

Relief Society Best Practices

Synopsis

Purpose

The Prophet Joseph Smith taught that the purpose of Relief Society is to save souls and relieve suffering. Additionally, members of the Relief Society work together to help accomplish the work of salvation and exaltation. They serve others, fulfill covenant responsibilities, build unity, and learn and live doctrine.

Responsibilities of Members of the Relief Society

- 1- Attend Sunday meetings and activities (help when possible or when assigned and come prepared to participate)
- 2- Support members in living the gospel of Jesus Christ. Emphasize exercising faith, repenting, increasing in self-reliance, and making covenants with God by receiving ordinances.
- 3- Reach out and love those in need by seeking ways to serve others in the ward and community.
- 4- Help members understand the importance of teaching the gospel in the home and encourage all members to do so.
- 5- Fulfilling Ministering assignments by
 - a. Truly knowing the sisters they minister to
 - b. Understanding the sisters needs and helping with them
 - c. Seeking and acting on promptings for the sisters
 - i. A ministering sister is entitled to receive revelation for the sisters she is assigned
 - d. Reporting needs of the sisters to the Relief Society Presidency
- 6- Constantly look for those sisters who need help
 - a. Act on promptings, be the first to serve, and report needs to the Relief Society Presidency

Sunday Meetings

- 1- Relief Societies meet on Sundays to strengthen faith, build unity, and strengthen families and homes.
- 2- Meetings are held on the second and fourth Sundays of the month and last 50 minutes.
- 3- The Relief Society presidency plans these meetings. A member of the presidency conducts.

Relief Society Presidency

- 1- Each presidency member should spend time praying and pondering about their calling. Listen and act upon the promptings received.
- 2- The President serves on the Ward Council (when unable to attend, she assigns a counselor to attend)
- 3- Plan Sunday meetings
 - a. Prayerfully select talks from the most recent general conference to discuss based on sisters' needs.
 - b. Rotate prayer assignments so everyone has the opportunity to pray if they want it.
- 4- Plan activities
 - a. Activities should strengthen sisters and give them opportunities to serve together.
 - b. Most activities are held at times other than on Sundays or Monday evenings.
 - c. The President oversees these activities.
 - a. She may ask a counselor or another sister to take the lead in planning and carrying them out.
 - b. Presidencies discuss activities with the bishop as part of their planning.
- 5- Ministering
 - a. Assign Ministering companionships to each sister (preferably 2 sisters)
 - a. Coordinate assignments with the Elders Quorum presidency and seek the bishop's approval.
 - b. Hold quarterly Ministering Interviews
- 6- Missionary, Temple and Family History Work (a counselor may be assigned to oversee this)
 - a. With the help of the Elders Quorum presidency
 - a. Lead efforts in the ward to invite all to receive the blessings of the gospel.
 - b. Lead temple and family history work in the ward.
- 7- Individual Meetings
 - a. Meet with each member individually at least yearly to discuss the well-being of the sister and her family.
- 8- Presidency Meetings (held regularly)

Relief Society Best Practices

Detail

Purpose (Handbook 9.1.1)

- 1- Relief Society is a divinely instituted organization for all adult women in the Church. The Prophet Joseph Smith taught that the purpose of the Relief Society is to save souls and relieve suffering. He stated that the Church of Jesus Christ was not fully organized until the sisters were so organized.
- 2- Members of Relief Society work together to help accomplish the work of salvation and exaltation. They serve others, fulfill covenant responsibilities, build unity, and learn and live doctrine.
- 3- The motto of Relief Society is “Charity never faileth”

Membership (Handbook 9.1.2)

- 1- Relief Society is a lifelong sisterhood. All adult sisters 18 and older are members of Relief Society. They are members even if they cannot attend Relief Society meetings.
- 2- A young woman may begin attending Relief Society when she turns 18. She counsels with her parents and bishop about the timing. By age 19 or when moving from home, such as to attend a university or serve a mission, she should participate in Relief Society.
- 3- Married women under 18 are also members of Relief Society.

Responsibilities

- 1- The Work of Salvation and Exaltation (Handbook 9.2)
 - a. God invites all to come unto Christ and participate in the work of salvation and exaltation by:
 - i. Living the gospel of Jesus Christ.
 - ii. Caring for those in need.
 - iii. Inviting all to receive the gospel.
 - iv. Uniting families for eternity.
 - b. Relief Society leaders plan Sunday meetings, activities, ministering, service, and other interactions to help women participate in the work of salvation and exaltation. Members of the Relief Society and elders quorum work in unity to accomplish this work.
- 2- Living the Gospel of Jesus Christ (Handbook 9.2.1)
 - a. Relief Society leaders support members in living the gospel of Jesus Christ. They emphasize exercising faith, repenting, increasing in self-reliance, and making covenants with God by receiving ordinances. Such ordinances include the temple endowment.
- 3- Encourage Gospel Learning in the Home (Handbook 9.2.1.1)
 - a. When members learn and live the gospel at home, their conversion to Heavenly Father and Jesus Christ deepens. Relief Society leaders encourage sisters to study the scriptures and the words of living prophets, individually and with their families.
- 4- Caring for Those in Need (Handbook 9.2.2)
 - a. As followers of Jesus Christ, sisters have a responsibility to reach out in love to those in need. Individually and as a Relief Society, they seek ways to serve others in the ward and community.
- 5- Ministering (Handbook 9.2.2.1 – 9.2.2.2)
 - a. Ministering is caring for others as the Savior would. Sisters receive ministering assignments from the Relief Society presidency.
 - b. Ministering sisters seek to understand and respond to the needs of those they serve.
- 6- Short Term Needs of Sisters
 - a. Ministering sisters seek to understand and respond to the needs of those they serve. Members may need short-term assistance at times of illness, births, deaths, job loss, and other circumstances.
 - b. When needed, ministering sisters ask the Relief Society presidency for help. The presidency may recommend calling a service coordinator to organize these efforts (see 9.3.4).
 - c. The Relief Society and elders quorum coordinate efforts to address short-term needs (see 22.3.2). The bishop may provide fast-offering assistance if needed.

