##### **Finances**

To become financially self-reliant, members should pay tithes and offerings, avoid unnecessary debt, use a budget, and live within a plan. They should gradually build a financial reserve by regularly saving a portion of their income. (See *All Is Safely Gathered In: Family Finances*, 3.)

#### 6.1.1.6

##### **Spiritual Strength**

Spiritual strength is essential to a person's temporal and eternal well-being. Church members grow in spiritual strength as they develop their testimonies, exercise faith in Heavenly Father and Jesus Christ, obey God's commandments, pray daily, study the scriptures and the teachings of latter-day prophets, attend Church meetings, and serve in Church callings and assignments.

#### 6.1.2

##### **Members' Efforts to Care for the Poor and Needy and Give Service**

Through His Church, the Lord has provided a way to care for the poor and needy. He has asked

Church members to give generously according to what they have received from Him. He has also asked His people to "visit the poor and the needy and administer to their relief" (Doctrine and Covenants 44:6). Church members are encouraged to give personal compassionate service to those in need. They should be "anxiously engaged in a good cause," serving without being asked or assigned (see Doctrine and Covenants 58:26–27).

The Lord has established the law of the fast and fast offerings to bless His people and to provide a way for them to serve those in need (see Isaiah 58:6–12; Malachi 3:8–12). When members fast, they are asked to give to the Church a fast offering at least equal to the value of the food they would have eaten. If possible, they should be generous and give more. Blessings associated with the law of the fast include closeness to the Lord, increased spiritual strength, temporal well-being, greater compassion, and a stronger desire to serve.

Some opportunities to care for those in need come through Church callings. Other opportunities are present in members' homes, neighborhoods, and communities, such as those coordinated by JustServe (in the United States and Canada, see JustServe.org). Members can also help the poor and needy of all faiths throughout the world by supporting the Church's humanitarian efforts, by participating in disaster response through Mormon Helping Hands (where applicable), and by individual efforts to serve others in need.

Providing in the Lord's way humbles the rich, exalts the poor, and sanctifies both (see Doctrine and Covenants 104:15–18). President J. Reuben Clark Jr. taught:

"The real long term objective of the Welfare Plan is the building of character in the members of the Church, givers and receivers, rescuing all that is finest down deep inside of them, and bringing to flower and fruitage the latent richness of the spirit, which after all is the mission and purpose and

reason for being of this Church” (in special meeting of stake presidents, Oct. 2, 1936).

### 6.1.3

#### The Lord’s Storehouse

In some locations the Church has established buildings called bishops’ storehouses. When members receive permission from their bishop, they may go to the bishops’ storehouse to obtain food and clothing. But the Lord’s storehouse is not limited to a building used to distribute food and clothing to the poor. It also includes Church members’ offerings of time, talents, compassion, materials, and financial means that are made available to the bishop to help care for the poor and needy. The Lord’s storehouse, then, exists in each ward. These offerings are “to be cast into the Lord’s storehouse, . . . every man seeking the interest of his neighbor, and doing all things with an eye single to the glory of God” (Doctrine and Covenants 82:18–19). The bishop is the agent of the Lord’s storehouse.

## 6.2

### Welfare Leadership in the Ward

#### 6.2.1

##### Bishop

The bishop directs welfare work in the ward. He has a divine mandate to seek out and care for the poor (see Doctrine and Covenants 84:112). His goal is to help members help themselves and become self-reliant.

The bishop’s counselors, the Relief Society president, the elders quorum president, and other members of the ward council assist the bishop in fulfilling these responsibilities.

The bishop maintains confidentiality about the welfare assistance that members receive. He carefully safeguards the privacy and dignity of members who

receive assistance. When he feels that other ward leaders can help members in need, he may share information according to the guidelines in 6.4.

More information about the bishop’s welfare responsibilities, including guidelines for administering assistance from fast-offering funds, is provided in *Handbook 1*, 5.2.

#### 6.2.2

##### Ward Council

In ward council meetings, the bishop teaches welfare principles and instructs council members in their welfare responsibilities. Council members consider spiritual and temporal welfare matters as follows:

They counsel together about ways to help ward members understand and follow principles of welfare.

They report on spiritual and temporal welfare needs in the ward, drawing information from personal visits and from ministering interviews. When information may be too confidential to share with the entire ward council, leaders speak privately with the bishop (see 6.2.3).

They plan ways to help specific ward members meet their spiritual and temporal needs, including long-term needs. They determine how to assist members who have disabilities or other special needs. They keep these discussions confidential (see 6.4).

They coordinate efforts to ensure that members who receive Church assistance have opportunities to work or give service. They compile and maintain a list of meaningful work opportunities. If Church welfare operations exist in the area, these operations may provide work opportunities and training for people who need Church assistance.

They compile and maintain a list of ward members whose skills might be useful in responding to short-term, long-term, or disaster-caused needs.

They develop and maintain a simple written plan for the ward to respond to emergencies (see *Handbook 1*, 5.2.11). They coordinate this plan with similar plans in the stake and community.

### 6.2.3

#### Ward Priesthood Executive Committee

The ward priesthood executive committee (PEC) has been discontinued. Agenda items for PEC meetings are now included in ward council meetings and, if needed for a sensitive issue, in expanded bishopric meetings.

### 6.2.4

#### Elders Quorum and Relief Society

Welfare is central to the work of the elders quorum and the Relief Society. In elders quorum and Relief Society presidency meetings, leaders plan ways to teach principles of self-reliance and service and to address welfare needs. Under the direction of the bishop, these leaders help members become self-reliant and find solutions to short-term and long-term welfare concerns.

