

My name is Lucy Elizabeth Willis. I have been baptized very recently. This is what happened:

I was eager to get in the water, get baptized, and become a member of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints.

When I came out of the water, I was happy. I knew I had made the right choice. I am a good person and I am happy to be a member of the Church.

This has been Lucy's month. Her baptism took place on Saturday, October 13th, eight days after her eighth birthday. The event was a good enough excuse for her maternal grandparents (who are ordinarily confined to Pacific Time Zone oblivion) to make the journey here, and it was great to see them. Grandma and Grandpa Kent stayed at my parents' house, and Grandma Carolyn stayed with us, earning her keep by doing lots of laundry, cleaning the basement several times and attempting to clean out my closet and under my bed. (A big job, she was somewhat successful in this.) All she needed to do was start mending socks and making wheat mush in the morning and it would have felt like my Grandma Willis was visiting. (Grandma Carolyn: to be compared favorably with Jean Cannon Willis is one of the highest compliments I dole out, so there you go.) Roland and Marci and family came up from Suffolk, Va. (which I guess is a suburb of Norfolk, Va., but I don't really know, as I find the whole area very confusing.) But they came and it was all good.

The baptismal service was nice. Here they're ward, rather than stake, affairs, so there's a certain intimacy to the whole thing. There was only minimal competition from the Spanish Branch's "cultural event" that went on concurrently. As "agent bishop" for the stake center I had the dubious honor of breaking away from my daughter's baptism to inform the Branch as politely as I could that if they want to hold a big fiesta with loud music, lots of food, and children running up and down the halls, that's fine, but they really need to reserve the @#\$% building. (I didn't actually say @#\$%, but it crossed my mind.)

Lucy is one of 11 people (including seven converts) baptized into the White Oak Ward during the past four weeks. The new converts are a fascinating and diverse lot, including one man whose wife is studying with the Jehovah's Witnesses and wants nothing to do with us (but, for reasons I don't yet understand, consented to her husband's baptism). Another man that I baptized and confirmed this month teaches sociology at the University of Maryland, and is the offspring of a Cherokee mother and a father who was a Schindler Jew. The others have interesting stories of their own and we look forward to getting to know them.

Of the four stakes in the Washington DC North Mission (and we have close relatives in all of them), ours is probably the least affluent. It probably isn't a coincidence that we also have the most baptisms of the four (see [Alma 32](#)). As a result of this, we meet a lot of remarkable people that we wouldn't meet through ordinary professional and social interactions—which is a good thing—but it also makes for some interesting challenges. Most of the time, it's all I can do to keep from collapsing under the guilt I feel from running my Relief Society President into the ground. (She's great, by the way; a senior director at Marriott, who's been in crisis mode all week managing displaced hotel guests and employees in Southern California, but who still answers her BlackBerry whenever I buzz it.) She asked me if I'd teach the lesson in Relief Society next Sunday. I've never taught Relief Society before and it makes me a little nervous, but it makes a certain amount of sense given the topic (confessing and forsaking sins, or something like that) and how can I say no to someone who never says no to me?

That said, it's been a good month to be the bishop. For one thing, we had General and Stake Conference this month; in other words, two Sundays when I don't have to do much of anything. Stake Conference Sunday is just a notch below General Conference Sunday on the ease-o-meter—because I have to put pants on—but it's still a pretty easy ride. And while my plan for a completely stress-free Stake Conference Sunday (accompany the choir on the piano for the closing hymn, bow my head for the benediction, and then slip out the funeral door before anyone could buttonhole me) didn't go exactly as I drew it up, it's still been a fairly relaxing day.

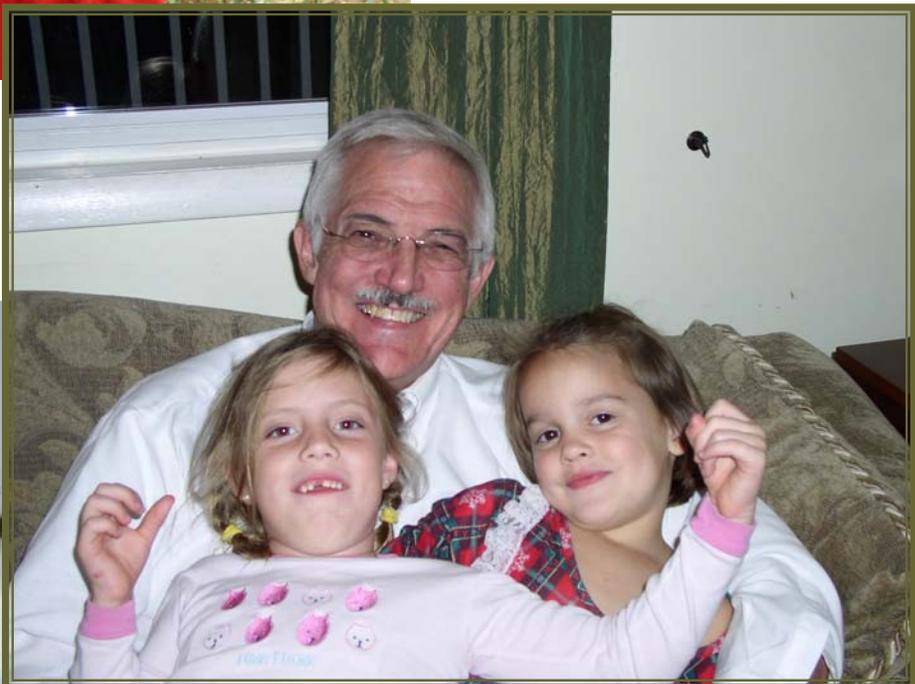
Stake Conference Saturday wasn't completely stress-free either, as the bishops were charged to work with their ward councils to develop strategies for safeguarding children during Church activities. Earlier in the week, a four-year-old girl was abducted from one of the buildings in our stake. The child was recovered a short time later about a mile from the meetinghouse, but apparently not before having been assaulted in some manner by her assailant. Remarkably, even with an extraordinarily precise description of the perp—an unknown, perhaps tall, perhaps African American, man who may have been driving a red jeep—the authorities still have not yet been able to bring him in. I expect we'll come up with some real groundbreaking policies; something exhibiting true outside-the-box thinking; maybe something like, "don't let your young children run around the building unattended while you're in meetings," but I'll keep you posted.

I haven't seen Reed at work in like a week and a half, so I don't know where he's been. I probably won't see him this coming week, either, because I'll be in Atlanta for most of it. I have a 6:30 flight tomorrow morning...which means I have to get up really early...which means I have to go to bed now. Have a good month.





Sophie: Kindergarten field trip to the pumpkin patch.



Above: Emma Kent and Sophie with Grandpa Kent.



Left: Grace makes a mess.



Above: Lucy (center), about to get baptized, surrounded by fellow eight-year-olds Adia Hansen and Joe Sallia.



Left: Birthday girl Lucy situates Kit (her American Girl doll) on her new Scooter