

# the Famlet monthly

November 30, 2016

Volume 19, Number 11

## Dear Family,

Every night at 8:00 an alarm on my watch reminds me that it is time to gather the family for prayer. In our many years of failed attempts to make evening family prayer a consistent, regular thing, this has worked better and longer than anything else. When the alarm goes off on a typical night when people are home, I knock on all the bedroom doors (unless I'm feeling lazy, in which case I just text everyone), ask the girls to come down the hall, try to remember whose turn it is, ask that person to pray, and that's that. The whole thing takes about 90 seconds. No one ever complains about it, and it's probably the easiest worthwhile thing we do.

Until recently the alarm was set for 8:45 p.m., which, all else equal, is better time since everyone is more likely to be home then. We changed it to 8:00 to accommodate Lucy's penchant for going to bed early. She would turn in at 7:30 if she could.

Lucy's unique sleep schedule (we might be the only family in which the 17-year-old, of her own volition, is the first one in bed every night) has had limited bearing on us this year because Lucy had been a residential student at RICA, her school in Rockville, since January. This month's discharge marks a significant milestone in her treatment and progress and it's been nice to consistently set five places at the dinner table again. (Our high-water mark was six—we are still adjusting in some ways to Hannah's departure more than two years ago.) Lucy still struggles with certain things and she is coming to terms with the possibility that she might always struggle with some of them. But she seems to be becoming increasingly adept at dealing with them.

She continues to attend morning classes at Northwood and afternoon classes at RICA. It makes for a long day and lots of bus time, but at least she's sleeping at home now. Her plan is transition fully to Northwood (our neighborhood high school) at start of next semester, which begins in January. After graduation in June it is our hope that she will enroll in a couple of courses at Montgomery College while she thinks through what she might want to do with her life. She is holding out hope of taking a gap year to hike the Appalachian Trail. Her parents have a hard time envisioning how that would work. She is doing better, and we appreciate the well wishes and other support from loved ones and friends.

You may recall that Sophie began the school year with an unsuccessful bid to become the president of the freshman class at Northwood High School. Notwithstanding her election loss, she continued to be an active participant in student government. I'm not sure what this entails exactly, but Sophie was good enough at whatever it is that the SGA faculty adviser told her that she was going to appoint her class president because the duly elected president had not been attending SGA meetings. When the president began attending at the urging of the faculty adviser, the adviser appointed Sophie vice president (since the elected vice president had not been coming, either). So, good for Sophie. Even if it brings to mind the immortal Homer Simpson line, "When are people going to learn? Democracy doesn't work."

Speaking of which, around this same time, several hundred of Sophie's and Lucy's classmates joined a large number of other students from neighboring high schools in a mass walk-out to protest the outcome of the U.S. presidential election. The students walked

to the mall (i.e., to Wheaton Plaza, a shopping mall, not "the Mall"), repeated some catchy slogans they'd picked up from TV, and then walked to downtown Silver Spring where they hung out for the rest of the day. Many people who are smarter than I found this inspiring for some reason.

A couple of weeks ago I drove Grace over to A. Mario Loiederman Middle School to audition for the county middle school honors chorus. Loiederman isn't terribly far, but the 5-mile drive during evening rush took nearly 30 minutes (in part because I took a stupid route, and 14 days later I'm still annoyed with myself about it).

I felt some ambivalence about the audition. On the one hand I wanted Grace to succeed. Most parents like to see their children succeed at things for various reasons. My wanting Grace to succeed at this was driven primarily by my admittedly selfish desire not to have to deal with the acute despair and drama that would have ensued if she hadn't. Grace tends to attach an inordinate amount of worry to a wide range of situations, but the level of anxiety she managed to associate with this audition during the two weeks leading up to it was so disproportionate, it actually caused me to worry (a little).

[On a side note, we joined more than 20 relatives in going to see *Fantastic Beasts and Where to Find Them* on the Friday after Thanksgiving. It was fine. I only remember checking my watch 2 or 3 times, which isn't very many for me. My favorite line was delivered by Newt Scamander (the main guy) after someone asked why he wasn't worried. Newt's reply, "Worrying means you suffer twice," is something I'd like to see fashioned into a plaque so I can hang it on Grace's bedroom door.]

And so on the one hand, I was eager for Grace's audition to be successful. On the other hand, I knew from last year (when Sophie was in middle school honors chorus) that a successful audition would result in my having to drive Grace out to Redland Middle School (a 10-mile drive that feels longer) for weekly rehearsals all through the winter. And part of me was rooting for not having to do that again. I'm not proud of myself for feeling this way, but only people who are exceptionally fond of me will have read this far, and I guess I don't mind so much your knowing.

As you've probably deduced by now, we learned about a week later that Grace had been selected for the chorus. Fortunately the one other person from Grace's school who made it (Montgomery County has 39 middle schools) is a nice girl from Grace's Girl Scout troop, and I expect we'll be able to carpool. It will work out, and I am genuinely happy for Grace, who, more than a week after hearing the news, is still delighted about it.

Honors chorus is the latest addition to Grace's musical portfolio, which currently also includes a before-school a capella club and an after-school rock band club, in which she sings and plays the keyboard. She also somehow manages to keep up with her academic work and seems to genuinely enjoy middle school, which is a miracle in itself.

We missed Hannah on Thanksgiving, but it sounds like she did not miss us all that much. She reported not feeling homesick for even a moment in part because she attended three Thanksgiving dinners with people in Arizona she now describes as family to her. We continue to feel extraordinary gratitude that she is where and who she is.

Love, Tim





Grace and Sophie  
20 November 2016

Sophie, Lucy, four of their cousins, and Uncle Pete at the now—traditional day-after-Thanksgiving temple trip.





Sophie, Crystal and I approach the finish line at the Montgomery County Road Runners' annual Saturday-after-Thanksgiving "Turkey Burn-off" race.