Sunday Meetings (Handbook 9.2.1.2)

- 4- Relief Societies meet on Sundays for the following purposes:
 - a. Strengthen faith.
 - b. Build unity.
 - c. Strengthen families and homes.
 - d. Make plans to help accomplish the work of salvation and exaltation.
- 5- Meetings are held on the second and fourth Sundays of the month. They last 50 minutes. The Relief Society presidency plans these meetings. A member of the presidency conducts.
- 6- The meeting begins with a presidency member conducting any business. For example, the sisters may counsel together about aspects of accomplishing the work of salvation and exaltation. Sufficient time should then be given to meaningful gospel instruction and discussion.
- 7- Relief Society meetings focus on topics in one or more talks from the most recent general conference. The Relief Society presidency prayerfully selects messages to discuss based on sisters' needs. Hymns may be sung to enhance a lesson. Meetings should end with a prayer.

Activities (Handbook 9.2.1.3)

- 1- Relief Society presidencies may plan activities. These activities strengthen sisters and give them opportunities to serve together. Most activities are held at times other than on Sundays or Monday evenings.
- 2- The Relief Society president oversees these activities. She may ask a counselor or another sister to take the lead in planning and carrying them out (see 9.3.4). Presidencies discuss activities with the bishop as part of their planning.

Relief Society Presidency (Handbook 9.3.2.2)

- 1- The Relief Society president has the following responsibilities. Counselors assist as assigned by the President.
 - a. Serve on the ward council. She serves as (1) a member of the council who helps address needs in the ward and find solutions and (2) a representative of the Relief Society.
 - b. Lead the Relief Society's efforts to participate in the work of salvation and exaltation.
 - c. Organize and oversee the service of ministering sisters. Coordinate ministering assignments with the elders quorum presidency, meeting at least quarterly. Seek the bishop's approval for ministering assignments. Hold ministering interviews at least quarterly.
 - d. Under the bishop's guidance, counsel with adult members of the ward. Only the bishop counsels ward members about matters of worthiness, abuse, and approval to use fast-offering funds.
 - e. With the elders quorum presidency, help lead efforts in the ward to invite all to receive the blessings of the gospel.
 - f. With the elders quorum presidency, help lead temple and family history work in the ward.
 - g. Coordinate the Relief Society's efforts to strengthen young adult sisters in the ward (single and married).
 - h. Meet with each member of Relief Society individually at least once a year. Discuss the well-being of the sister and her family.
 - i. Teach sisters their covenant responsibilities.
 - j. Oversee and help improve teaching in the Relief Society.
 - k. Plan and conduct Relief Society meetings.
 - l. Oversee Relief Society activities.
 - m. Help young women prepare to participate in Relief Society.
 - n. Oversee Relief Society records, reports, and finances. A secretary may help.

Presidency Meetings (Handbook 9.3.2.3)

- 1- The Relief Society presidency and secretary meet regularly. The president conducts these meetings. The agenda could include the following items:
 - a. Plan how to strengthen sisters and their families.
 - b. Plan how to help accomplish the work of salvation and exaltation.
 - c. Coordinate missionary work and temple and family history work.
 - d. Respond to counsel and assignments from the bishop.
 - e. Respond to assignments from ward council meetings.
 - f. Prayerfully consider ministering assignments.
 - g. Review information from ministering interviews. Plan ways to identify strengths and help meet needs.
 - h. Consider sisters to serve in Relief Society callings and assignments.
 - i. Plan Relief Society meetings and activities.

Additional Callings (Handbook 9.3.4)

- 1- The following additional callings may be helpful. The bishop and Relief Society president discuss whether they are needed.
 - a. Relief Society teachers to teach in Sunday meetings.
 - b. A service coordinator to help plan and carry out service to people in need. Assistants and committee members may also be called.
 - c. An activity coordinator to help plan and carry out Relief Society activities. Assistants and committee members may also be called.
 - d. Assistant secretaries to help the Relief Society secretary.
 - e. Ministering secretaries to organize ministering interviews and help prepare quarterly reports.

Sample Presidency Meeting Agenda

The President Presides

The person conducting may rotate through the Presidency and Secretary

1. Opening Prayer
2. Spiritual Thought
3. Review notes and action items from previous meeting (usually kept by the Secretary)
4. Review the Calendar
 - a. Next Sunday Meeting
 - i. Who is leading the discussion?
 - ii. Who is conducting?
 - iii. What announcements need to be made?
 - b. The Following Sunday Meeting
 - i. Who is leading the discussion?
 - ii. Who is conducting?
 - c. Next Activity
 - i. What is it and who is in charge?
 - ii. How are we advertising it? (communicate at least twice to everyone)
 - iii. What action items are outstanding
 - d. The Following Activity
 - i. What is it and who is in charge?
 - ii. How are we advertising it? (communicate at least twice to everyone)
 - iii. What action items are outstanding
5. Review Presidency Assignments
 - a. Ministering
 - b. Missionary, Temple and Family History Work
 - c. Activities
 - d. Other
6. Needs of the Members
 - a. Inspiration received about specific sisters
 - b. Who is not attending regularly?
 - c. Sisters who are struggling
 - d. Information received through Ministering Sisters
 - e. Annual meeting with each sister
 - i. Information received through these meetings
 - ii. Schedule of meetings for the next 1 or 2 months
7. Other
8. Training
9. Closing Prayer