

Inspired Words on an Inspired Work: What Speakers Said about Welfare

Several addresses during the 181st Annual General Conference of the Church were dedicated to the commemoration of the Church's welfare program, celebrating its 75th year.

Below are excerpts from speakers' talks focusing on the welfare program and the welfare principles set forth by the Lord to help His children help themselves.

President Thomas S. Monson

"I declare that the welfare program of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints is inspired of Almighty God." (See "The Holy Temple—a Beacon to the World," page 90.)

President Henry B. Eyring, First Counselor in the First Presidency

"Great temporal needs of the children of Heavenly Father have come again in our time as they have and as they will in

all times. The principles at the foundation of the Church welfare program are not for only one time or one place. They are for all times and all places."

"[The Lord] has invited and commanded us to participate in His work to lift up those in need. We make a covenant to do that in the waters of baptism and in the holy temples of God. We renew the covenant on Sundays when we partake of the sacrament." (See "Opportunities to Do Good," page 22.)

Bishop H. David Burton, Presiding Bishop

"The prophetic welfare plan is not merely an interesting footnote in the history of the Church. The principles upon which it is based define who we are as a people. It is the essence of who we are as individual disciples of our Savior and Exemplar, Jesus the Christ."

"This sacred work is not only to

benefit and bless those who suffer or are in need. As sons and daughters of God, we cannot inherit the full measure of eternal life without being fully invested in caring for each other while we are here on earth. It is in the benevolent practice of sacrifice and giving of ourselves to others that we learn the celestial principles of sacrifice and consecration."

"This is the sacred work the Savior expects from His disciples. It is the work He loved when He walked the earth. It is the work I know we would find Him doing were He here among us today." (See "The Sanctifying Work of Welfare," page 81.)

Silvia H. Allred, First Counselor in the Relief Society General Presidency

"Men and women of the Church participate jointly today in bringing relief to those in need. . . . When love becomes the guiding principle in our care for others, our service to them becomes the gospel in action. It is the gospel in its finest moment. It is pure religion." (See "The Essence of Discipleship," page 84.) ■

Perpetual Education Fund Fulfills Prophetic Promises

By Natasia Garrett
Church Magazines

Ten years ago President Gordon B. Hinckley (1910–2008) outlined a problem—the inability of many returned missionaries and other worthy youth in developing areas to escape poverty—and provided a solution: the Perpetual Education

Fund (PEF). A revolving fund that would be established using donations from members and friends of the Church, the PEF would supply educational loans to young people with the expectation that they would prepare for gainful employment in their communities and repay the loans so that others could have similar

opportunities. He said the Church would rely on volunteers and existing Church resources to succeed.

Miracles Brought to Pass

When President Hinckley stepped to the pulpit on March 31, 2001, and laid out a vision of the Perpetual Education Fund before the priesthood of the Church, it was evident to many that the Lord's prophet had received direction.

The potential for failure might have seemed to loom as the PEF's



PHOTOGRAPH BY BRIAN WILCOX

The Perpetual Education Fund, which began 10 years ago, has helped more than 47,000 participants.

newly appointed leaders rushed to begin providing loans by autumn of 2001, as President Hinckley had directed. Outside of the prophet’s inspired outline there existed no business plan, no detailed proposal. The program was organized using the text of President Hinckley’s conference talk as its charter. Hundreds of loan applications were flooding into Church headquarters even as directors were being called and the basic structure of the program was being formed.

But miracles were already taking place. Within the first year, millions of dollars were donated to the program. Several individuals whose backgrounds made them uniquely qualified for the work of the PEF were immediately available to serve as volunteer directors. The infrastructure necessary to support the PEF globally had already been laid in the form of Church Educational

System institute programs and Church Employment Resource Centers. Whatever was needed fell into place quickly, providing the program with what President Hinckley reported in April 2002 to be a “solid foundation.”¹

“President Hinckley’s invitation helps those who contribute to the PEF as well as those who [use it to] improve themselves to draw closer to our Savior.”

—Elder John K. Carmack

Rex Allen, currently serving as volunteer director of training and communications for the PEF, said, “Long ago, Moses stretched his staff over the Red Sea and the waters divided. President Hinckley mirrored

this same faith when he held his prophetic mantle over the dark sea of poverty and initiated PEF.”

