

# the Famlet monthly

December 30, 2015

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## Dear Family,

As of 7:00 p.m. yesterday Hannah is now a missionary.

The emotions associated with the events of last night and this morning have been experienced by many, many people, but I don't know that I can adequately describe them.

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I wrote those first two sentences yesterday morning after saying goodbye to Hannah at the airport. I was too much of an emotional wreck to write any more than that. It is now 9:00 a.m. the next day, Thursday, December 31st, and, having returned home from the pool, I am going to try this again. I swam this morning in the same lane in which I swam on Tuesday, when Hannah and her mother occupied the lane next to mine. This morning that lane was vacant during my first 1,500 yards or so, which caused me to tear up a little. *Everything* this week has caused me to tear up—driving past Hannah's high school; seeing Hannah's *E. coli*-laced (probably) Chipotle leftovers in the fridge; looking at Find My Friends, which thinks Hannah's at home because her phone is here. Even writing this paragraph is making me tear up. I'd better start a new one.

The rest of Tuesday was about as peaceful as I could have hoped. After our swim Crystal felt that the three of us ought to go to Georgetown Cupcake. (Like many people, Crystal clings to the rather optimistic view that physical exercise somehow justifies the subsequent consumption of garbage.) We then went home and Hannah set about packing. Crystal helped match outfits while I lay on her bed, trying to help by staying out of the way. This occupied most of the afternoon. At 7:00 p.m. our stake president, Eric Denna, came over and set Hannah apart. We told him that Aunt Rebecca would be picking Hannah up in Salt Lake the next day and driving her to the Missionary Training Center. President Denna, Sister Denna, and Aunt Rebecca were missionaries together in Spain nearly 40 years ago, and Aunt Rebecca and Sister Denna were companions briefly. The Dennas are great fans of Aunt Rebecca's and asked Hannah to be sure and convey their love, which presumably she did.

President Denna shook everybody's hand, gave me a hug, and left. I then asked Hannah's Grandpa Willis and Uncle Peter to stay and join me in giving Hannah a father's blessing. I have given many such blessings over the past 19 years. This was the first time I experienced difficulty making the words come out.

At a little after 5:00 a.m. yesterday the six of us (Hannah, her sisters, Crystal, and I) piled into the car to make the familiar 30-mile drive to BWI. We arrived to find a substantial queue at the Delta bag check. And for the very first time in my life I was not irritated by the prospect of waiting in a long line. It just gave us a few more minutes with Hannah. We then accompanied her to the security line where we went as far as we could and then watched as she made her way first past the guy who checks boarding passes and IDs, then to the x-ray machine where she placed on the belt her one carry-on item—a small missionary satchel containing just her wallet, her scriptures, a journal, a pen, and whatever personal items women carry. She then proceeded through the active millimeter wave scanner that

enables some dude in the back room to see everybody naked. She caught sight of us one last time after she collected her bag from the x-ray machine. She waved and smiled at us as she passed behind a large pillar, and then she was gone.

And now I'm crying again, dammit.

We stopped at IHOP for breakfast on the way home, which seemed to provide adequate solace to her sisters, and particularly to Grace, who was having the hardest time coming to grips with it. I suppose a year and a half may as well be a century when you're 10. We got home, Crystal went to a doctor's appointment, and I went for a run. I actually cried during the run. It was only the third time I can recall crying during a run. (The second was earlier this month—more on that later.) This is all a little surprising since I don't think of myself as much of a crier. I mean, I cried a *little* during Star Wars, but not as much as Grant did. We saw it the Monday after Hannah came home (the Monday before Christmas) with the Kempers. It will be Hannah's last movie for 18 months.

The next day (the Tuesday before Christmas) we returned to the temple with Hannah, her Willis grandparents, Grant and Jen, and Andrew and Jessica to do proxy sealings. It was Hannah's first visit to a sealing room, and Sophie was surprised to learn that Hannah could be a proxy for an ordinance she had not yet received herself. That had not occurred to me before. I suppose the sealing is the only ordinance like that. Grandpa was our sealer on Tuesday. His approach differs from many other sealers that I encounter both in the slow and deliberate manner in which he performs the ordinance and in the interest he takes in what little he can learn from the card about the people for whom we were acting as proxy. This interest appears to be the same regardless of whether the person is a random temple file name or one of his own. (We did some of both on Tuesday.) He likes to say that we are performing these ordinances not for "names" (despite our casual Mormon vernacular of "taking names to the temple") but for actual people who have lived on the Earth. It makes the whole thing considerably more meaningful to me.

Returning to the events of yesterday, Aunt Rebecca called to let us know that Hannah had made it to the MTC intact. We were grateful for this news. The MTC drop-off process has been streamlined considerably since my time. I recall my first day there beginning with a short meeting attended by new missionaries and their families. That meeting ended with missionaries exiting one door and families exiting another. I attended that meeting alone, having said goodbye to my family in Philadelphia several hours earlier. (Almost 25 years later, I now know how my parents felt.) My Grandma Willis drove me from Salt Lake to the MTC and dropped me off at the curb. Now everyone does it this way. It sounds eerily similar to the process for dropping off your kid at elementary school. (Pull in, kid gets out, you keep driving and don't back things up.) Good. That meeting was silly.

It looks like I'll have to tell you about the rest of the month, including why I cried at the end of the Rehoboth Beach Marathon, in the photo captions. I hope you'll look at them.

May the New Year bring you happiness. And may the Lord watch over his missionaries, including my little girl.

Love, Tim, et al.





Dec 29. Hannah, just prior to being set apart by President Denna, left. (Sophie and me, right.)



Dec 30. Hannah's sisters say goodbye at BWI.



December 2015



Dec. 10. Grace plays the bass xylophone at Forest Knolls Elementary School winter concert.



Dec. 17. Grace with Santa and Mrs. Claus at the White Oak Ward Christmas party.



Sophie (holding cello) takes a bow after her solo at the Silver Spring International Middle School winter concert.





Dec. 5. Approaching the finish line at the Rehoboth Beach Seashore Marathon in a personal best time of 3:57:27. If that does not sound particularly fast, well, it isn't, but it's more than 7 minutes faster than any of my six previous marathons. I began to cry near the end of mile 25 when it became clear that, after six previous failures, I was finally going to finish in under 4 hours.



Dec. 5

**Above:** With Grace and Lucy on the beach after the marathon.



**Right:** Lucy, Grace and Crystal – Rehoboth Beach Boardwalk.