

News of the Church

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Relief Society Sisters around the World Celebrate 170th Anniversary

By Lok Yi Chan

Church News and Events

To honor the 170th anniversary of the organization of Relief Society, sisters around the world are actively participating in service and other activities that engage them in the work of the organization.

In February, the Relief Society general presidency issued an invitation to sisters worldwide, suggesting eight possible ongoing activities for celebrating the anniversary—which took place on Saturday, March 17, 2012. The activities can be planned under the direction of local priesthood leaders.

And sisters around the globe have responded. What follows are brief highlights from some of the celebrations that have taken place throughout the Church.

Dominican Republic

Sisters from the Primavera First Branch of La Vega Dominican Republic District were reminded of the selflessness of women from early Latter-day Saint history and of their enduring legacy through the branch's celebration on March 17.

Each sister who participated

dressed in the style of pioneers and shared a message about Relief Society. María Elena Pichardo de Gómez, first counselor in the Relief Society presidency, reminded the sisters of their responsibility to prepare for difficult times, as taught by modern prophets. She added, “The great strength of the Primavera First Branch Relief Society is in how different we are but how we are united by the same gospel.”

Fiji

Following the counsel of the Relief Society general presidency to “organize Relief Society service in the community,” the Relief Society of the Samabula Ward of the Suva Fiji North Stake launched an ongoing project called “Making a Difference—Charity Never Faileth.” Each sister in the ward made a goal to perform an act of service, love, or kindness 170 times—all to different people—by the end of September 2012.

The ward also held an activity to help the sisters better understand and appreciate the lives and contributions of all Relief Society general presidents, from Emma Smith on.

Hong Kong

In Hong Kong, sisters from the New Territories Stake celebrated the Relief Society anniversary by reflecting on their personal and Relief Society histories.

They organized an exhibit, themed “Pursuit of Grace,” in which they showcased old missionary photos, family records, paintings, and handicrafts made at previous Relief Society activities, including lanterns and peacocks made of red paper pockets, embroidery work, key chains, and wallets.

Kenya

In the Bamburi Branch of the Kenya Nairobi Mission, Relief Society sisters donated the money they would have spent on an activity and instead purchased kitchen utensils and other items the branch needed. After thoroughly cleaning the local meetinghouse, the sisters of the ward assembled for a time of reflection on the creation of Relief Society in 1842, using and discussing resources from *Daughters in My Kingdom: The History and Work of Relief Society*.

“The thought of being part of this worldwide organization of Relief Society is special,” said Irene Kioi, second counselor in the Relief Society presidency. “It gives me the assurance that [Relief Society] is



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ordained of God and not men.”

In the Mombasa Branch, sisters studied about female disciples of Jesus Christ from *Daughters in My Kingdom* and the New Testament. The branch’s Relief Society president, Jael Mwambere, said, “This is our first anniversary for the Mombasa Branch Relief Society. It is my hope that we may all start anew in our devotion to our duties in Relief Society. May we care for one another, attend our Church meetings, and help those in need, starting from today.”

The Republic of the Marshall Islands

On Saturday, March 17, hundreds of sisters from the Ajeltake Branch,

Laura Ward, and Long Island Majuro Ward of the Majuro Marshall Islands Stake met at Rairok, a town near the Majuro Atoll, at 4:30 a.m. The reason: they walked for an hour and a half to the Delap meetinghouse to demonstrate the virtue of endurance. They later met the sisters of the Delap and Rita Wards, who also walked to the meetinghouse, for a devotional and breakfast. Later the sisters performed skits and dances and listened to an address from the stake president.

Spain

The Dos Hermanas Ward of the Seville Spain Stake displayed an exhibit of the history of the ward’s

Relief Society and included a special book of photos of the service and activities the sisters have performed together over time.

María Pérez Sánchez, first counselor in the Relief Society presidency, said, “[Being] able to participate in the anniversary of this organization makes me feel closer to those pioneering women who sacrificed so much for us. And now, today, we can continue carrying out this work they undertook.”

The United States

In the Gardner Ward of the Springfield Massachusetts Stake, the sisters celebrated the 170th anniversary of Relief Society at a dinner held on March 15. The evening included presentations from four sisters, each of whom spoke about a woman who had influenced her life positively. Each speaker also brought a small display highlighting her presentation.

“This was an activity that promoted the strength and worth of women,” said Jennifer Whitcomb, Relief Society president, “and also encouraged us to see the strengths, commonalities, and worth in each other.”

Although the anniversary itself has passed, the invitation for sisters to engage in service and other celebratory activities is ongoing throughout 2012. ■