“It is a miracle,” President Hinckley confirmed repeatedly.

After 10 years, though, the greatest miracles may be just beginning.

Promises Fulfilled

In his announcement of the PEF and in later addresses, President Hinckley promised several blessings would flow from the PEF. Each is being fulfilled with increasing momentum as more participants graduate from the PEF and repay their loans.

Opportunity and Employment

“[Participants] will be enabled to get good educations that will lift them out of the slough of poverty,” President Hinckley said.²

As of February 2011, nearly 90 percent of those who have sought

work after completing their schooling have found employment. Some 78 percent of those now employed say that their current employment is an improvement over what they had before receiving training. The average income after schooling for PEF participants is three to four times greater than income prior to schooling, representing a vast improvement in economic status.

Family and Community

“They will marry and go forward with skills that will qualify them to earn well and take their places in society where they can make a substantial contribution,” President Hinckley declared.³ Just over one-third of current PEF participants are now married.

Elder John K. Carmack, executive director of the PEF, says: “One of the most encouraging outcomes of the PEF so far is that we are seeing that young people gain more hope. This hope gives them the courage to get married and to move forward in their lives.”

As they do so, their growing families look forward to brighter futures.

Church and Leadership

“As faithful members of the Church, they will pay their tithes and offerings, and the Church will be much the stronger for their presence in the areas where they live,” President Hinckley said.⁴

In some areas where the PEF has been in operation for several years, as many as 10 to 15 percent of current Church leadership consists of PEF participants.

“Participants have encouraged other young people to use PEF loans and to break out of poverty,” said Rex Allen. “After 10 years we are seeing

the circle of hope expand as those who have been blessed share the blessings with others.”

Effects on the Lives of Many

“[The PEF] will become a blessing to all whose lives it touches—to the young men and women, to their future families, to the Church that will be blessed with their strong local leadership,” President Hinckley promised.⁵

More than 47,000 people have participated in the PEF since fall 2001. That’s not counting the extended families that are supported and inspired by family members participating in the PEF, the wards and branches that benefit from members who have a greater capacity to serve and contribute, and the local economies that need skilled workers to grow.

“Imagine the impact as you consider all who are affected,” Brother Allen said. “This extends to those who donate to the PEF—the donors, their families, their wards and branches—all are blessed by their contributions.”

“Within the grasp of almost all Latter-day Saints is the ability to give something regularly to this fund and to other worthy endeavors,” Elder Carmack said. “President Hinckley’s invitation helps those who contribute to the PEF as well as those who [use it to] improve themselves to draw closer to our Savior.”

Continuing Growth

President Hinckley’s prophetic vision of the Perpetual Education Fund has been realized as the influence of this inspired program continues to spread throughout the world, and it will continue to be realized in ever-greater numbers as

donations continue and loans are repaid, allowing a new generation of participants to improve themselves and their situations.

To learn more about the Perpetual Education Fund, please visit pef.lds.org. ■

NOTES

1. Gordon B. Hinckley, “The Church Goes Forward,” *Liahona*, July 2002, 4; *Ensign*, May 2002, 6.
2. Gordon B. Hinckley, *Liahona*, July 2002, 4; *Ensign*, May 2002, 6.
3. Gordon B. Hinckley, *Liahona*, July 2002, 4; *Ensign*, May 2002, 6.
4. Gordon B. Hinckley, “The Perpetual Education Fund,” *Liahona*, July 2001, 62; *Ensign*, May 2001, 52.
5. Gordon B. Hinckley, *Liahona*, July 2001, 62; *Ensign*, May 2001, 52.

Call for Survey Participants

If you have ever wanted to influence the *Liahona* or *Ensign* and the millions who read the messages in the magazines, here’s your chance. The magazines are looking for members around the world who are willing to provide feedback and participate in a handful of simple online surveys each year. If you would like to participate, please e-mail liahona@ldschurch.org or ensign@ldschurch.org and put “Magazine Evaluation” in the subject line. Volunteers must have Internet access and be able to communicate in English, Portuguese, or Spanish. Your feedback will help the magazines better meet the needs of readers around the world. ■