

# THE FAMLET

MONTHLY

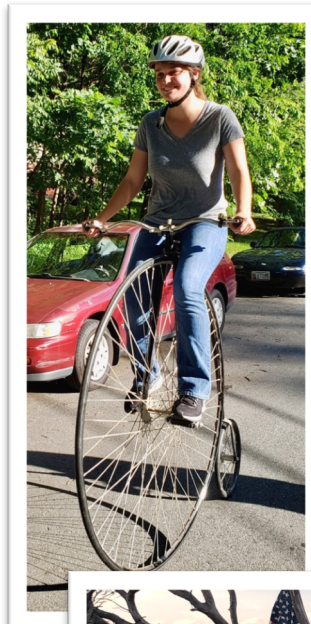


## Dear Family,

June is typically when I learn how little progress I have made as a swimmer over the past nine months. According to Garmin Connect, I have swum 173,500 meters in the past year. (If you're not good at the metric system or basic arithmetic, that averages out to a little more than two miles per week.) The actual distance is a little more than that because my watch doesn't give me credit for kick laps or certain drills, which is one reason I hate doing both of those things and don't do them as often as I should—or much at all.

I enjoy reciting figures like “173,500 meters” for the same reason I like pointing out that the Montgomery County Public Schools annual operating budget is 2.6 billion dollars. They're simultaneously sort of prodigious sounding and utterly meaningless without context. I imagine that 173,500 meters is more than most people swim in a year but considerably less than most swimmers do. On balance, I spend more than three times as many hours running as I do in the pool and about twice as much time biking as running. This obviously sums to a non-trivial chunk of my life. But selfishly speaking, it's an introvert's paradise and still leaves plenty of time for me to eat, sleep, and binge-watch *Corner Gas* reruns on Amazon Prime. I don't currently spend as much time in the scriptures as I should.

June is important because, although Crystal and I swim year-round, only in the summer do we pay a coach to structure our workouts and tell us everything we're doing wrong. I like our coach, even though he makes us kick, do drills, and actually swim all the strokes, which



Above: Sophie rides one of our bishop's penny-farthings

Below: Grace at our campsite on Assateague.

Utah World War II veterans on the Honor Flight to Washington



I hate. I know how to swim them, but not well. I'm a better-than-average freestyler (which is all I care about) but I bounce between lane ropes like a pinball when swimming backstroke, my butterfly is legal but awful—the swim team kids call it “survival fly” because it looks like I'm just trying not to drown, and breaststroke is surprisingly exhausting when you do it right.

The coach does his best to straighten me out, and I try to do what he says when he's watching. But left to my own devices, I typically reclaim most of my bad habits by the end of September. Our theology holds that one purpose of mortal life is to learn what kind of people we are capable of becoming when we don't perceive the supervisory gaze of Deity upon us. What do my workouts look like when the coach isn't around? In swimming and in life, they leave a lot to be desired, and I wish I were more like Crystal.

Crystal is also a better early-morning seminary teacher than I ever was, and her tenure as one now exceeds my three-year run, which ended in 2006. The Church's recent alignment of the seminary curriculum with the Sunday “Come, Follow Me” curriculum means that three cohorts of seminary students (including Sophie's) will graduate without having studied the Old Testament. This was disappointing to both Sophie and Crystal, and so Crystal has established an unofficial (and, she would emphasize, entirely optional) weekly Old Testament summer study group for her students. She kicked it off with a Friday night showing of *Raiders of the Lost Ark* at our house, which surprisingly few of the students had seen. (It troubles me that parents today are doing such a poor job of exposing their children to the pillars of 1980s cinema.) It astounds me that anyone actually comes to these sessions, but the kids in our ward are pretty great.

With one year to go in the BYU nursing program, Hannah is now a “licensed practical nurse,” having passed the National Council Licensure Examination for LPNs earlier this month. This significantly ups her comp at the nursing home where she had been working as a certified nursing assistant and relieves her of certain less-desirable tasks that are typically delegated to CNAs. A year from now, she will have completed her bachelor of science in nursing degree and will sit for a presumably harder NCLEX exam to become a registered nurse.

