

January, 2019

Dear family and friends,

Thank you to all of you who sent us letters this past year, we very much enjoy them. Here's the news from our family in the past year.

The biggest news is that Sarah got engaged last spring to Aaron Hooyer, and they are planning a June wedding in northwest Iowa. Sarah is now in her last semester at Dordt College and will graduate in May with a Graphic Design major and Digital Media and Psychology minors. After finishing Chicago Semester in the spring where she did an internship with the Edgewater Chamber of Commerce, she was able to resume her product photography job in Iowa. Aaron landed a construction management job with Graham Construction based near Minneapolis, MN, so that is where they plan to live after they're married. He has been working on projects near Minot, ND, most of the time since he was hired. We went to Visalia, California, after Christmas with Sarah and met Aaron's family for the first time, which we really enjoyed.

Mark is working as a night security guard at the same location in Des Moines as he was last year, though frequent turnover in his coworkers makes things challenging. He lives in an apartment with two other guys. Despite his job being the sort that is 24/7/365, he was able to be with us for Thanksgiving and two family Christmas parties, for which we are grateful.

Ruth's craft business, When Not Gardening, continues to grow and keep her busy. She is still involved in Coffee Break leadership and enjoys her weekly knitting group. Gardening is her passion and she enjoys cooking although sometimes gets tired of meal planning.

Dave is in his 12th year at Fermilab. In addition to his weekly early morning and Fermilab Bible studies, he started another volunteer position last year, leading 7 am Bible studies a couple of times a month for men who are recovering from addictions at a ministry called Wayside Cross in Aurora. The program is very much focused on learning from the Bible and connecting the men with a local church. So far it has been going well and the men seem to appreciate that he comes. For fun, he is catching up on TV series that he missed the first time around. MacGyver is still a classic.

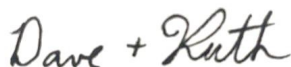
Our dog Maddie and cats Perry and Fiona continue to keep life interesting. For Christmas Ruth got an additional pet, a baby crested gecko she named Jasper. So far he's been living in a small aquarium on her desk. When he gets bigger she'd like him to move into the bigger aquarium that she has converted from a fish tank into a home for orchids and tropical plants.

We had three special trips this year. We went to Aruba and Curacao in February, especially enjoying the snorkeling (although the airport in Aruba was a nightmare), and in the summer we went to Sofia, Bulgaria. The latter certainly wasn't high on our list of places to see, but Dave had a conference there. Ruth enjoyed the city as well as the weekend visit we could both take to the ancient city of Veliko Tarnovo. We also went to Montana in the summer for a family reunion of Ruth's mother's side, our fourth time there in 25 years. Mark and Sarah were both able to come along on that trip and we also visited Glacier National Park together before the reunion. Our timing was good, because a short time later, the Going-to-the-Sun road was closed due to a forest fire.

2018 has been a busy year, full of activities and opportunities, and we thank God for the health and energy that He has given us to be able to accept and enjoy them. It looks like 2019 will be another packed and exciting year and we look forward to seeing where God will be leading us next.

We hope you are all doing well and wish you God's blessings in 2019!

Love,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Dave + Ruth".

Dave and Ruth Dykstra



Sarah & Mark with grandfathers
celebrating Dave's Dad's 90th birthday



Maddie tolerates Perry's snuggling



Fiona planning to come along



Ruth at the Field Museum



Aaron & Sarah the day the got engaged



Dave in our back yard



Jasper exploring his world (photo almost life-sized)