

NEWS FROM UTAH

AIM 2011

December

Salt Lake City

Hello! I hope this newsletter finds you all in good spirits and ready to tackle another year!

It feels like a very long time since I have written a newsletter, though it has only been a month. A lot has happened in the month of December. I'm not sure where to start actually. The month of December has been hard. It was a hard realization finding that I cannot save anyone, there is only so much I can do, the rest is up to God and them. After that realization, figuring out where to go from there. It has been good but hard.

Of course we had Christmas; Bekah, Jesse, and I celebrated most of it together. Christmas morning, Jesse came over to our apartment and we opened presents and had breakfast together. Afterwards, we all went our separate ways. I went to Volunteers of America (VOA, also the place where I go Tuesdays to talk to the women detoxing from drug use). Some of the church members spend most of Christmas day cooking a huge dinner for the ladies there, Bekah and I went there and helped serve food. We sat down with the ladies and chatted and then sang church and Christmas songs. The holidays were harder than I thought they would be, I realized it's a big difference to not have your family around. It made it all worth it to see the smiles on the women's faces

at VOA. Most of them do not get to see their families during the holidays either.

Christmas is very big in Salt Lake City, you can go to Salt Lake City and see streets and even trees decorated in lights. Even the tabernacle where the girl missionaries are at, that place is decorated so much. It is very pretty. There is a massive nativity scene there, with someone reading the story of Jesus' birth on speakers.

The church here celebrates New Year's together. Every year, they have a chili cook-off; Bekah, Jesse and I were judges for it, there were some interesting chilis ;). After we sat and ate dinner together, the teenagers split off and all went on a scavenger hunt all around the city. We were split into separate teams and had to find things like, "take a picture on a bridge" and "a picture of a boy team member in a dress", etc. At the end, the team with the most points won a prize. After the game, we sat in a circle and sang worship songs before the new year and half an hour into the new year. It was so encouraging, I can't think of a better way to start the new year.

What I've been up to lately...

I am still meeting with the girl Mormon missionaries at the Tabernacle, though not as often as I'd like to. Over my visits there, I have made a really good friend, she is 23 and from the Pacific Islands. It is common for missionaries to get moved all around during their mission, she was moved to Washington and will be back in Salt Lake City for the last month of her mission. I hope to keep in contact with her through letters while she is gone. The most challenging part about going to visit them is remembering not to argue Scripture with them like I am always tempted to. The best way to reach them is to be kind first of all, and to be a friend. To let them see the difference in me and letting God take it from there.

The church has started a read-your-Bible-in-90-days plan. We started on January first. I do not spend nearly as much time in my Bible as I'd like to, I look forward to reading through the Bible in 3 months with the church family.

I mentioned in one of the newsletters that we meet with our coordinator every morning before starting our days. On top of that, Mike meets with us all individually throughout the week. I am very thankful for his dedication and love to the church family and also to the people here. He keeps us all sane hahah.

I have taken a few classes to teach me how to teach English to someone who does not speak it. I have been helping a lady from Afghanistan better her English enough to pass a citizenship test. I take an hour bus ride to teach twice a week. Her name is Soma, she is a very sweet woman with a very gentle heart. On our first class, she had bought me a present for Christmas, I had met her once before. Every time we meet, she offers me tea and nuts and cookies. She is so friendly and treats me like I am her daughter.

My schedule:

Here is what my schedule usually looks like for a week:

Monday: this is the day we have off

Tuesday: meet with Mike at 8; meet for hot chocolate with one of the ladies from the church; Spanish lessons; ESL class with Soma; VOA

Wednesday: meet with Mike at 8; Spanish lessons; after school program; small group

Thursday: meet with Mike at 8; coffee with Mike; Spanish lessons; cooking class for mentally disabled; prepare lesson for next ESL class; small group

Friday: meet with Mike; Bible study with Mike and team; breakfast with the coordinators; Spanish lessons; ESL lesson with Soma; game night with youth group

Saturday: go to the tabernacle to talk to the girls there; Spanish lessons; movie with Jesse and Bekah; study for Bible study

Sunday: church; Bible study with one of the college girls from the church

Prayers....

The more time I spend here, the harder it gets. It is hard to keep in mind to love people no matter what and to keep God as the main focus instead of the people. Please keep me and my teammates in your prayers, that we are renewed in love for the lost each day.

There is a family from the church that are struggling very much, a single mother with 5 children. Currently, they are looking for an apartment. Please pray for them. Their last name is Albanez.

Bekah and I had bought a ticket for Brazil when we thought we were going there. The place we used refunded us the money and has given us until May 10th of this year to use that money. But, we can only use it to go to specific places, Alaska is not one of those places unfortunately. Pray for us as we find the best way to use those tickets.

I am sure the closer it gets to leaving South Africa, the harder it gets for Maria. Pray that she will be able to leave Africa knowing she worked for God those 2 years and did all she could.

The more I talk to my biological family, the more I hear that they are not doing very well. My biological mother is very sick, her thyroid is very bad and is not getting better. If you could, pray for all the family my siblings and I have there. Some good news about them, my biological mother is a God loving woman, recently one of our brothers started attending church with her.

And lastly, for all the missionaries around the world, Aimers and nonAimers alike, that their perseverance and confidence in God will continue to grow.

Thank you all for your love and support, I cannot tell you how uplifting it is to know that there are tons of people around the world praying for me. It truly is a blessing ☺

With lots of love,

Beta Katkus