

Sister Patricia P. Pinegar

President Hunter, President Hinckley, President Monson, thank you for this opportunity to share my testimony and my feelings of joy, gratitude, and responsibility for being called to serve the Primary children of the Church.

Redwoods hold each other up

I have appreciated what Elder Wirthlin has taught us. I have also had an experience similar to his.

Several years ago while my husband, Ed, and I were serving in the England London South Mission, there was an unexpected storm. All night the winds raged. When morning came we ventured from the mission home to see the damage. It was devastating. Many trees throughout our garden, the neighborhood, and all of southern England had been uprooted. It was amazing to see the fallen trees with their gigantic root systems, still intact, jutting into the air. I came to the conclusion that because of the "easiness of the way" (Alma 37:46)—rain is plentiful in England—the trees had no need to sink their roots deep into the earth to get the nourishment they needed. Their roots were not strong enough or deep enough to withstand the hurricane-force winds.

On the other hand, the giant redwood trees that grow in northern California also have a very shallow root system. But when they are surrounded by other redwood trees, the strongest, fiercest wind cannot blow them over. The roots of the giant redwood trees intertwine and strengthen each other. When a storm comes, they actually hold each other up.

May I share with you some personal examples and thank those people who have been as the giant redwoods in my life, those who have been an example of caring and teaching, those who have intertwined their roots in mine and

helped me stand firm as they taught me through their words and their lives.

Gratitude to family

I feel deep gratitude to my mother, who allowed me to be responsible and didn't always fix my mistakes. To my father, who is soon to be eighty-nine years old and is living with us, thank you, Dad. Thank you for teaching me as the scriptures counsel, "only by persuasion, by long-suffering, by gentleness and meekness, and by love unfeigned; . . . reproof betimes with sharpness, when moved upon by the Holy Ghost; and then showing forth afterwards an increase of love" (D&C 121:41, 43).

The strongest intertwining roots in my life are those of my companion and sweetheart, Ed, who is supernally righteous. He has taught and encouraged me, exemplifying President Hunter's prayer "that we might treat each other with more kindness, more courtesy, more humility and patience and forgiveness" (quoted in *Ensign*, July 1994, p. 4).

To my children, who are a part of my roots, who are a brightness of hope in my life—thank you for helping me stand tall with gladness because you are trying.

I am a happy grandmother. Thirteen of our seventeen grandchildren are Primary and pre-Primary age. They will help teach me about Primary and children. They can be my hands-on training. Could there be a better calling for a grandmother than to love and strengthen children?

Gratitude to auxiliary leaders

May I offer a sincere expression of gratitude to you, my brothers and sisters, who have strengthened me by forgiving me when I have disappointed you.

There are many others in my life who have encouraged me and allowed

me to connect with their strengths. My deep gratitude to President Janette C. Hales, the Young Women presidency, board, and staff who have shared their wisdom and insights, who have more than loved and supported me these last two years. To Michaelene Grassli, Betty Jo Jepsen, Ruth Wright, and the Primary board, thank you for your devotion and untiring efforts to encourage all members of the Church to focus on what is best for the children.

Gratitude to Saints

When I was ten or eleven years old, I became the Primary organist in the ward in Hawaii where I grew up. That is one of my most vivid Primary memories. I remember being very nervous. I remember making many mistakes. But I remember even more clearly that the Primary leaders cared more about me than about the mistakes I made.

I thank the community of Saints, the ward family of Saints, who, throughout my life, have provided "safe places"—places where I was able to be taught, to have experiences, to practice, and to eventually better understand and live the principles of the gospel.

Teach the children

One day as Ed and I were maneuvering the streets of England, he turned to me with tears in his eyes, and he said, "Look." I turned and saw a child on the side of the road. And then he said, "Who will teach the children?" That thought will not leave my mind or my heart. Who will teach the children? Who will teach the child who asks, "Will Heavenly Father really answer my prayer?" Who will teach Kate when at five years of age she asks, "Why do we need Jesus?" Who will teach the children? Please, will you? Will you? Will you help teach the children?