If I understand the hierarchy of nursing correctly, RNs supervise LPNs, and both RNs and LPNs direct the work of CNAs—often in a manner reminiscent of how Miss Hannigan directs the work of orphans. (Hannah has



Top: Sophie plays a variation of volleyball the Scouts invented on Assateague



Middle: Crystal at our campsite on Assateague



Bottom: Sophie hikes past a helpful sign with some Scouts on Assateague.

vowed to be kinder to CNAs than she felt nurses were to her when she was one. I expect she will.)

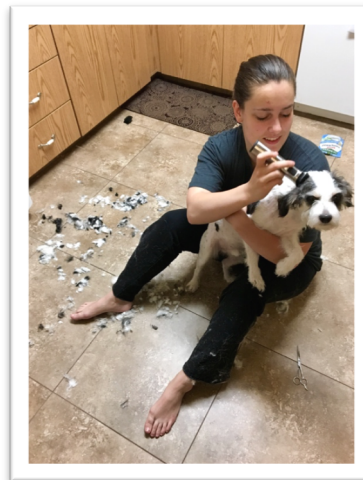
Sophie is spending her summer between 11<sup>th</sup> and 12<sup>th</sup> grades lifeguarding at the pool and taking an online statistics course at Montgomery College. The second part is not a choice I would have made, but presumably it will make her senior year a little less hectic. At the pool last week, I mentioned to one of the swim team moms that Sophie had been struggling with some of the material. As fate would have it, this particular swim team mom teaches AP statistics at Georgetown Prep (a nearby private secondary school for rich boys that achieved a certain level of notoriety during last year's confirmation hearings for U.S. Supreme Court Justice Brett Kavanaugh) and expressed a willingness to help. It reminded me of several years ago when a number of other swim team parents help point us toward county and state resources that ultimately proved quite beneficial for Lucy. I can't speak to the character of swim team parents generally, but the ones at our pool seem uncommonly good. The extent to which our girls have benefitted from swim team in ways that have nothing to do with swimming is remarkable to me.

Grace's 8<sup>th</sup>-grade "promotion" ceremony from Silver Spring International earlier this month officially brought our family's 12 consecutive years in the middle school business to a long-anticipated end. The ceremony was a fitting capstone and microcosm for the overall middle school experience—which is to say it was awful. I was proud of Grace, who was a soloist in a small vocal ensemble that lent a modicum of mellifluousness to an otherwise intolerable sea of cacophony from more than a thousand irreverent children and parents who proved incapable of sitting quietly for more than 30 seconds at a time. The two-hour ceremony might have lasted 45 minutes if people had somehow been able to suppress their apparently uncontrollable collective impulse to burst into riotous ovations anytime speakers so much as paused to inhale or simply respect the punctuation in their prepared remarks. It felt like a political rally. (Or so I imagine—I've never attended a political rally.) It's hard to imagine anything short of winning the World Series as justification for the lack of decorum exhibited in response to these children *having completed the 8<sup>th</sup> grade*. I'm proud of Grace and can only hope that her life will be sufficiently rewarding that she never considers "finishing middle school" among her life's important accomplishments.

For roughly 22 of the 23 years we've lived in Maryland, Crystal has been saying that we should go camping with



*Lucy outside our tent on Assateague.*



*Top: Lucy outside our tent on Assateague*

*Middle: Nurse Hannah gives her dog, Sparks, a haircut*

*Bottom: William Kemper, Grace, and Sophie with now-traditional post-Temple doughnuts from Reading Terminal - Philadelphia.*



the wild ponies on Assateague Island. This has never appealed to me for various reasons, but a three-night outing there this month planned by our ward's Scout troop seemed like a good opportunity to tick that box.

