

# Update

## Welfare Service Missions

No single males or couples with children at home need apply, but females and retired couples may apply for eighteen-month mission assignments in the six areas of personal and family preparedness defined by the Church: physical health, literacy and education, career development, financial resource management, social and emotional and spiritual strength, and home production and storage. The present Welfare Services Missions replace the Health Missions begun in 1971.

Welfare Services missionaries are called in the customary fashion and assigned according to requests from mission presidents around the world. Curiously, there does not seem to be a great demand for these specialists, for Welfare Services reports it is able to fill virtually every request and at present there are only 393 such missionaries in the field, compared to 26,000 proselyting missionaries.

Since the program concentrates on preventive rather than curative medicine, there are no physicians presently in the field. Instead there are 95 nurses, 42 with health services background; 33 social workers and 2 counselors; and 37 educators, with 4 in career development, 16 in vocational work, 15 in home economics, 12 in business and finance, and 19 "other." By far the largest group (118) is in agriculture. South and Central America have 173 missionaries, 135 are in the United States and Canada (usually assigned to Indian reservations), and 85 serve in the Pacific.

After three years in development, twenty-eight standardized discussions will soon be available to Welfare Services missionaries, covering a broad range of subjects to be adapted to local conditions. Welfare Services emphasizes that the missionaries do not initiate programs, but serve as a resource for local priesthood leadership.

## Discrimination Perceived

On June 4, five days before the historic announcement extending the priesthood to all worthy male members, the *Salt Lake Tribune* published a poll of 600 adult Utahns. Over three-fourths said they

perceived "none at all" or only "a little" racial discrimination in Utah.

Interestingly, 40% of the non-Mormons "criticized discriminatory practices" in the state, while only 14% of the Mormons perceived discrimination as a problem.

## Church Enters Entertainment Industry

Church-owned Bonneville International Corporation, which operates television stations in Seattle and Salt Lake and radio stations in New York, Los Angeles, Chicago, Seattle, Dallas, Kansas City, Salt Lake City, and San Francisco, has announced the creation of a new subsidiary, BEI Productions, Inc. Headquartered in Los Angeles, BEI will produce commercial movies, television specials, and other entertainment productions. BEI president James B. Conkling was the founder-president of Warner Brothers Records, former president of Columbia Records, and vice president of Capitol Records and CBS.

One of BEI's first projects will be a major budget motion picture on the life of Joseph Smith. According to Bonneville president Arch L. Madsen, top professional performers, directors, writers, cinematographers, and staff members have already been contracted.

## BYU and Justice Reach Accord

On June 8, BYU and the Justice Department signed an agreement resolving the alleged discriminatory housing practices of the university. Justice will not oppose BYU's requiring all single students to live in university-approved housing. Non-student housing complexes or wings of complexes, however, must allow both male and female renters, while student housing complexes continue to be strictly segregated. Syndicated columnist James J. Kilpatrick summed up the agreement: "Brigham Young conceded, though no concession was truly required, that its rules for students could not be imposed upon non-students. The department conceded that although the Fair Housing Act prohibits sex discrimination in all circumstances, the act does not prevent sex discrimination in every case. . . . It is

wonderful, believe me, what victories our government can achieve when it tries."

## BYU's Project Guatemala

In 1973 BYU initiated a project to improve living conditions in Mexico. The project was later transferred to Guatemala to assist in the aftermath of the 1976 earthquake. Each year 44 students trained in nutrition, agriculture, home improvement, and literacy spend the summer in Guatemalan homes working with families and small groups. Last year the students built frame houses, planted 91 gardens and began an on-going employment agency. Over 50 adults were taught to read, and parents were instructed in nutrition and health care.

## Prayer Circles Discontinued

In May the First Presidency sent a circular to all priesthood leaders: all prayer circles are to be discontinued. Considered by some to be the most spiritual gatherings held in the Church, monthly prayer circles will be deeply missed by those fortunate enough to have participated in them.

Typical of many prayer circles were those held by the Salt Lake Stake. At 6:30 a.m. on the first Sunday of each month the stake presidency, high council, patriarch, stake clerks and selected bishops and quorum leaders met in a sealing room of the Salt Lake Temple. Dressed in temple clothing, circle members sang, prayed, bore testimonies, and listened to brief sermons. Led by the Stake President, the group would then stand together in a large circle and rehearse parts of the endowment ceremony. A prayer roll would be placed on an altar and a prayer would be offered in behalf of the stake's needy and afflicted.

Following the order of prayer circles held in the Nauvoo Temple, Brigham Young conducted weekly prayer circles with the Apostles and other Church leaders in Salt Lake City. Some of the earliest circles were held on Ensign Peak and later in the Endowment House. Stakes and wards, especially those in areas far from a temple, organized prayer circles to keep in touch with the temple endowment. The Salt Lake Stake prayer circle met continuously from 1887.

Though such circles are now officially discontinued, prayer circle rooms in church towers and basements and in a few structures such as the Prayer Circle Building in Malad, Idaho, and the "Endowment House" in Spring City, Utah, remain to remind us of this once traditional Mormon practice.