Since my call I've knelt and asked, "Father, what do you want the children to be taught?"

Teach and show the children that Heavenly Father loves them and has confidence in them because they are his children.

Teach and show them that they do need Jesus, our Savior, our guide. Help them understand and accept his love and trust him and follow him. Teach them that our prophet, President Howard W. Hunter, has said, "We should at every opportunity ask ourselves, 'What would Jesus do?' and then be more courageous to act upon the answer." He also said, "We must know Christ better than we know him; we must remember him more often than we remember him; we must serve him more valiantly than we serve him" ("He Invites Us to Follow Him," *Ensign*, Sept. 1994, p. 5).

Teach the children that at eight years of age, when they are baptized and receive the Holy Ghost, they will be responsible for their choices. Teach them that they will be tempted, but as they listen to the still, small voice of the Holy Ghost, he will help them with their choices.

We can teach the children these gospel truths and all of the truths of the plan of happiness that Heavenly Father wants his children to understand and live. Family home evening can be one of those safe and loving places where the Spirit is felt. With eight children in our home, I also have vivid memories that family home evening wasn't always easy. Remember other opportunities for teaching: family prayer, family scripture study (don't give up!), in the classroom, in the hall, in the neighborhood.

Stand by children in life's storms

And please, will each one of you be as the stalwart and dependable redwood trees, connecting and intertwining your

roots of testimony, of faith, of love, of kindness and patience with every child? Their roots are not deep enough for them to stand alone in the storms of life. They need us—every one of us—parents, teachers, leaders, youth, brothers, sisters. They need you.

And now I look to the future. How grateful I am for the principle of presidency, and for Sister Anne Wirthlin and Sister Susan Warner. "In the multitude of counsellors there is safety" (Proverbs 11:14). We will stand together in unity as we support our priesthood leaders and help parents teach and strengthen children.

To the Primary children of the world, I want you to know that there are many people you don't even know who love you and care about you, who want you to be safe, be happy, and feel peace. I love you and would want you to feel "encircled about . . . in the arms of his love" (2 Nephi 1:15) and my love. Listen carefully to every good thing you hear about Heavenly Father and Jesus our Savior and then try your very best to follow him by doing what he wants you to do.

All of us can be like the giant redwood trees and support and strengthen each other, especially the children, that when storms arise we can actually hold each other up. In the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

President Monson

We have just heard from Elder Joseph B. Wirthlin, a member of the Council of the Twelve Apostles, and Sister Patricia P. Pinegar, general Primary president. I might say, Sister Pinegar, that for many years President Howard W. Hunter was the member of the Twelve who was an adviser to the Primary. You have a friend in court, and as Elder LeGrand Richards often said, one friend in court is better than a hundred friends in the courtyard.

Yesterday we thanked Sister Grassli and her counselors as they were released, and we of course have sustained a new Primary presidency. We should really take this opportunity to express our gratitude to the husbands of the sisters who serve in the auxiliary organizations. Without your support, brethren, your dear wives could not do nearly the work that they do. You are as silent redwood trees, sustaining each one of your companions, and we're very grateful to you.

The choir and congregation will now join in singing "High on the Mountain Top." And then Elder Rex D. Pinegar, a member of the Presidency of the Seventy, will speak to us.

The choir and congregation sang "High on the Mountain Top."

Elder Rex D. Pinegar

It's been a blessing to be here and listen to the instruction we've received. It's a special privilege to welcome these men and to bid farewell for a time to those who will be leaving us. We're grateful for the valiant service these men have rendered.

President Hunter, I love you and sustain you with all my heart and soul,

as do all the Seventy. We declare to all our testimony of the reality of Jesus Christ and of your calling as His prophet at this time.

"What we need is home teachers"

I first met President Howard W. Hunter in 1967 when I reported to his