

**Dear Family,**

For the past few weeks I have spent what is probably an inordinate amount of time thinking about how I might appropriately share with you an experience I had with an apostle earlier this month.

The experience came during a four-hour priesthood conference attended (by my count) by 230 high priests, four seventies, and one apostle. It was, I imagine, as intimate a gathering as one could expect to have with that many people. The 230 high priests were the presidents of the Washington DC North, Washington DC South, and Maryland Baltimore Missions, and the 54 stake presidency members and 173 bishops and branch presidents residing within the boundaries of those missions.

One of the four seventies is the current president of the Washington DC Temple. He was joined by an area seventy, a member of the Second Quorum of the Seventy, and one of the seven presidents of the Seventy. The apostle was Elder Holland.

I was the organist.

The conference was held at the Washington DC Stake Center (the one next to the temple). It was a more convenient location for me than it was for perhaps 99 percent of those in attendance. At 4.4 miles from our house, it's only a fraction further than the 4.1 miles from our house to the Silver Spring Maryland Stake Center, where our ward meets every week.

I was a little deflated when Elder Holland indicated early in the meeting that he didn't want to go home and be able to read about the proceedings of the meeting on the Internet. My understanding of his rationale was that he wanted to be able to speak frankly and openly without fear of his words being published and possibly misconstrued. For that reason I don't feel at liberty to discuss what was said during the meeting (even though—with one possible exception, which I'd be happy to share with you in a less-public setting—nothing was discussed that can't be substantially found on official Church websites). But presumably Elder Holland's injunction doesn't prohibit me from reporting that the meeting happened and that it was one of the most edifying things I've ever been part of.

The organ bench provided a bit of a unique perspective. President Elwell of our stake presidency was allegedly taking bets from those seated around him on whether I would play the hymns precisely as written or do what I usually do up there (which essentially boils down to one part making people laugh and two parts showing off). My intent was to play it straight, but to be honest, I can't tell you for sure what I did. The opening hymn was "High on the Mountain Top." I'm not as familiar with the pipe organ at the Washington DC Stake Center as I am with the pipe organ at our own building, but I'm pretty sure I had her open as far as she'd go, and I could still just barely make out what I was playing, such was the wall of sound emanating from the men in attendance. It was literally unlike anything I'd ever heard. Outside of general conference, you (or at least I) don't typically think of the musical production of a gathering of priesthood

brethren as anything to write home about. But these guys were loud and they were great. It's become cliché to say that the music set the tone for a meeting, but it did, and it was great, and I'd love to tell you about it sometime—I just can't do it here.

Another thing I can't tell you here (because I don't know the answer) is why we feel like we need to have elementary and middle school "graduation" ceremonies. I don't remember having them when I was a kid. Crystal and I have a handful of hypotheses as to why we have them now (most of these reflect a certain arrogance on our part, so I won't put them out for public consumption) but I suppose there are worse things to do than smile and wave at one's child as she walks across a podium to collect a make-believe diploma. I was able to attend Lucy's ceremony where Lucy did a very nice job introducing the visiting "commencement speaker." I was in San Francisco the following day, so I missed Hannah's middle school promotion, but I've seen the pictures, so I'm fairly certain she'll be going to high school next year.

The end of school brought with it some of our standard end-of-June traditions as well as some new ones. Emily Warner and her kids came over to help Crystal and the girls make the now-traditional last-day-of-school Smith Island Cake. (I think I write about this every year. Smith Island Cake is the official Maryland state dessert; it has 12 layers and isn't my favorite dessert, but it's fun.) A new tradition may have emerged when Crystal and the girls went to Sandy Point on the day after the last day of school (again, while I was in San Francisco). Sandy Point is a beach on the Bay. We're an hour from the Bay and three hours from the ocean, so in the unlikely event that we opt to go to any beach, it's likely to be on the Bay. But the girls seem to have had a good time, and it sounds like they ran into half the Kensington Ward there, so that might become a new tradition for us as well (at least for the girls—as for me and the beach, unless it's not unbearably hot and there aren't a million people around, I just don't get it).

Summer swim league is back in full swing, with Hannah, Lucy, and Sophie on the team again, and Grace now having reached that stage eventually reached by every child where her confidence in the water greatly exceeds her ability. She can stay above the water on her own and even cover short distances, but her development has been hindered somewhat by a newfound unwillingness to wear goggles. (She doesn't like the way they make her look—she's still doing that thing where she tilts her head and smiles while admiring herself in the mirror, so it's good to know that she's taken her Marcia Brady complex into the water with her.)

The stifling heat (even at 5:45 A.M. some days) hasn't knocked Crystal off her running routine as she continues to train for September's [Ragnar](#) relay (more on that in a future letter). She's up to at least 20 miles a week and actually seems to enjoy it. She also swims or lifts weights most days. (And, no, it isn't emasculating at all to have a wife who can chase me down and beat me up.)



Sophie has gotten into the action as well, having become an avid participant in her school's running club (the brainchild of Maren Hansen, a member of our ward). Just this month Sophie completed her first 5K. I'm pretty sure she's only into it for the free shirts and pink water bottles, but I could be wrong. Hope this finds you well. Love, Tim et al.



Left: Hannah “graduates” from Silver Spring International Middle School. Right: Lucy does the same from Forest Knolls Elementary.



Lucy, Hannah, and Emma (Hannah’s friend) exult before the Smith Island Cake.

**Right:** Sophie, after “running” her first 5K. (She ran for part of it.) She got a pretty pink water bottle, a piece of cake and a technical shirt that’s too big for her. Still pretty cute though.

**Below:** Grace gets into the running club scene as well.



Grace and Hannah, mostly buried under the sparkling white beach of Sandy Point Stake Park (on the northwestern shore of the majestic Chesapeake Bay).