#### 6.2.4.1

##### Short-Term Welfare Needs

As the bishop provides short-term assistance, he may give assignments to elders quorum or Relief Society presidencies.

The bishop normally assigns the Relief Society president to visit members who need short-term assistance. She helps assess their needs and suggests to the bishop what assistance to provide. The bishop may ask her to prepare a Bishop's Order for Commodities form for him to approve and sign.

The Relief Society president's role in making these family-needs visits is explained more fully in 9.6.1. For information on other short-term welfare

responsibilities that apply specifically to the Relief Society president and her counselors, see 9.6.2 and 9.6.3.

#### 6.2.4.2

##### Long-Term Welfare Needs

Many short-term problems are caused by long-term difficulties such as poor health, lack of skills, inadequate education or employment, lifestyle habits, and emotional challenges. Melchizedek Priesthood and Relief Society leaders have a special responsibility to help members address these concerns. Their goal is to address long-term concerns in ways that lead to lasting change.

As Melchizedek Priesthood and Relief Society leaders become aware of long-term needs, they respond compassionately to help individuals and families. They use resources available in their organizations and in the ward. They pray for guidance to know how to provide assistance.

To gain a better understanding of how to help, Melchizedek Priesthood and Relief Society leaders normally visit members who have welfare needs. They may use the Needs and Resources Analysis form or otherwise follow its principles to help members plan ways to respond to welfare needs.

As leaders help members respond to long-term needs, they counsel with the bishop. In some cases, Melchizedek Priesthood and Relief Society leaders work together.

#### 6.2.4.3

##### Reporting to the Bishop and Seeking His Continued Direction

The elders quorum and Relief Society presidents regularly report to the bishop on actions they and their organizations are taking to address short-term and long-term welfare needs in the ward. They seek the bishop's continued direction on their welfare efforts.

If individuals and families have short-term problems that they cannot resolve themselves and that elders quorum and Relief Society presidencies cannot resolve, these leaders inform the bishop immediately.

If the elders quorum or Relief Society presidencies learn of possible concerns with worthiness or sensitive family matters, they refer the members to the bishop.

#### 6.2.4.4

#### **Ministering**

Assistance with spiritual and temporal welfare often begins with those who serve as ministering brothers and sisters. In a spirit of kindness and friendship, these brothers and sisters help individuals and families. They report the needs of those they serve to their elders quorum or Relief Society presidencies.

#### 6.2.4.5

#### **Seeking Service from the Elders Quorum, Relief Society, and Others**

Elders quorum and Relief Society presidencies may seek the service of people whose skills or experience could help those in need. Members may provide short-term service such as providing meals or child care or sharing information about available employment. Members may also provide guidance to help with long-term welfare needs, such as health, sanitation, nutrition, preparing for a career, finding opportunities for education, starting a small business, or managing family finances.

After leaders ask others to provide assistance, they remain in contact with the needy individual or family to provide encouragement and to help in other ways as necessary.

Leaders may assist the bishop when he refers members to Church welfare operations such as bishops' storehouses, Church employment resource centers, Deseret Industries, and LDS Family Services.

Leaders may also help members receive assistance through community and government agencies.

#### 6.2.5

#### **Ward Welfare Specialists**

Welfare specialists serve as resources to help the bishopric and to help Melchizedek Priesthood and Relief Society leaders perform their welfare duties.

The bishopric may call an employment specialist to help members prepare for and find suitable employment. The bishopric may also call other welfare specialists to help members with needs such as education, training, nutrition, sanitation, home storage, health care, family finances, and the Perpetual Education Fund.

#### 6.3

### Welfare Leadership in the Stake

#### 6.3.1

#### **Stake President**

The stake president oversees welfare work in the stake. More information on his welfare responsibilities is provided in *Handbook 1*, 5.1.

#### 6.3.2

#### **Stake Council**

In stake council meetings, leaders consider spiritual and temporal welfare matters as follows:

They identify welfare concerns in the stake and seek ways to address those concerns. However, they do not assume responsibility to resolve ward welfare matters.

They plan ways to teach welfare principles to stake and ward leaders.

They discuss ways to make ward leaders aware of people in the stake who can serve as resources to help with welfare needs.

They develop and maintain a simple written plan for the stake to respond to emergencies (see *Handbook 1*, 5.1.3). This plan should be coordinated with similar plans of other stakes in the coordinating council and with plans in the community.

They plan welfare activities, taking care not to place undue burdens on ward leaders.

They plan ways to respond to stake welfare assignments.

When assigned by the Area Presidency, they provide leadership and support for a welfare operation.

If a bishop has been assigned to handle requests for assistance to people who are transient or homeless, members of the stake council determine how to make stake resources available to that bishop.

### 6.3.3

#### Stake Welfare Specialists

A member of the stake presidency or an assigned high councilor may call a stake employment specialist and other welfare specialists. These stake specialists serve as resources for bishops and other ward leaders. The specialists may help with welfare needs such as those listed in 6.2.5.

## 6.4

### Confidentiality

As the bishop and other ward leaders learn of members' welfare needs and assistance that has been provided, they maintain the confidentiality of that information. They carefully safeguard the privacy and dignity of members who receive assistance. They are careful not to embarrass members who need assistance.

There may be times when it would be helpful for the entire ward council, and perhaps other ward members, to know about the welfare needs of an individual or family. For example, when a member is unemployed or looking for a better job, others may be able to help the member find a job more quickly. In such cases, the bishop and other leaders generally seek the needy members' permission to share information about their situations.

When leaders ask others to help, they share only the information needed to fulfill the assignment. Leaders also instruct them to maintain confidentiality.