



John Larsen <theclaw56@gmail.com>

Merry Christmas! Email from Mom, 19 Dec 2011

Joyce Larsen <linenlady9@gmail.com>

Mon, Dec 19, 2011 at 8:58 AM

To: Phillip Larsen <phillip.larsen@myldsmail.net>

Cc: John Larsen <john@larsen-family.us>

Hello, Dear Elder Phillip Larsen!

Merry Christmas! I have to remember you're two hours ahead of us now, with our time change. So I need to be faster with emails to you, and also when we talk to you this coming weekend, we'll plan for it! I'm excited to talk with you! When we had the Elders come to dinner on Saturday we asked them if they would be doing Skype, or making phone calls. Elder Jones said he wasn't sure if he wanted to Skype, or just be surprised at how people look when he returns home. So they might just do phone calls, from their apartment. They have a cell phone. Do you have one to use in the work you do?

This is the final week for Christmas preparations, and as always, there is more on my list to do than I think I can possibly accomplish. This is when things really shake out, when I decide what's actually important and what can be dropped. I was sick a bit on Friday, which lost me a day of shopping and errands. So I did the groceries on Saturday (the busiest day of the week), and Dad did the post office on Friday morning, as well as picked up the permit for the shed (which he tells you about in his letter to you). I was going to do that. He also drove for Seminary on Friday. A lot of people have been sick with stomach stuff or with colds. We have been very blessed to not be sick, really.

Because I had been sick on Friday, I still wasn't up to my full energy on Saturday. We had the Ward Christmas Breakfast, which was delicious, and there were musical numbers. Sis. Hood brought her harp, both to accompany Sis. Rigg on a song, and to play background music for the breakfast. It was lovely. And instead of having Santa visit, there were the Three Wise Men, who did bring gifts for the kids, but they talked about the symbolism of the gifts they brought to Jesus. I never knew before this year that myrrh, which is the third gift they brought, was used primarily for embalming purposes, and it was representative of how they knew Jesus would die for us and be the Savior of the World. And frankincense was not just a nice-smelling incense, but was used by the Priests in the Temple in preparing the sacrifices they would make. There again, it was symbolic of the whole life's mission of the Savior. I've been reading more and studying about it in the past couple of days, and Heather (who remembers lots from Institute) has talked to me about it. For some reason, I just think

it's really neat to know those things. It's a testimony that the Wise Men weren't just curious guys, but were prophets, men of God, and were seeking the Savior of the World to worship Him. I also imagine their long journey, and compare it to our long journey to find the Savior. It doesn't happen in a few short scripture study sessions, but can take months and years of constant and focused diligence. Also, the Wise Men had lots of time for pondering while they traveled, which we don't allow ourselves, really, in our busy society.

After the Ward Christmas Breakfast, there was Ward Choir Practice, but I had some errands I had not completed before, and I had energy for only one or the other. And since we were having the missionaries come to dinner on Saturday night, I needed to prepare for that, so I skipped choir rehearsal. Which meant that I didn't feel prepared to participate on Sunday. It turned out I could have done fine, but I really enjoyed seeing the program from the audience, instead of seeing the backs of heads of those reading and speaking and singing. The Sunday program was really good. And I loved hearing the missionaries perform, too. Elder Stephens played the piano to accompany, and Elder Jones sang. Bro. Henkel came to home teach us last night, and he commented on their music. He said it was like hearing their testimonies in music, and he had no idea our missionaries had such musical abilities. I didn't know that either. He said it was so appropriate that we hear their testimonies in that way, since they are constantly bearing testimony of the Savior and of the Restored Gospel every day. I hope you have opportunity to sing or otherwise use your musical abilities while on your mission. It's another way to testify of Jesus.

I've found it so hard in recent years to enjoy doing the decorations and things surrounding Christmas. It all seems so overwhelming, though I do enjoy other people's efforts. However, I do love the spiritual aspect of Christmas. I have loved learning about the Wise Men. And I loved the program at church yesterday. We had a good lesson in Relief Society, too. Sis. Hann gave it, on celebrating Christmas, and also had a video of Mary and what she experienced. One of the things she said to do is to make your decorations focus on spiritual things a little bit. So today when we put out decorations more (finally!), I'll find a nativity or two, and just a few of the things I can think of that really mean a lot to me. That way it will be festive, and not too cluttered, and focus on the Birth of Jesus.

News about people you know: Sis. Blanchette had her surgery, and it went well, though she had some complications with the healing, but she seems to be doing much better. She says she feels better, and now just needs to take things easy (which is difficult with twins, and with five children!). Beverly was planning to go to Colorado with Ben last Tuesday for a few days, but then in the morning as she was getting ready she fell and broke her hip. Her sister, Barb, was at the cottage, and called an ambulance, and Beverly ended up having surgery and a hip replacement on Thursday. She did very well with that, and will be going soon to a rehab place for

physical therapy. As far as I know she is still planning on the cruise in January which she was going on with her sisters and children. I hope that all works out. Melanie Larsen posted on her blog yesterday, and has lost her hair. Ammon shaved his head in support. Melanie posted a picture of Ammon, but not of herself bald, and said she would not be doing that, either. She seems to be in very good spirits, and full of faith. As soon as a couple of Christmas gifts are knit, I'll be making a hat for her. Not that she doesn't have any already, she does, but that is a tangible way to say "I love you". And, I ran into Sean Spencer's Mom at the yarn shop in Wilton, and found out she is undergoing chemotherapy for ovarian cancer, too. It sounds like she is doing well, and the chemo in her case is just insurance, and they got the cancer in good time. So, we keep all of these people in our prayers daily.

Well, I'm looking forward to talking with you! I've been listening to German audio lessons, and need to get back to the Portuguese. Karen Ogden is back from her trip to Brazil, and is looking forward to continuing with her life at school in January. I saw her at church yesterday and gave her a hug. I greeted her in Portuguese, and she answered back, but then I could not remember how to answer her! So, I need to review again. I guess constantly work on it. Which you're doing, daily!

I miss you, Phillip. But I'm thrilled you're on a mission to preach the gospel to people in Brazil. What a wonderful opportunity! How wonderful to be able to focus on gospel things all the time like that! Keep the faith. I love you!

Love,
Mom