



NATIONAL COMMISSION ON MILITARY, NATIONAL, AND PUBLIC SERVICE

MEMORANDUM FOR THE RECORD

Subject: Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints representatives' briefing
March 15, 2018

The following is a record of a meeting between the Commission and the participants listed below, which took place on March 15, 2018, at the Crystal City office of the Commission. The conversation was moderated by Chairman Joe Heck. All Commissioners present at the March meeting were also present for this conversation, and other Commission employees observed at least part of the meeting. Please note that the following is not a verbatim transcript of the discussion.

Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-Day Saints (LDS) representatives:

- Elder Kevin Calderwood, member of the Sixth Quorum of the Seventy, Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-Day Saints (LDS)
- Sister Sydnee Calderwood, North America Northeast JustServe Specialist

Key Takeaways:

The discussion included the following topics of interest:

- LDS inculcates a life-long focus on service among members of the church, starting with children as young as 3 years old.
- Approximately 40 percent of young people ages 18 to 24 within the LDS community participate in a mission, with a slightly higher rate among men (who are “expected” to serve) and a slightly lower rate among women (who are “encouraged” to serve). There are also opportunities for married couples to serve jointly.
- The church uses a “center-based” model for training missionaries, where they spend time at one of 15 locations around the world before their deployment. Most missionaries evangelize, but some are specifically service-centric (building wells, assisting with emergencies, etc).
- The accessibility of the JustServe website, which links individuals to service opportunities in a user-friendly format, as a means of promoting volunteerism is a best practice.

Follow Up:

Sister Sydnee Calderwood indicated that they could provide data from the JustServe website, both for the immediate region and the United States. RAW team to follow up at an appropriate time.

Meeting Discussion:

The Calderwoods opened the meeting by overviewing some key elements of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-Day Saints, including:

- There are no paid clergy (all services are led by volunteers)
- There are 70,000 missionaries ages 18 to 24 across the world, serving for 18 months to two years
- Missionaries fund their own trips, which typically cost \$10,000 - \$12,000

They overviewed their presentation by outlining the major points they intended to address, which are in bold below, and by introducing their backgrounds.

1) How does the LDS church inspire an ethos of service in young people, manage such an expansive missionary/service program, and pay for it?

The Calderwoods explained that the church instills a culture of service from an early age. They shared the example from their experience leading the New York South mission together for three years, during which Hurricane Sandy occurred. At that time of the hurricane, they had 220 to 240 young men and women serving as missionaries at the New York South mission, all of whom were able to support recovery efforts for about four months after the storm. The Calderwoods showed a video to demonstrate the work of the missionaries they led during this time.

Steve Barney observed that many people may be aware of LDS missions, but may be less aware of the service orientation of these missions. The Calderwoods explained that in most cases, missionaries go out in to the community to evangelize each week of their mission, but that service components are incorporated into their schedule. He also mentioned LDS prioritizes “serving quietly.”

Chairman Joe Heck reflected on the fact that LDS families do a lot to showcase service to children and wondered how it is possible to inspire an ethos of service in young people if it is not a focus within their families. Elder Calderwood responded, “There is nothing like putting that young person side-by-side with someone who is serving.” He referenced an interfaith council on service in which he participates. In his opinion, while the council releases many press releases to encourage folks to serve, he would prefer a stronger focus on participation in service projects. Sister Calderwood acknowledged that an ethos of service would have to be the product of a cultural shift and recommended developing and releasing multiple public service announcements (PSAs) on service. She explained her initial response to the question, “How does the LDS church inspire an ethos of service?” was “I don’t know, we just do!” Both Calderwoods reiterated the desire for and positive impact of action, not words.

Ed Allard asked them to share their stories about getting started in service. At this point, the Calderwoods showed a video and song targeted to young children ages 3+ to raise their awareness of what going on a mission means. Sister Calderwood explained that children as young as 3 years old are asked to speak in “Primary” [child-centric portion of Sunday worship services] and develop early skills that will assist them as older church members. She also

explained that from a very early age, children see their parents volunteering their time at church, reiterating that all LDS clergy are lay clergy.

Steve Barney wondered about the language and terminology surrounding service in LDS households and among youth, specifically wondering whether it is construed as “opportunity,” “requirement,” or an “obligation.” He further explained that the role of the Commission is to inspire an ethos of service in a secular society. Elder Calderwood explained that service is simply expected, observing that very few individuals like to be ‘forced’ to do something. At this time, he reflected on his own missionary experiences. Sister Calderwood added to this, explaining that while service is “expected” among young men, it is “encouraged” among young women. They affirmed that those who do not serve are not “shunned,” and explained that approximately 40 percent of LDS youth participate in a mission, with the share of women increasing.

2) What are some of the lessons and best practices that the LDS church has learned through managing such a program?

The Calderwoods explained that the age for serving missions has recently been dropped from 19 to 18 years old for men, and from 21 to 19 years old for women. At the time that the age minimum was reduced, the number of young people serving missions surged to about 80k; however, this surge has ended, and there is now a steady representation of 70K individuals in missions worldwide. Approximately 40% of men serve missions.