The Handbook, to my knowledge, does not explicitly address the appropriateness of the Young Men president bringing his wife and teenage daughters on overnight Boy Scout outings. But I've now done it twice this year. The Scoutmaster doesn't seem to mind, and in situations such as these, I am more inclined to ask for forgiveness than permission. (More accurately, the older I get, the more I'm inclined to do whatever I want and ask for neither forgiveness nor permission. I also find myself growing increasingly contemptuous of people who try to tell me what to do—which puts me somewhere between a late-blooming 17-year-old snot and a precocious 70-year-old crank. I'm a delight.)

The youth camping areas at Assateague State Park are tucked behind a row of sand dunes, perhaps 100 meters from the ocean. Like most of the rest of the island, the sites are nothing but sand, which makes anchoring tents and pop-up shelters difficult in windy conditions (like those you encounter at the beach). In lieu of stakes, we buried milk jugs filled with water to keep things tied down. This mostly worked.

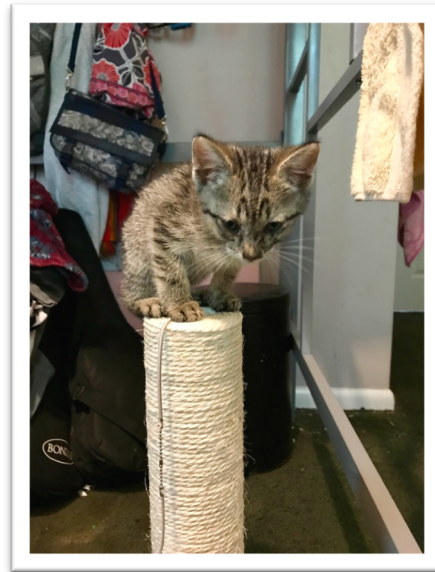
Unfettered access to the ocean counterbalanced the flies and mosquitoes that infested our campsite. I grew weary of smelling like bug spray. I also grew weary of the sun and sand, which, while pleasant in reasonable doses, become tedious when you can't take refuge from them. The horses are a fun novelty, but you can't interact with them and, ultimately, they're just another kind of wildlife that can only be observed from a distance. By the fourth day, I was ready to go home.

So yeah, camping at Assateague. We've done that now. Maybe we'll go back, but not soon.

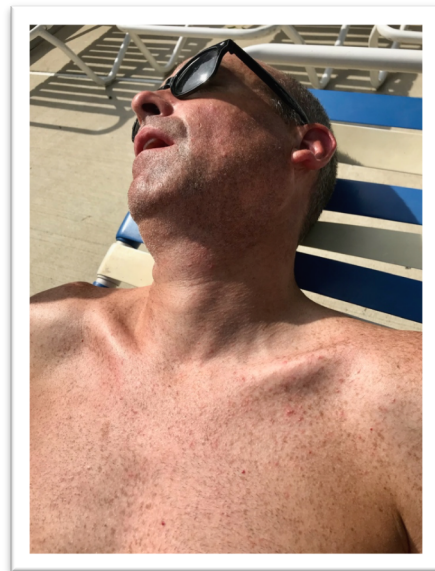
As of yesterday, we now have a kitten. More accurately, Lucy has a kitten—a stray found by someone in Richmond, Va., whom Lucy met on Tumblr. Lucy and Crystal spent a sizable chunk of yesterday sitting in traffic between here and Fredericksburg (roughly halfway to Richmond) to pick it up. We don't know the sex of this kitten (Lucy has given it the genderfluid name *Sam Meow*). We don't know how this kitten will get along with the dog (they haven't met yet). We really don't know anything at all about this kitten except that it's awfully cute. (It is, after all, a kitten.) Stay tuned.

Finally, we bid farewell this week to Sister Abigail Willis who has departed on her mission to Calgary. I can't immediately recall having attended a better sacrament meeting than the one in which she spoke. All three speakers made me cry and the musical selection, sung by Abby's four siblings and eight local cousins, was pretty good, too. She is now in the Provo Missionary Training Center, where, if I ran things, her preparation for Canada would include a steady diet of *Corner Gas* episodes. (Shockingly, no one has ever asked me to run the Provo MTC.) I expect she'll do well anyway.

Love, Tim, *et al*



Top: *Sam Meow*



Bottom: *Me snoring by the pool.*