

NEWS FROM UTAH

AIM class of 2011

March

Salt Lake City

Hello! I hope this newsletter finds you all in good spirits!

I apologize for this newsletter being so late. March has come and gone faster than I thought possible. It seems like yesterday that we were dressing warm to keep warm during the winter. Now, summer is here and it is *hot*. But so nice :)

It seems that each month, God teaches me something else. Whether it be through people I meet or things happening, usually, it's both. Hang with me as I try to explain just how God is teaching and what he is doing in not only Salt Lake City, but through Salt Lake City.

What I've been up to lately...

The religious background of Utah is Mormon and part of being in the Mormon faith is to have a temple. Now, this isn't at all like the temples that the Bible talks about. These temples are used to get married in, to worship, and to make promises to God. Though only members of the Latter Day Saints (LDS) are allowed to enter the temple, everyone else can enter what is called their tabernacle. This is where most of the girl missionaries spend their time, giving tours of the tabernacle and answering questions about their religion. Many months ago, I met a good friend from the Marshall Islands. It is common during your mission as an LDS to be moved all over the US, my friend was moved to Washington. The exciting part is that we have been writing letters back and forth.

Recently, our church has become a food bank drop off site. Starting next week, the food bank will drop off food twice a week and the church will invite anyone and everyone to come and take what they need. This will be a large amount of people! We're talking about a *thousand* people coming in each week! This will be a fantastic opportunity to meet more people!

As I've mentioned in newsletters before, twice a week I teach English as a second language (ESL) to Soma, woman from Afghanistan. I've been teaching for 5 months now. The goal is for Soma to learn English well enough to take her test to become a citizen. Twice a week, I take the bus and train to Soma's house, this takes me about an hour and a half (to get there, and then another hour and a half back home). I have enjoyed watching Soma become more confident in her English, she is a very quick learner. Soma will take her test in a few months.

Early in March, I was able to buy an airline ticket to go to Romania. I'm excited to say that I'll be spending May 8th through the 22nd in Romania. I admit that most nights are spent trying to relearn as much Romanian as I can and preparing to go, emotionally and spiritually. I ask for your prayers as I meet my biological family again.

What God has been teaching me....

This month, God has really been teaching me to pray constantly. This started with looking around and seeing things happen that I can't do anything about. Here's an example, at the women's detox center, the women are encouraged and helped to rid their bodies of drugs and to eventually stop using. I can't make the women change their habits, I can encourage them, even if they do go back to using drugs. I can't do anything, except pray and encourage them.

Another example is my LDS missionary friend who I am writing letters to. I can't make her look at the Bible and believe it all, all I can do is pray for her. These, and other things beyond my control have encouraged me to go to God and talk to him about them. Another example: I am starting to see progress in my ministries. As exciting as that is, that means I need to go to God in prayer even more.

God has also been teaching me patience (this is one lesson that never ends haha) through my classes with Soma. Just last week, Soma and her husband and I got to talking about the vast presence of the Mormon church in Utah. That quickly turned to hearing about what Soma's family believes, and lastly, to what I believe. Soma is Muslim and counts Jesus as merely another prophet, her husband was very interested to hear about who the Jesus from the Bible is and why I believed that. This was the first conversation where I was asked what I believed. It was great to see God working in this!! I've been praying for an opportunity like this! The challenge is waiting for Soma to ask about God more, most days she is content to talk about her religion.

Realizing that these are way beyond my control and that the progress that has happened has been God working, I am curious and excited to see what else God will do. My prayer is that I will step aside and let Him use me, no matter how uncomfortable or afraid I am.

Prayers....

Though my ministries are going well, I ask for your prayers that God will continue to be the one who lead them.

Many of you know that I have an older sister who is also in AIM. Her mission field is South Africa, come May, and she will be finished working there. Please pray for her during this month, I imagine it would be hard to end the work she is doing there.

The church family here is small but strong. Please pray that we continue to encourage each other and to draw nearer to God together.

And lastly, for my friendships with Soma and the LDS missionaries I am in contact with. I can see that God has a plan and purpose for these and I'm thrilled to see him so evident in these friendships. Pray that they may see Jesus through me.

Thank you all for your prayers and support. I wish to someday sit with you and tell you more of how God is working in Utah.

The church here sends their love and greetings.

With much love,

Beta Katkus