

the Famlet monthly

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Dear Family,

Several times during this past week I've tried to cajole Hannah into writing this letter for me. Each attempt has been equally unsuccessful, though Hannah's stated reasons have evolved somewhat as the week has worn on. Today's reason is that she has a writing assignment of her own to complete. If I understand correctly, the assignment involves comparing and contrasting various policy positions of three Republican presidential candidates. (I believe she's going with Romney, Gingrich and Paul.)

Obviously, an opening paragraph like that could launch this letter onto any number of tangents from which it would not likely recover. I will only say that if Romney doesn't lap this field of bozos when the voting actually starts, it will simply be further evidence that the people who vote in Republican primaries (and I'm one of them—at least for now) are the biggest bunch of dolts ever assembled under a common banner.

End of tangent (for now—I'll get back to it in a minute).

I was trying to elicit Hannah's help because this has been an unusually busy week and month for me. Aside from wrapping up yet another tithing settlement season (my sixth as bishop) I've recently moved on to a new assignment at work that I'm trying (successfully at times) to not let bury me. Though challenging, I am grateful for this work, and I have the Democrats to thank for it.

The Democratic party is generally perceived as being anti-business. This is only partially (okay, mostly) true. But not entirely true. It is not true, for example, if your business happens to be a consulting firm (as it is in my case). You see, Democrats believe that government's role is to make it utterly impossible for anything bad ever to happen to anybody. This is a worthy ambition, albeit somewhat at odds with what I understand to be God's plan, but I digress. To accomplish this ambition, Democrats seek to save us from ourselves by having us build what amount to Towers of Babel in every conceivable facet of life. (Onerous environmental regulations to combat what the Democratic Church believes to be anthropomorphic climate change, for example.) Like their ancient counterpart, these modern Towers of Babel never actually accomplish their stated objectives, but they make people feel like they're doing something beneficial. And that might be a good enough reason if the Towers didn't also have the perverse effect of making life difficult for people who actually are doing something beneficial.

There are many such Towers of Babel in my line of work. Sarbanes-Oxley and Dodd-Frank legislation are two prominent examples. They make it difficult for my clients (i.e., banks) to do business, all in the name of saving us. But it's only recently that I had a fairly obvious epiphany: These clients wouldn't actually be clients if it weren't for these big useless Towers. Much of what our clients pay us to do is help them comply with useless legislation and regulation. My latest work involves helping mortgage servicers monitor their

foreclosure attorneys to ensure they're not engaging in a practice commonly referred to as "robo-signing." "Robo-signing" isn't really what it sounds like, nor do I believe it to be a widespread or serious problem. But banks (with regulators' guns to their heads) are paying me to help fix it. Thanks Democrats!

In addition to ridding the world of robo-signers, there's also been the matter of our new basement. Though the lion's share of the actual remodeling work was done by contractors, we were still left with the somewhat overwhelming task of hauling a whole bunch of furniture, food storage, and other junk (mostly junk) out of the basement to make way for the remodelers. I'm sure the neighbors have appreciated the unsightly "PODS" storage unit on our front curb throughout the holiday season. (Actually one of the things we like about our extraordinarily diverse working-/middle-class neighborhood is that nobody gets worked up much over stuff like that. I still remember the guy who took to growing corn *along his front walk* a few years back. No HOA here to give him grief about that.)

I think we're pleased with how the basement turned out. I probably won't attach any pictures of it because 1) I assume that you're about as uninterested in what the interior of my house looks like as I am in what yours looks like, and 2) it's a basement—imagine what a newly finished basement looks like; that's what it looks like. We have more guest space now, so feel free to come visit, but don't feel like you have to.

The basement project has rendered the rest of our house somewhat more cluttered than usual (and it's usually at least a little bit cluttered) for the duration of the Christmas season. We somehow managed to survive it. It was the girls' idea to wait until after church (we meet at 9:00) to open presents and see what Santa had brought. This involved shrouding each girl's chair with a sheet during the Sunday morning routine and then unveiling everything after we got home. I think the girls must have been moving toward the stand during the benediction because I'd scarcely had time to get up after the "amen" before at least two of them were tugging on my jacket and telling me to hurry up. Anyhow, Santa came through. They all got what they wanted. Everybody's happy.

It's safe to say that if someone had told me on New Year's Eve 2010 that on New Year's Eve 2011 I'd be registered to run two marathons in 2012, I'd have had a hard time believing it. But here I am. In addition to being registered for the Richmond Marathon in November, I'm now registered for the March 17th running of what used to be called the "National Marathon." I guess that was too dignified-sounding, so it's now called the "Rock 'n' Roll USA Nation's Capital Marathon." The sheer idiocy of the new name was almost reason enough for me *not* to sign up. But finding non-Sunday races is hard, so I looked past it. At this point in my life, I've run a grand total of zero marathons; how I now find myself registered for two is as much a mystery to me as it probably is to you.

Happy New Year!

Love,

Tim et al





We saved a little money by painting the basement ourselves (i.e., by having the girls do it). This was Grace's first experience with a paint roller. It all worked great until she started rolling the new carpet...



I somehow forgot to acknowledge Hannah's 15th birthday this month. She got a new coat.



Above: Alex, Lucy, Sophie and Grace decorate a gingerbread house on Christmas Eve at Grant and Jen's house

Below: Grace and Lucy unveil their Christmas haul. (Lucy changed back into her nightgown after church.)

