

**Dear Family,**

*I really shouldn't have time to write a letter today. I'm one-third of the way through a 21-day stretch during which I've needed/will need to deliver remarks at 1) a youth fireside, 2) stake conference, 3) Young Women New Beginnings (later than usual this year), 4) a stake Single Adults fireside, and 5) sacrament meeting on Mothers' Day. (And that's on top of all the writing I have to do for my real job.) I'm not a very good extemporaneous speaker, so all this translates into quite a bit of preparation time. Fortunately, today is stake conference Sunday, and because my talk was yesterday, the sum total of my church obligation today amounts to sitting through a single two-hour meeting (the general English-speaking session of conference—our stake also has a second general session for Spanish speakers, but I don't go to that one, because, you know, when my ancestors came here—from England—they did what was necessary to learn the language of their new country). What all this means is that I ought to have all the time in the world today to write to my heart's content.*

It never would have occurred to me that the most cost-effective way of getting the interior of one's car detailed is to get rear-ended.

We renewed our annual family tradition of going to see the cherry blossoms at dawn on the first Monday of spring break. As I think I point out every year, dawn on a weekday is the time to go; the crowds are non-existent—the only people out are photographers attempting to capture the surreal beauty of the blossoms against the tidal basin and the monuments in the dawn's early light. Easter (and, therefore, spring break) were a little late this year, which meant that the trees were slightly past peak and lots of blossoms were on the ground. Grace enjoyed tossing handfuls of them into the air and observing, "It's snowing into flowers." Indeed it was, and it was all very nice...

...Right up until the point during the drive home when, after we had stopped at an intersection, a friendly young lady plowed into the back of us.

This was something of an inconvenience, but ended up being a great blessing. Not only was no one injured, but after a week at the body shop, our 2004 Toyota Sienna came back smelling better than it has in five years. The cumulative effect of that many years of young children who don't know the difference between a cup holder, a storage bin, a seat pocket and a garbage can—and use them all interchangeably—had been reversed by just one chance encounter with a distracted woman in a Range Rover. Ah, the tender mercies...

(Incidentally our rental for the week was a Dodge Durango—an experience that served only to reinforce in my mind why nobody buys American cars.)

Sophie, who turned 7 this month, still has trouble accepting the fact that in a family of six, most of the time it's

someone else's turn to pray. Her indignant response to a prayer offered by one of her siblings earlier this month: "I could have said more if it were my turn."

Sophie's middle name is Joan. Her seventh birthday came one day after the funeral service for her namesake, Crystal's great-aunt Joan Matheke. I think I first met Aunt Joan at our Coeur d'Alene wedding reception in 1994. Ever since then, I've always felt that the adjective most befitting her (to the extent that any person can be adequately described by a single adjective) is "salty" (in a good way—it might have had something to do with the Jersey accent she never totally lost). She was never anything but kind and gracious to me and my family, opening her San Diego home to us on multiple occasions, hooking us up with passes to the zoo, and knitting Christmas stockings for each newborn child.

I regret not having been able to travel to California for the funeral, which I imagine was rich with remembrances of a great old lady, but I'm happy that Crystal was able to go. I'm also happy that I was able to dump the kids at Grandma and Grandpa's house for a good chunk of the weekend.

My month, however, was not completely devoid of funerals. I conducted one more this month—this time for a physicist who worked on the Manhattan Project (obviously as a very young man). Among the hidden perks of being a bishop are the fascinating things you get to learn about the lives of people you've only known as "old folks." I've now officially lost track of the number of funerals at which I've spoken, but I'm pretty sure I'm into double-digits—which strikes me as a lot for a man my age.

Apparently I'm starting to look older, though. Our twenty-something-year-old office admin (and occasional triathlete) remarked the other day that she thought I looked like I was "in pretty good shape for a guy in his 40s"—which I suppose I'd find somewhat more flattering if I weren't 37.

Fortunately, with the improved weather, I'm back to riding my bike to work (20 miles each way) at least once a week. At the advice of Roland and Marci, I've invested in good pair of [bib shorts](#), which makes the ride somewhat more comfortable.

Hannah's now decided that she'd rather ride her bike to school (4+ miles) than take the bus. She did it for the first time this past Friday. I rode behind her to make sure she didn't make any wrong turns (which was unlikely since the Sligo Creek Trail goes right past her school). I couldn't help but notice after we arrived that Hannah's school—which, like everyone else, has jumped whole-hog onto the prophet Al Gore's "reacting is easier than thinking" green bandwagon—doesn't have a single bike rack on its entire Prius-crammed campus. Sweet, sweet hypocrisy.



Incidentally, if you're into Prius-bashing, [this two-year-old op-ed piece](#) is for you! (If you're a Prius-lover, but can't stand those stupid compact fluorescent light bulbs, then [this more recent op-ed piece](#) is for you!)

Give Mother Earth a hug and have a nice month. Love, Us.

# Cherry Blossoms 2009



Lucy and Sophie:  
(Look at how they're not hitting each other!)



L to R:  
Lucy,  
Sophie,  
Grace,  
and  
Hannah



**Above:** The girls in a tree

**Below:** Lucy and Hannah on a bench

