

Over 140 years ago in Farmington, Ut concern was rising about the children of the church. The church had established the Relief Society, Young Men's Literary Association, Young Ladies Mutual Improvement Association, and a brass band. Still, there was not a specific organization for the children to teach them the basic principles of the church.

Aurelia Rogers was a member and saw a rising issue with the young boys in the area. They were becoming more and more mischievous. She was impressed to speak with Eliza R Snow about it after a Relief Society conference in March 1878. Eliza R Snow agreed to talk to the church leaders about it, and, shortly after that, permission was granted to start a new organization for the children. On August 11, 1878, Aurelia Rogers was asked to preside over the Primary Association. She quickly went door to door to make as many kids aware of the new association as possible. On August 25, 1878, she had 115 boys and 100 girls attend their first meeting.

In the April 1978 conference session (marking the 100th anniversary) David B Haight shared,

*"When primary first began, there were no lesson books or outlines. Children were taught obedience, faith in God, prayer, punctuality, good manners, and the Word of Wisdom. Aurelia must have gained strength from reading: "Wherefore, be not weary in well-doing, for ye are laying the foundation of a great work. And out of small things proceedeth that which is great." ([D&C 64:33](#).)*

*He continues, primary will continue fulfilling its goal of enriching the lives of children — blessing not only their individual lives but the lives of their families and friends. Every child needs to know that he has a Father in Heaven who loves him, to develop a faith in Jesus Christ, and to desire to live his gospel so as to meet the pressures and problems of today's world. Primary belongs to the children. Aurelia wrote: "Why should anything be allowed to come before the most sacred duty of parentage, that of looking after the spiritual welfare of the children? was the question which burdened my mind." (Rogers, p. 206.)*

*Though primary's responsibility is awesome, the parent challenge is even greater. In addition to harmful programs on television, there are drugs, child abuse, acceptance of violent acts, and child pornography. Research indicates that American children watch television one-half of their waking hours. By age twelve they will have watched the violent destruction of 18,000 human beings. By age twelve they will have spent 10,720 hours with television and only 352 hours in Primary if they had perfect attendance."*

Fast forward to August 2020. Our children have not been to primary since March. They have not been in singing time to feel the spirit their precious voices bring to the room. They have not been able to listen to their peers' talks, nor have they been given the growing opportunity to pray or share a talk in front of their friends, teachers, and leaders. They have not been able to learn more about the Book of Mormon from their teachers who were set apart to teach them, set apart to understand what each child needs in order to understand the teachings. My heart breaks when I think about our kids not being in primary. I pray regularly for each of your children that they will feel the spirit through other positive experiences during the weekly home-centered Come Follow Me lessons and from being ministered to by their primary teachers, leaders, choristers, etc.

I am in awe of some of the creative ways our children have been ministered to during these challenging times. For example, my 6-year-old daughter has received lesson handouts each week from her sweet primary teachers. She is given the opportunity to see her teachers weekly, even while social distancing and merely answering the door to accept the package. This kind of ministering is priceless to our younger kids who, in many cases, wouldn't even remember who their teacher was after this many months of not being with them.

Also, we have had our ministering sister and her daughter drop by monthly to check in not only on me but also on my daughter, bringing her something unique each time. Our ministering brother has also come by monthly to check on us and bring her a homemade treat. In all cases, we have maintained social distancing, but still felt the love of those assigned to minister to us. Again, these positive touches are impacting our daughter's testimony of ministering and showing love one to another.

I have heard of wards doing a drive-by ice cream social. Primary presidencies dropping flower growing kits off for each child, doing sidewalk chalk for birthdays, sending special gifts for children who chose to be baptized, heart attacking doors of the kids to remind them they are loved, etc. One ward did a virtual musical number to I Am a Child of God, which was posted for their entire ward to see. The list goes on and on of the random acts of ministering and kindness happening for our children.

In an article titled *Ministering to Youth and Children*, Brittany Beattie states

*"A loving Heavenly Father has given each of us unique talents, gifts, passions, and interests. These talents allow us to minister to those around us as we seek to become "of one heart and one mind" in following Jesus Christ ([Moses 7:18](#)). This includes our ministering efforts to children and youth.*

*Whether you're a Primary teacher, a youth leader, or a ministering brother or sister, or you simply interact with children and youth at church, you have the capacity to inspire, encourage, uplift, and help children and youth become all that Heavenly Father intends them to be.*

*Your encouragement and ministering can be part of Church-supported aspects of home-centered efforts, remembering that parents have the sacred, primary role for guiding and supporting their children's growth. That's true even if the parents aren't members of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints or if they aren't active in the church."*

Primary teachers, activity day leaders, choristers and pianists, ward members, please consider ways you can help minister to the children. Although we cannot have face to face lessons or activities, feeling the love of those they look up to is priceless in helping them learn to do *unto others* as you would have others *do* unto you.

I want to challenge parents to help their children learn to minister to others as well. Our children must gain a testimony of ministering to others early in life. How great it would be if our children learned at an early age what it means to give to others selflessly and were able to do so on the

school playground, during athletics, a dance class, or simply recognizing a smile will help cheer someone up. These efforts don't need to be grand in scale; they could draw pictures for the elderly in the ward, a local nursing home, or a teacher. With parents' help, they could go to someone else's house and do sidewalk chalk outside to help brighten their day. They could help make cookies for someone in the ward, or help clean up leaves for a neighbor after a storm. The easy efforts will help build their testimony line upon line.

I am thankful for the opportunity I have to serve the children of the stake. I am grateful that Heavenly Father has trusted me to work in the ward primary organization for many years. I know Heavenly Father has an individual plan for each of his children, and our job as parents, teachers, leaders, and ward members is to help teach them how to fulfill that plan. I am thankful for Aurelia Rogers, that she was concerned about the children of the church enough to make sure she expressed that concern to someone she knew would escalate it to the church leaders. I am thankful she was willing to start the organization from scratch over 140 years ago. I am grateful for our General Primary Presidencies today who help us know how we can influence our children and their testimonies at a very young age.

I know this church is true. I know the Book of Mormon was translated through Joseph Smith, and he was chosen by our Heavenly Father to do so. I know our Prophet, President Nelson, is charged with leading and guiding us today. I know he receives revelation on our behalf. I know if we listen to and heed his teachings, we will grow closer to our Heavenly Father and achieving eternal happiness.

In the name of Jesus Christ, Amen