

1,700 Pack Auditorium for Miners' Memorial

Special to The Tribune

CASTLE DALE, Emery County — Faith in God will overcome the loneliness and tragic sense of loss evoked by the Wilberg Mine disaster, a leader of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints said at a memorial service Wednesday for the 27 deceased miners.

President Gordon B. Hinckley, second counselor of the First Presidency, told more than 1,700 people packed into the Emery High School auditorium that last week's tragedy at the coal mine outside nearby Orangeville even had a positive aspect, bringing the people of the small mining communities in Emery and Carbon counties closer together.

"At this time, we are bound together

by a great burden of sorrow. All of us here and many thousands from around the nation and the world have appreciated in some small measure the terrible deprivation suffered, the loss of husbands and fathers and sons and brothers. Our hearts reached out to you with love," President Hinckley said.

90-Minute Service

Gov.-elect Norman Bangerter, Salt Lake City Mayor Ted Wilson, officials of the Carbon and Emery County United Mine Workers of America Disaster Relief Fund, and Richard Cordova, UMWA international representative, joined with families of the victims and local residents at the 90-minute service.

The emotion in the packed auditorium

reached a peak during remarks by Anna Bell, mother of Phillip Bell, 28, Orangeville, the Wilberg Mine longwall supervisor who was one of the 27 victims.

Composed, but speaking in a voice filled with emotion, Mrs. Bell said she knows the spirit of the Lord is with her and has been since she first received word of the tragic fire.

'He Is Not Dead'

"On Wednesday night, when we heard of the fire at Wilberg, we knelt and asked the Lord's blessing to be with them, and especially with Phillip. And I re-experienced a special feeling and I have experienced that feeling ever since, and I still do," Mrs. Bell said.

"I know with all my heart that

Phillip lives and that he is not dead, and I believe that he's here close with us now," she added, praising the strength of her daughter-in-law, Michelle, who must now bring up her young family without a loving spouse.

"Michelle has been so strong and I'm so proud of her. We have beautiful little grandchildren and I know that one day we'll all be together. I don't recall ever having so much love and acts of charity given. We're very grateful to all of you."

President Hinckley said Mrs. Bell's message emphasized the depth of the loss and "the loneliness that grips her heart and the hearts of her children."

See Page B-3, Column 5

1984 Wilberg Mine fire NEWS4

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Continued From Page B-1

but nonetheless affirmed the idea that faith transcends loneliness.

"I'm confident there isn't a woman here today whose heart doesn't reach out with love and tenderness for those women who have been left widows," he said.

"There isn't a man whose heart it doesn't affect and there isn't a parent who doesn't think of the little boys and little girls who will have to grow up without their fathers at their sides," the LDS church leader added.

He praised the miners who work deep beneath the surface of the earth to provide energy for all, and are often forgotten except when tragedy strikes, as it has frequently in the history of coal mining.

"Men such as those who died the other night worked around the clock to make possible the comforts we take for granted. All of us should

pause now and again to reflect on the sources of our comfort and the dangers endured by those who make it possible."

He encouraged individuals and families not touched directly by the disaster to pay their proper respects to the miners and to extend a helping hand to the bereaved loved ones left behind.

"We can and must pay respect to their memories. Extend a hand of comfort to those they loved so dearly. The pain that has come with their passing will not be in vain," he said.

"There will be loneliness," he added, "but for those who believe in the mercy of our eternal Father, there will also be comfort. They are as much individuals today as they were a week ago. To deny this is to deny the very essence of Christmas, which we celebrated just yesterday."

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