Avril Haines asked how the options for service are formally presented. The Calderwoods explained that when a young person is ready to begin the process, they “start their papers” and interview with their local bishop and state president. Once these rigorous interviews are complete, an applicant “sends in” his or her papers, which are reviewed by the church’s quorum of the 12. The Quorum decides where each applicant will be serving. The applicant will receive a letter with the location of his/her mission, which is typically opened in the presence of family. Sister Calderwood described that the family typically celebrates the assignment, noting that is likely a “cultural thing.”

Tom Kilgannon references the Commission’s mission to review women’s participation in the Selective Service, and asks why missionary expectations are different for men and women—and what about the LDS church encourages this? Sister Calderwood explained that, in the LDS church, only men hold the “power of the priesthood,” and that serving as a priest requires having served as a missionary. She acknowledged that this may not always seem fair in the secular world.

Tom Kilgannon asks who the LDS church looks to as an example for high-quality service programs. Elder Calderwood explained that this is an area in which other groups tend to look to the LDS church, adding that they run 15 service training centers around the world.

Chairman Joe Heck asks whether the Calderwoods think that more than 40 percent of young people would serve if the requirement to self-fund were lifted. Sister Calderwood explains that the LDS church finds a way to send anyone who wants to serve on a mission, so it’s unlikely that

this they would attract a significantly higher number of people by explicitly removing this barrier.

Ed Allard asks what inspires the missionaries to pay for their service. Elder and Sister Calderwood acknowledged that missions are hard work, but that those people generally interested in service just want to “get busy.” They noted that this model might not translate directly to a nationwide effort.

Janine Davidson asks if the mission is perceived to be a rite of passage or stepping stone for youth. The Calderwoods affirmed that the mission program is particularly aimed at young people, but that anyone can “raise their hand to serve” on a mission, and that the church encourages service in all aspects of one’s life.

Steve Barney asks whether the LDS church would have any moral objection to women’s participation in the Selective Service System or serving in active-duty roles. Sister Calderwood explained that it is a LDS principle to follow the laws of the country in which they reside and that love of country is taken very seriously. If it were law to have women register, they would have no religiously-motivated problem with that. Elder Calderwood concurred. They also explained that for some church leaders, notably WWII-era clergy, that their military service substituted for time on mission.

3) What is, and what could be, the LDS missionary program’s interaction with existing or future programs of service in the United States.

The Calderwoods then introduced a program entitled JustServe.

The Calderwoods mention two studies that the LDS church has commissioned: one about the perceptions of Mormons in the United States, and one about service outcomes. The perceptions study showed that individuals who know a Mormon tend to be open to the LDS Church, while those who do not know any Mormons are more likely to be suspicious of LDS. Both studies showed that the LDS church might benefit from investing in community outreach. This, in part, motivated the launch of [JustServe](#) in 2011, initially in San Jose. JustServe expanded to the Northeast in 2015. JustServe connects service opportunities to any individual who wants to get involved. It is a not-for-profit endeavor and is project-based (they do not support fundraising or overt political activities). JustServe is both a site and an app, which is highly filterable, including by geography, types of service, age range of volunteers and more. It is not limited to the U.S., but rather is intended to expand globally. According to Sister Calderwood, JustServe has helped to match over 100,000 volunteers and averages 4-5 years to take root in a community.

JustServe is a sponsor of [Day to Serve](#), which launched in VA, WV, MD, and DC. This initiative represents a partnership between the LDS church and other communities of faith with their respective states’ governors/mayors.

Alan Khazei asked whether the church has thought about raising its voice in support of “service for everybody” or about partnerships, including with Service Year Alliance? Chairman Joe Heck asked how they spread the message of service outside of the church, and how the Commission and the LDS church can use one another to amplify this message. Tom Kilgannon

asked if the system is ready to deploy in the hypothetical situation that all public schools in the country wanted to use this to find service opportunities. Sister Calderwood said that even though JustServe has only two paid staff (software engineers), it is ready to be deployed on a national level and should be “the volunteer platform for our world.” Both Calderwoods reiterated that the LDS church is not looking for formal recognition due to their emphasis on quiet service, and they pride themselves on having been “stealthy” so far. Sister Calderwood observed that the will to serve is in everyone, but that creating a culture shift from the country’s current outlook and approach to one focused on service will be the challenge. She also says that service should not be about pitying people.

Avril Haines asked if there are any metrics that they use to track how organizations are using this or other outcomes. Sister Calderwood explained that they do track number of volunteer hours for participating organizations, and that she would be willing to pull nationwide and Capital-region data. She explained further that some of the most robust areas for participation are Ohio, Rochester, NY, and southern Canada. Finally, she suggests that it would be interesting to study how cities respond to a time-limited call to service for the benefit of “urban renewal.”

Tom Kilgannon asked whether what LDS has done could be done at all public schools in the country. Sister Calderwood responded that it would take a culture shift. Elder Calderwood emphasized the importance of teaching core values in the family. Sister Calderwood agreed, noting that kids learn by watching adults. She suggested an idea to help generate a commitment to service among young people might involve having a large service project geared towards families and children 8 years old and up – for example, an inner-city renewal project partnering with Habitat for Humanity. The children would have an opportunity to see what their own hands accomplished. Elder Calderwood added to this, suggesting the project could be a showcase that could then be rolled out more broadly around the country. He noted that through JustServe, LDS could generate 120,000 volunteers—not limited to members of the LDS church—for such an effort.