

# the Famlet monthly

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## Dear Family,

Greetings from the Denver Marriott South at Park Meadows, where it's 4 in the morning and I, of course, can't sleep. I'm trying to wait for the thermometer to crack 30 degrees before going out on my run, but I may not be able to wait that long. I don't write from the road much anymore, but this past weekend had too much going on (details follow) and what better time and place than a quiet hotel room in the middle of the night?

You may recall that I dashed off last month's letter in a mad rush to get it done and posted before Hurricane Sandy blew through and knocked us back to the 19th Century for a week or more. We had every reason to believe this would happen. In all my years of listening to weathermen forecast various things with varying degrees of certainty, I've never heard such widespread devastation predicted with greater confidence. Hurricane impact is a function of track, of course, and specific track is hard to nail down, I get that. But whether it came ashore at Delmarva (as originally predicted) or Jersey (as actually happened) it wasn't going to matter, we were told, because the storm was so mind-bogglingly large, and there was no conceivable scenario under which we wouldn't get crushed. Virtually every school and local government agency, as well as the federal government, pre-emptively shut down for two days. We hunkered down in the basement and went to sleep resigned to the fact that we would awaken to a cold, dark house. The best we dared hope for was that our house would survive the onslaught.

And then, well, it rained a lot. The wind gusted enough to knock a few limbs down, but that was all. It rained heavily for two straight days, briefly flooding a few low-lying areas, but we generally handle rain reasonably well. Our basement stayed dry; our power never went out; no trees hit our house; no trees near us even fell. About the biggest inconvenience was that I had to alter my standard morning run on the Sligo Creek Trail because so many leaves had fallen that I couldn't make out where the edge of the paved path was, and I didn't want to slip and turn an ankle two weeks before my marathon (more on that later). But then I looked over and noticed that authorities had closed Sligo Creek Parkway to vehicular traffic, apparently fearing that the creek would overrun its banks and flood the roadway. (It didn't.) And so I crossed the creek and ran most of my 7 miles that morning right down the middle of the Parkway. It was great.

Crystal and I spent the rest of the morning visiting people in various neighborhoods around our ward. Remarkably, nobody had sustained any damage or even lost power. Many prayers of thanksgiving were offered, and rightly so, but it's difficult for me to attribute our outcome to divine providence when I consider what happened to the people living north of us.

Moved in part by [this viral video](#) (you really need to watch it if you haven't yet), Crystal, Hannah and I, along with a half-dozen other members of our ward joined Grant and Jen and many more members of their ward and stake in driving up to the Rockaway Peninsula (which technically is part of Queens but in a lot of ways is its own little place) to join the cleanup effort. A month has passed since the storm hit and while much

progress has been made in the two weeks since the video was shot (seriously, if you haven't yet, go back and click on the link and watch it!) the place is still a disaster area. Totaled cars dotting the landscape; debris everywhere; demolished and condemned houses; Red Cross and other volunteers all over the place. But no sight, it seemed, was more ubiquitous than 'Mormon Helping Hands' yellow vests. We spent much of the day in basements, hauling out masses of rock and contaminated sand (we found lots of great seashells and other things you wouldn't necessarily expect to find in your basement), spraying for mold, ripping out drywall, floorboards and appliances and hauling everything out to the curb where fleets of Bobcats and other equipment pushed everything into mountains of detritus. Grant, Jen, Crystal, Hannah and I were only able to stay for Saturday, but most of the other volunteers stayed two or even three days of the holiday weekend, showering at the YMCA and sleeping on the floor of the stake center. Those people had a brief church service Sunday morning and then were back at it all day, eventually driving home in the always-miserable Sunday-night-after-Thanksgiving I-95 traffic.

Our day trip, by comparison, notwithstanding bruises and sore muscles (Hannah was reluctant to go to swim practice yesterday because she didn't want people to see her bruised legs), seemed more like a fun outing than actual work, and was made possible by goodly parents who willingly took on the task of tending to our 8 collective children (Grant and Jen's 5 and our 3) who weren't able to come. (This is further evidence that no one should ever have misgivings about living close to one's parents. I'm starting to think, however, that I might want to think twice about living close to my children when they grow up, particularly if they plan to cash in on my proximity as much as I do on my folks'.) They undertook all this two days after hosting Thanksgiving, which was its usual blend of pleasant chaos. I've given up trying to count the number of people spread out across three tables in Grandma's dining room, living room and family room, but it was somewhere in the mid-thirties. It included Andrew's and Jessica's family—their first Thanksgiving since returning from Switzerland, Matthew's and Andra's family—up from Raleigh, and Richard's and JoAnn's family—who brought the centerpiece dessert, a "cherpumpkin" (which defies description; you should just Google it).

All of this makes the Richmond Marathon seem like a bit of an afterthought, but I finished...eventually...in 4:08. I was really hoping to get in under 4 hours, and was comfortably positioned to do so for most of the race. And then mile 18 happened. Or was it mile 19? I don't remember exactly, but there was a hill there, and in the space of about 10 minutes I went from feeling great to feeling like I was going to die. The last 6 miles were abject torture, but I pressed forward with my only thought being that the faster I moved the faster I would be done ([President Uchtdorf's wise counsel](#) notwithstanding, I'm not sure it applies to the last 6 miles of a marathon). I managed to continue something resembling "running" (passing only walkers and people standing on the side of the road) and finished more than a half-hour ahead of my previous marathon time. At this rate of improvement I'm only about three marathons away from being elite.

Hoping your holiday season is elite.

Love, Tim, et al





Rockaway:  
Sporting our Mormon magic outerwear



One of the houses we helped gut belongs to the fire chief. He let us dress up in his gear.