

QUALIFIED THROUGH CHURCH SERVICE

By Alice A. Lewis

“Church members are responsible for their own spiritual and temporal well-being,” states Handbook 2: Administering the Church. “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” ([2010], 6.1.1).

I was 57, newly divorced, with little work experience outside the home, and desperately in need of a job. I had raised four children, and here I was alone after 32 years of marriage with a bit of college behind me and great trepidation in front of me to have to find a job at my age.

I sat waiting to interview for a position as a scheduling and productions specialist with the county library district, all the while thinking I must be out of my mind to believe I was qualified for such a position. I had just convinced myself to get up and leave when the secretary suddenly said they were ready for me in the conference room. I felt sick but straightened up, said a silent prayer, and stepped forward.

Two articulate and professional people told me that experience in certain areas was vital for this

position and began to ask me about my experience. This job required a person who could make arrangements for large conferences, including announcements, invitations, catering, and cleanup. Did I have the experience needed? I was thinking I didn't when my mind suddenly captured an image of a stake Relief Society conference. I had been a counselor in the stake Relief Society presidency. From that experience I had learned how to organize large gatherings and shop for bulk food for large groups. I could honestly say I had experience doing exactly what was required.

The interviewers continued: “Are you proficient on the computer? You will be corresponding with patrons and will be required to keep a schedule of conference room use.” All I could think of was how grateful I was

to all the people who had taught me to use the computer so I could create the ward bulletin and calendar and write the stake newsletter. Yes, I was proficient on the computer.

“You will be expected to develop programs and provide classes for the public. Would you be able to teach classes to children and adults?” they asked. All those home-making and Cub Scout crafts I had done sprang to mind. I explained that I had taught classes to children and adults my entire adult life. I knew I was creative and artistic and felt sure I could come up with interesting programs for children and adults.

I was thrilled when I got the position. I loved the work and tried to do as I would in a Church calling: magnify my work, go the extra mile, and not whine about overtime.



A LIFETIME INVESTMENT

“The Church may call upon you to make sacrifice. It may call upon you to give of the very best that you have to offer. There will be no cost in this, because you will discover that it will become an investment that will pay you dividends for as long as you live.”

President Gordon B. Hinckley (1910–2008), “Life’s Obligations,” *Liahona*, May 1999, 6; *Ensign*, Feb. 1999, 4.

I developed computer classes in English and recruited a young student to teach the classes in Spanish. I taught arts and crafts classes and hosted numerous authors and prominent speakers. I decorated the library for every holiday and displayed related books.

One day someone called me at work, claiming to be from the governor’s office and wanting to know if I would be interested in a position as the governor’s assistant. I laughingly asked, “Who is this?” He explained that the call was legitimate and invited me to come the next day for an interview. I went with a sinking feeling that it could be a joke. It wasn’t. The interview went well, and I was hired on the spot.

In my new job I used the skills I had gained from years of speaking in church. The governor could not

attend all the events to which he was invited; therefore, his staff members were expected to speak in his place. All those talks in church and from serving in leadership positions had given me the experience I needed to speak in public alongside senators, local and national dignitaries, and celebrities. I served as the governor’s assistant for seven years until we both retired.

Where would I have been without the wide range of experience I had received while serving in Church callings? All that I have learned as a servant of the Lord in His Church has given me a life rich with blessings. Not only was I helping others while serving, but I was also growing by leaps and bounds. I am deeply grateful for the gospel and have a solid testimony of the value of service in the Church. ■