

# the Famlet monthly

July 31, 2016

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## Dear Family,

This weekend was to have been our stake's quadrennial "Pioneer Trek" youth conference at the [Marriott Ranch](#) in Middle-of-Nowhere, Virginia, about 70 miles west of here. Crystal and I were to have been a "Ma and Pa" (i.e., chaperones). Our family (Lucy and Sophie were set to join us) had procured the necessary pioneer-style clothing, mostly from the thrift store, but I also found a few appropriate items on [Haband](#), an online retailer that appears to specialize in clothing styles that you could otherwise only expect to find either at the thrift store or at the bottom of a trunk in grandpa's attic. The girls had made their bonnets. The food had been purchased, the gear had been organized, the handcarts and porta-johns had been rented, and I had almost reached the point where I was (kind of) looking forward to the actual experience, as opposed to simply looking forward to it being over.

And then, two Sundays ago, we decided to cancel. *Postpone* is the term we are using, and our intent truly is to reschedule for sometime during the next 11 months, but *cancel* feels like the more honest term until we can actually fix a new date.

We cancelled because of the heat. I realize that sounds lame and, to quote Lucy's psychiatrist (among others), "Didn't they know it was going to be hot at the end of July?" Yeah, we knew. But we didn't know it was going to be *this* hot. The past two weeks have been record setting with heat index values in the neighborhood of 110 degrees, and we couldn't get comfortable with the idea of asking people to dress in pioneer garb and pull heavy handcarts many miles over difficult terrain in such punishing conditions. Our decision was made easier when we learned of another stake's ordeal at the Marriott Ranch about a month ago. Heat-related illness sent two people to the hospital and the group had to go home before the end of the first day. I can only imagine what the local EMTs must have thought after being called the *second time* to rescue the same group of idiots pulling handcarts around the wilderness in period clothing. *Would you like to know more about our church?*

In lieu of the whole thing, we had a two-hour fireside/hoedown at the stake center last night featuring our bishop's family's fabulous bluegrass band. We got suitably hot and sweaty doing the Virginia Reel wearing our period clothes in the air conditioned (kind of) cultural hall (we would have done it outside if not for the thunderstorm) and it was a lot of fun.

The cancellation left us with two unexpectedly free days, and we decided to spend one of them at [Hersheypark](#), two hours north of us, in Almost-Middle-of-Nowhere, Pennsylvania. I hadn't been to Hershey in years, and our family has now reached the precise, optimal age for all of us to have fun there together. No one is too old or too young for all the roller coasters, and that's pretty much all we did. The place is full of nostalgia for me and it's probably the only theme park I can navigate without a map. Hersheypark was the first place I mustered the courage to ride an upside-down roller coaster when I was a kid. The SooperDooperLooper was the baddest ride around in those days. There are at least a half-dozen better roller coasters at Hershey now. Even Disney has rides that are less tame than the Looper, but it's still there and it will always hold a special place

in my heart. We rode all the coasters, cooled off at the water park, bought a bunch of junk at Chocolate World, and drove home. It was a really fun day and I've probably had my fix for the next three years. (Grace clearly has not had her fix yet and is going to [Kings Dominion](#) tomorrow with a friend.)

The only thing that could have made the day better would have been if Hannah were with us. I have lost track of how many times we've had to explain to other swim team parents that Hannah won't be home at all this summer. People seem to have a hard time grasping why that is. I understand their confusion, and we remain embarrassingly bad at explaining to people what exactly Hannah is doing as a missionary and why our communication with her is so limited.

Hannah got a laugh out of learning that we had cancelled Trek on account of 110-degree heat index values. That's just another Tuesday in the Arizona Phoenix Mission, and Hannah and her companion get around principally on bikes. They have a car (a small truck, actually) but they feel they are more effective on their bikes. This even though Hannah was struck by a car about a month ago (the person who repaired Hannah's bike expressed amazement that Hannah had not been injured) and a former companion of hers was recently sent home after suffering heat stroke. I sent Hannah and her current companion a large canister of Gatorade powder, and I continue to pray that she will be both wise and protected. I guess that's all a parent can do.

Her letters continue to relate small islands of success in an ocean of effort. They remind me of Mormon's description of Ammon and his brethren, of "their sufferings in the land, their sorrows, and their afflictions, and their incomprehensible joy." Some excerpts from the past two weeks that made me especially happy:

Referring to her current area of Cottonwood: *"I love it here. I could stay here forever."*

*"Even on the hard days, we know that what we're doing is good and it brings me greater happiness than anything else I could be doing."*

After describing some setbacks: *"I do love my mission. It's so much harder than I thought it would be, there have been days I'm not sure I'll make it, but it's the best thing I ever could have done."*

Lucy is nearing the end of her summer program at RICA. (See [April's letter](#) if you don't know what RICA is or that Lucy has resided there since January.) She seems to be doing better and, beginning this Thursday, we look forward to having her with us for most of August. The current plan is for her to return to RICA a week before school resumes at the end of the month. She'll commute from RICA back to Northwood, our neighborhood high school, for morning classes and return to RICA for afternoon classes, dinner, evening, and bed. The hope is that she will be able to transition to Northwood full time, living at home, during the coming year.

This means Lucy (a senior) and Sophie (a freshman) will be attending the same high school. Sophie's ready to get going, and here in overachieving Montgomery County it's not enough that she is taking A.P. U.S. History (APUSH) as a freshman, she also felt it necessary to enroll in "APUSH Summer Boot Camp" to aid in preparation. I hope it helped. She says the pizza was good. Sometimes that's all you need. Love, Tim





Rick Kemper and Sophie (wearing Brother Kemper's hat). Trek hoedown, 30 July 2016.



On stage at a spectacularly entertaining performance of "The Mikado" at Olney Theatre. 15 July 2016. We sat on the stage throughout the show and the performers worked around us told us when we needed to move. (That's Matt sitting behind us.)

July 2016



Lucy, Sophie, and Grace — Hershey, Pennsylvania, 28 July 2016



Grace really wanted to buy this five-pound Hershey's Bar. We talked her out of it.



I don't know who actually buys this stuff, but we didn't.