

# the Famlet monthly

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## Dear Family,

A little over 12 years ago, as I was approaching the end of my first year teaching early-morning seminary, I asked Crystal whether she thought it was a good idea for me to do it again next year. Her response surprised me. "I don't think we can afford for you to stop teaching seminary," she told me.

Her reply was intriguing because my position as a seminary teacher, like every other Church position I've held, was unpaid. And so she was not contemplating the loss of any particular income stream. Rather, she felt that things had gone quite well for us that year, and she attributed that, at least in part, to the sacrifices our family was making in connection with my preparing for and teaching a seminary class to high school students at 6:00 every weekday morning.

I am not a believer in what some term "the prosperity gospel." I don't think Crystal is, either. But, as Mormons, we do believe in a kind, loving, and mercifully encouraging God who provides a means of accomplishing what He requires and who, from time to time and in various ways, manifests His appreciation and enables us to recognize it as such.

I taught for three years and likely would have continued longer had I not been asked to be our ward's bishop in 2006. I still remember what the stake president said when he broke the news. "This will be harder than teaching seminary," he warned. This surprised me because I did not think anything could be harder than teaching seminary. The next 6½ years taught me that he was right in many respects, but there is a relentlessness to teaching seminary that even bishoping seldom matches. However, notwithstanding its unique demands, and unlike administrative Church positions, which can beat you down at times, seminary teaching *always* builds you up. It unquestionably ranks among the most wonderful experiences anyone can have.

And so, when it suddenly became necessary a few weeks ago to identify a new seminary teacher and Crystal's name came up, I immediately felt at peace with the prospect. When the stake president asked me whether I thought a stake presidency counselor and a seminary teacher was too much for one marriage, I was reminded of two things: first, I thought of my parents' marriage, which managed to withstand simultaneously a stake president and a seminary teacher for nearly a decade; and, second, I thought of Crystal's observation from 12 years ago. How could we afford *not* to do this?

Asking one's wife to serve in a Church position can be awkward. There never seems to be a good time to do it, and so I told her during a quiet moment aboard a Southwest Airlines flight from Spokane to Denver. (More on that trip later.) She immediately accepted the calling and proceeded to remind me of what my new morning responsibilities would entail. School mornings in our house have recently consisted of Crystal's doing all the work getting the girls off to school while I swim, bike, and run. It's been a pretty good arrangement for me, but this is now over. Sophie, who starts high school tomorrow, will presumably go to seminary with Crystal, who will drop her at school afterward. That leaves Grace, whom I'll have to pry from bed at 6:30 in order to complete the morning routine in time for her to catch her bus to middle school at 7:40. No problem.

And then there's Lucy. Lucy continues to be a residential student at RICA in Rockville. This year she will begin transitioning to a mainstream program, attending the first four periods and lunch at Northwood H.S. and returning to RICA for the rest of the day. We were excited about this until we were informed that the district would not bus Lucy from RICA to Northwood. It would be our responsibility get her from Rockville to our neighborhood high school each morning. This was a frustrating development, but I really had no justification to gripe about it. To do so would be akin to having my entire vacation comped by the resort and then complaining at the prospect of having to pay for my cab back to the airport.

Still, with Crystal teaching seminary, the transportation issue was going to pose a significant hardship (for me) and so I wrote to Lucy's school therapist to explain things and ask whether the decision not to provide a bus might be reconsidered. She was sympathetic but explained that it was not her decision. She suggested I ask the assistant principal but was not optimistic. I wrote to the assistant principal, who replied that it wasn't his decision, either. He was equally sympathetic and said he would ask the transportation office, but he likewise did not express much optimism.

The next day the assistant principal informed us that the transportation office had approved Lucy's bus. I had to fight back tears as I read his email at work. A short time later Crystal texted me from in line at Costco. She had just seen the email and was tearing up, as well. Fewer than 48 hours had passed since Crystal had officially become a seminary teacher, and it felt like the miracles were starting already. Would the transportation office have come through anyway? Perhaps. But I choose to believe in a benevolent God—one who provides the means to accomplish what He requires and who, from time to time, manifests His appreciation and mercifully enables us to recognize it as such.

The stake presidency reached its decision regarding Crystal on a Sunday afternoon conference call during an otherwise splendid week visiting Crystal's family in beautiful North Idaho. Roland and Marci's fabulous home on Hayden Lake was spacious enough for all the siblings and their families. Their dad and Grandma Karel live nearby and their mom and Grandpa Pat brought their motorhome from Wenatchee, Wash., to round out the family reunion. They are all uncommonly nice people who for 22 years have inexplicably tolerated my quirky idiosyncrasies and continue to treat me like a member of the family (which, of course, I am).

Sophie has joined the Northwood H.S. field hockey team. She has never played field hockey before, but a friend told her the team was looking for players, and that was apparently all the encouragement she needed. Two weeks of August practices persuaded her that she ought to own shorts, which is quite a development for a girl who typically opts for jeans, even when it's 95 degrees.

Grace's initial anxiety about starting middle school tomorrow was replaced with joyful anticipation after Thursday's "dry run," which included riding the bus to school, finding her locker and visiting all her classrooms. She must have said "I'm so excited" at least three times after that. We are happy about this and hope it lasts.

Hannah is happy to still be in Cottonwood, Ariz., where she continues to enjoy missionary service. She is now training a new missionary—Sister Something-Or-Other, a blonde girl from Idaho. That narrows it down. Love, Tim



Sophie wakesurfing:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=i3b-3N2oJS8>

Crystal wakesurfing:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=eOETBjB7EvI>



Lucy wakesurfing.  
Hayden Lake, Idaho



Crystal, Sophie, and Grace on Roland and Marci's dock.  
Hayden Lake, Idaho.



Lucy pans for gold (sort of) in Idaho.



Grace tackles a ropes course in Idaho



I didn't write anything about our fun day trip to Philadelphia for the temple open house. We loved it.



The Temple is 1.5 miles from Independence Hall (behind us) and pays frequent homage to it. The wall behind the recommend desk is strikingly similar to the wall behind John Hancock's chair; a painting of signers in the Assembly Room of Independence Hall is prominently featured, and a crossed quills motif surfaces in multiple places, including around the outside of the table in the center of the celestial room.